CHILDREN: MAJOR INFLUENCER IN FAMILIES TODAY

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ABSTRACT
India has lived in a setup of Joint families. Unlike other countries, India does not have the system of allowing children moving out of families to live an independent life of their own. The children in today’s times are playing a major role in the purchases of the family. This research paper is an attempt to understand children’s influence in the purchase decision making in families in the Indian context, to identify and analyze the dimensions of child’s consumer socialization affecting child’s influence in family buying process, to identify and analyze the different influence strategies children use to persuade their parents, to identify and analyze the different product categories on the basis of child’s influence, to find out if parents are happy with the involvement of children in the purchase decisions made by them.

Keywords: Children; Influence; Opinion; Parents; Choice

INTRODUCTION
Children constitute a significant marketing zone as the world fits to children and this has led to consideration from marketing point of view and companies are using this segment as a trump card for profit maximization. Children today have a more important place in the society than their parents ever had. They not only are consumers but have a considerable influence, may be direct or indirect influence in the family purchase decisions. The influencer role children exhibit over purchase decisions in family along with the nagging effect that they have on their parents is increasing day by day. The quotation “Kids today are customers, buyers, spenders, shoppers, consumers” illustrates that children constitute a very profitable segment to marketers because they have their own purchasing power, they influence their parents buying decisions and they’re the adult consumers of the future.

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY
1. To understand children’s influence in the purchase decision making in families in the Indian context.
2. To identify and analyze the dimensions of child’s consumer socialization affecting child’s influence in family buying process.
3. To identify and analyze the different influence strategies children use to persuade their parents.
4. To identify and analyze the different product categories on the basis of child's influence.
5. To find out if parents are happy with the involvement of children in the purchase decisions made by them.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to understand the impact of children in family purchase decision, primary type of research was conducted. The primary data was collected by interacting with the parents and children with the help of structured questionnaires. The research questions were framed by going through the available data and by examining the research regions. Also various types of research papers were reviewed.

Sample Size: 60 respondents including both parents and children were collected, where 30 questionnaires were filled by parents and 30 questionnaires were filled by children. Both working and non-working parents were included in the survey. Children from Kindergarten to the 10th standard that is from the age group of 3 to 16 years were included in the survey.

Questionnaires to be filled by parents were mailed to them. Studying children’s behaviour is unpredictable and it is difficult to judge the behaviour. They behave differently in different surroundings. In order to get deep insights of the children’s behaviour, the questionnaires to be filled by them were filled under the guidance of either their parents or me. They were explained each question in depth and their answers were ticked in the questionnaire.

The questionnaire contained questions in chronological order related to children influence in family purchases. The questions were personally administered and any clarifications on the research topic or difficulty in understanding the questions were attended, that ensured 100% response rate. If the family contained more children, the child available at the point was given preference.

The survey was carried out in Mumbai. Analysis was drawn out using Microsoft Excel and Google Documents.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Today children are not only passive observers but they have taken a considerable place in the families and have a significