

# Critical study of factors influencing consumers attitudinal and behavioural responses to direct -to- consumer and over the counter Toys Advertising in India

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## ABSTRACT

The study focuses on two main approaches of advertising strategies in Toy Industry: over-the-counter (OTC) and direct-to-consumer (DTC) advertising. OTC advertising in the toy industry primarily targets retailers, wholesalers, and distributors. Toy manufacturers often rely on trade shows, industry publications, and promotional materials to showcase their products to these intermediaries, who then make purchasing decisions based on the appeal and marketability of the toys. On the other hand, DTC advertising focuses on reaching the end consumer, primarily children and their parents. DTC advertising in the toy industry involves television commercials, online advertisements, social media campaigns, and influencer marketing to directly engage with the target audience. By utilizing DTC advertising, toy companies aim to create brand awareness, generate excitement, and influence consumer preferences. While OTC advertising focuses on business-to-business transactions, DTC advertising empowers toy companies to establish a direct connection with consumers, driving demand and facilitating a direct purchasing relationship. Both OTC and DTC advertising approaches have distinct influences on consumer behaviour within the toy industry. While OTC advertising targets retailers and wholesalers to secure distribution, DTC advertising directly engages with consumers, shaping their preferences and driving purchasing decisions. Emotional appeal, brand awareness, and consumer empowerment are key elements that impact consumer behaviour in response to toy advertising. By understanding the nuances of both OTC and DTC advertising, toy companies can effectively navigate the market, establish strong brand presence, and cater to the needs and desires of their target consumers. Toy advertisements have a profound effect on children's behaviour, leading to changes in their preferences and desires. It creates a sense of urgency and desire, fostering the belief that possessing certain toys will lead to happiness and social acceptance.

## Keywords:

Attitudinal Shift, Behaviour, Marketing Preferences, Nature of Toy Product, Accompaniment, Over-the-counter, Direct-to-consumer

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The toy industry has captivated the hearts and minds of children and adults alike for generations. From traditional playthings to cutting-edge innovations, toys have played a crucial role in shaping childhood experiences. In this article, we will delve into the captivating world of the toy industry, exploring its history, current state, driving factors,

challenges, and sustainable practices. Join us as we unravel the secrets behind this exciting industry.

Toys have been an integral part of human civilization, with evidence of their existence dating back thousands of years. The joy and wonder that toys bring to children's lives are unmatched. Whether it's a simple wooden doll or a high-tech robotic companion, toys foster creativity, imagination, and cognitive development.

The toy industry has evolved significantly over time. In ancient civilizations, children played with simple toys crafted from natural materials such as wood and clay. As societies progressed, so did the complexity and diversity of toys. The industrial revolution marked a turning point, with mass production techniques allowing toys to reach a wider audience. Iconic toys like the teddy bear and the LEGO brick emerged during this period.

Today, the toy industry is a thriving market, with a global value in the billions. Major players like Mattel, Hasbro, and Lego continue to dominate the industry, offering a wide range of toys catering to various age groups and interests. The advent of digital technology has brought forth new possibilities, with interactive toys and augmented reality experiences captivating young minds.

Several factors contribute to the continuous growth of the toy industry. Increasing disposable income in many regions allows parents to invest in high-quality toys for their children. Technological advancements have opened up avenues for immersive play experiences, blurring the boundaries between the physical and digital worlds. Furthermore, the influence of social media and online platforms has amplified toy marketing and made it easier for consumers to discover and purchase the latest toys.

While the toy industry thrives, it also faces certain challenges. Safety regulations and compliance have become a critical aspect due to concerns about product quality and child safety. Stricter regulations aim to ensure that toys meet the highest safety standards. Additionally, the rise of digital entertainment, including video games and online media, has posed competition for traditional toys. Manufacturers and retailers must adapt to changing preferences and play patterns to stay relevant in an evolving landscape.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on various industries, including toys. With lockdowns and social distancing measures in place, children spent more time at home, leading to increased demand for toys and entertainment options. The industry witnessed a shift towards educational and skill-building toys as parents sought to engage their children in meaningful play experiences. Virtual playdates and online platforms also emerged as avenues for socializing and engaging with toys remotely.

As environmental concerns become more prominent, the toy industry has started embracing sustainable practices. Manufacturers are focusing on reducing their environmental footprint by using eco-friendly materials and adopting ethical manufacturing processes. Additionally, recycling initiatives and waste reduction strategies are being implemented to minimize the impact on the planet. By promoting sustainability, the industry aims to provide children with toys that not only bring joy but also instil a sense of environmental responsibility.

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

**Sutton-Smith, 1989** stated that Advertising has a profound impact on consumer behaviour, shaping attitudes, preferences, and purchasing decisions. Through strategic messaging and persuasive techniques, advertising has the ability to influence and even change behavioural patterns. Companies invest substantial resources in advertising to drive consumer engagement and generate sales. Through the strategic dissemination of information and the artful manipulation of emotions, advertisers strive to change behavioural patterns in a way that aligns with their marketing objectives.

**Guddemi, 1992** quoted on advertising's influence on behaviour is its ability to create awareness and education. Advertisements are designed to introduce consumers to new products, services, or ideas, thereby expanding their knowledge and understanding. They found that advertising significantly increased consumers' awareness of unfamiliar products, ultimately impacting their purchase decisions. By highlighting the benefits and features of a product or service, advertising influences consumers' perceptions and stimulates their interest.

**Eljkonjin, 1990** stated that it has been effective in altering societal norms and attitudes. Social marketing campaigns, for instance, have successfully employed advertising strategies to promote behavioural changes on a larger scale. The "Designated Driver" campaign, launched by the Ad Council in the 1980s, aimed to reduce drunk driving by encouraging individuals to designate a sober driver. The campaign's impact was substantial, with a study published in the *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing* indicating that the percentage of individuals using a designated driver increased significantly as a result of the campaign's messaging.

**Thyssen, 2003** advocated that Advertising plays a role in changing behavioural patterns in the realm of health and wellness. Advertisements often promote healthy lifestyles, encouraging individuals to adopt exercise routines, make better dietary choices, and prioritize preventive healthcare. Research conducted by the Harvard School of Public Health revealed that exposure to public service announcements and advertisements promoting healthy eating habits positively influenced dietary patterns among children and adolescents.

**Kuchner, 2010** brought out the power Advertising to shape cultural values and societal norms. It can challenge stereotypes, promote inclusivity, and redefine traditional gender roles. He found the role of Advertising campaigns portraying non-traditional gender roles had a positive impact on viewers' attitudes towards gender equality. By featuring diverse and inclusive representations, advertisers contribute to a broader cultural shift, influencing how individuals perceive and interact with others.

**Cugmas, 2010** acknowledged the ethical considerations surrounding advertising's role in changing behavioural patterns. While advertising can be a force for positive change, it can also be manipulative and exploit vulnerabilities. Advertisements that use psychological tactics to manipulate emotions and create artificial needs have been the subject of criticism. Therefore, responsible advertising practices that prioritize transparency, honesty, and respect for consumer autonomy are essential to ensure ethical engagement.

### 3. RESEARCH GAP

The study addresses the following Research gaps:

- Consumers' attitudinal direction w.r.t their marketing channel needs to be addressed.
- The role of elders in ascertain the behaviour of children towards the purchase of toy product needs to be analysed.
- The varied nature of Toy products and the specific advertising strategy in that regard needs to be discussed.
- Whether the standalone advertising or tagging toy products with others are more fruitful needs to be evaluated.

### 4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To assess the impact of Marketing preference on consumers' attitude towards advertising of toy products.
- To investigate the influence of Accompaniment by the children by guardian on the relative response to Ad efforts though Over-the-counter and Direct-to-Consumer mode.
- To analyse the role of Nature of Toy Product on instigating consumers' inclination towards the OTC and DTC toy advertising.
- To look into the importance of tagging of toy products with others on determining the behaviour of consumers across two routes of Toy product purchases.

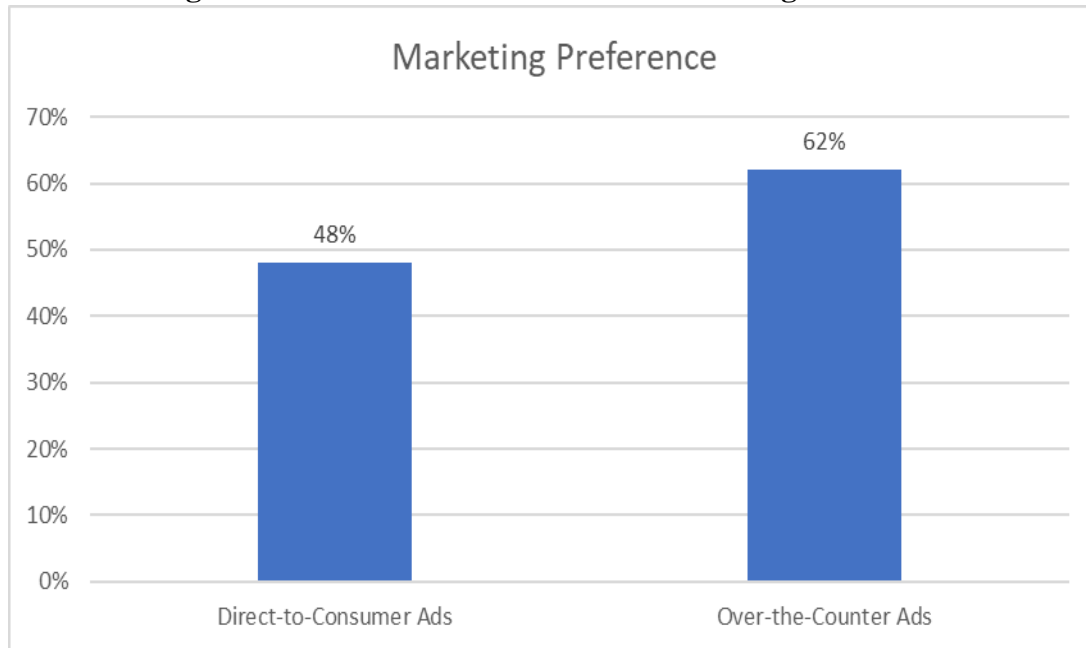
### 5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is based on a questionnaire-based survey conducted over a sample of 20 consumers, which is further bifurcated into 10 sub-sample each for the groups of 10 each for the Over-the-counter and Direct-to-Consumer advertising strategy of toy products,

The Analysis is carried out through statistical methods like Mean and T-test for difference of mean between two groups. The hypothesized statement is taken as little or nil difference as against the Alternative of significant difference with 5% level of significance.

### 6. DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

### 6.1 Marketing Preference as a determinant of Advertising Effectiveness



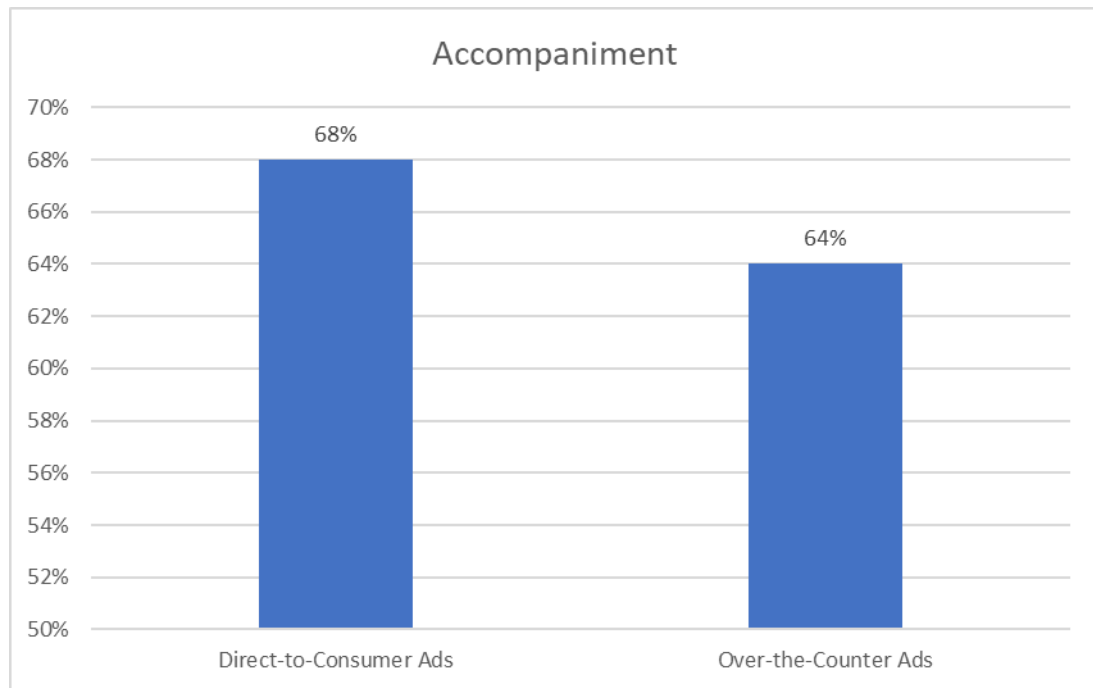
t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances

	Direct-to-Consumer Ads	Over-the-Counter Ads
Mean	0.48	0.62
Variance	0.015111111	0.017333333
Observations	10	10
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	18	
t Stat	-2.457864091	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.012172264	
t Critical one-tail	1.734063607	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.024344528	
t Critical two-tail	2.10092204	

The consumers which have a higher tendency to purchase from Supermarket rather than at local Kirana Stores are more likely to purchase Toy Products over-the-counter as the attractive display of toys persuades the parents to go for them even if the primary purpose was to purchase Groceries etc. The data shows that 62% of the respondents opting for Supermarket are likely to purchase OTC Toy Product, whereas such consumers respond much lesser to the Direct-to-Consumer Ads with merely 48% of sample instances.

T-test with two-tailed p-value of 0.02 being lesser than 0.05 also indicates significant between consumers influenced by OTC Toy Ads and those by DTC Ads in case of Marketing Preference bent on Supermarkets.

## 6.2 Accompaniment as a determinant of Advertising Effectiveness



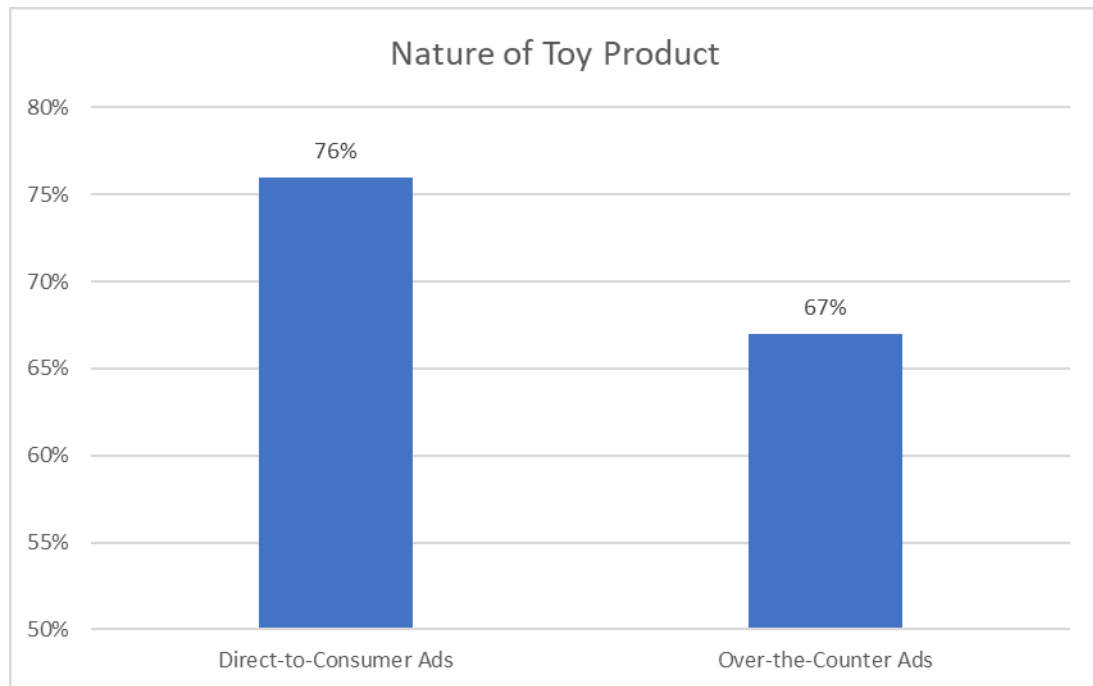
t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances

	<i>Direct-to-Consumer Ads</i>	<i>Over-the-Counter Ads</i>
Mean	0.68	0.64
Variance	0.010666667	0.011555556
Observations	10	10
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	18	
t Stat	0.848528137	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.20364351	
t Critical one-tail	1.734063607	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.407287019	
t Critical two-tail	2.10092204	

The instances of accompaniment of the children by their parents or any of the guardians are found to be an important driver of turning of advertisement of Toy products into actual sales. Although the effect is almost similar for both cases having instances of 68% for DTC and 64% for OTC respectively.

The corresponding p-value of the two-tailed t-test of 0.4 being much greater than 0.05 also indicates that there is not any significant between consumers influenced by OTC Toy Ads and those by DTC Ads in case of Accompaniment of Children by their guardians.

### 6.3 Nature of Toy Product as a determinant of Advertising Effectiveness



t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances

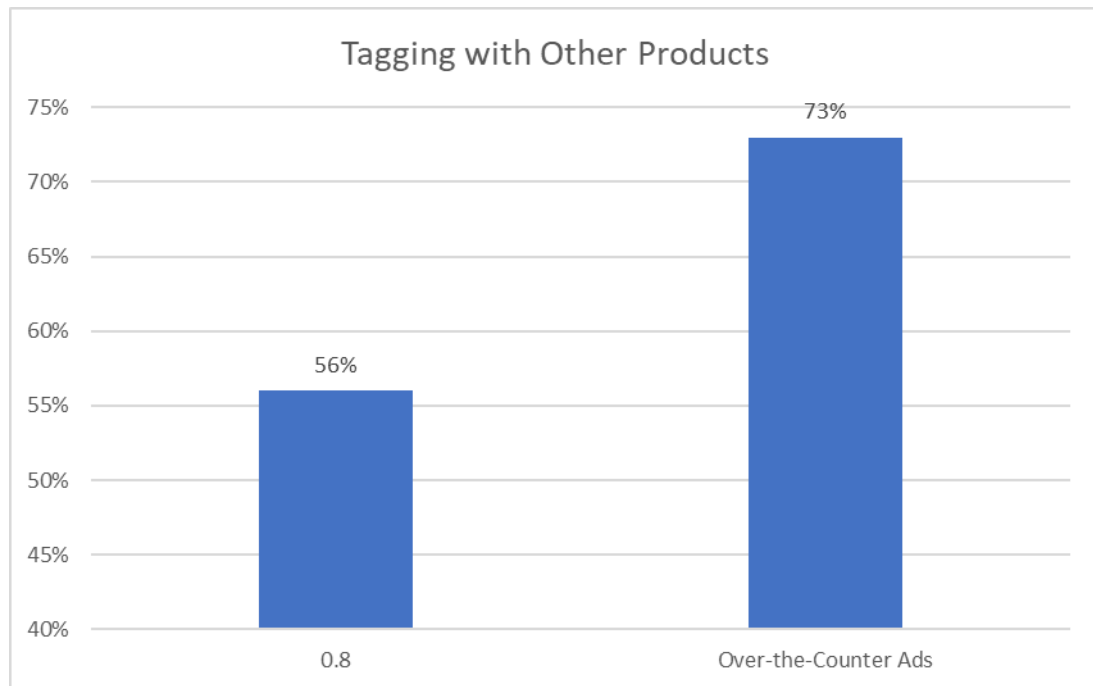
	<i>Direct-to-Consumer Ads</i>	<i>Over-the-Counter Ads</i>
Mean	0.76	0.67
Variance	0.007111111	0.011222222
Observations	10	10
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	17	
t Stat	2.101947149	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.025384056	
t Critical one-tail	1.739606726	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.050768113	
t Critical two-tail	2.109815578	

It is observed that electronic toys are more successful in entering consumers' basket through DTC Advertising mode with 76% positive nods. Although, these toys are not so effective in appealing the consumers over-the-counter with 67% sales mark. On the contrary, dolls and soft toys are found to be attracting customers more over-the counter as compared to DTC route.

T-test with two-tailed p-value of 0.05 indicates a weakly significant difference between consumers influenced by OTC Toy Ads and those by DTC Ads in case of Nature of Toy Products.



#### 6.4 Tagging with Other Products as a determinant of Advertising Effectiveness



t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances

	Direct-to-Consumer Ads	Over-the-Counter Ads
Mean	0.56	0.73
Variance	0.038222222	0.013444444
Observations	10	10
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	15	
t Stat	-2.365068368	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.015964142	
t Critical one-tail	1.753050356	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.031928284	
t Critical two-tail	2.131449546	

The Over-the-counter advertising strategy of tagging toy products with others is more successful with almost 70% rate than tagging with others in DTC route, having 61% attitudinal shift. Consumers' behavioural action is more influenced by OTC tagging strategy with either free or discounted price towards ending up buying that product.

T-test with two-tailed p-value of 0.03 being lesser than 0.05 also indicates significant between consumers influenced by OTC Toy Ads and those by DTC Ads in case of tagging of Toy Products with others.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

The Toy products are found to be appealing the consumers of both Over-the-Counter and Direct-To-Sale route. However, some factors are considered to be responsible for influencing



the behaviour and attitude of consumers through advertising strategies. The consumers largely preferring Supermarkets are more inclined to be compelled by the Ads to purchases OTC Toy products. Also, tagging the toy products with others play an important OTC strategy to shift the consumer minds towards toy products although they have a pre-determined purchase intention for other products. Electronic Toys are more likely to be effectively sold through DTC route whereas the Soft Toys give better sales result at OTC counters. Accompaniment of Children by elders have been an important driver of turning Ad effort into sales in both modes.

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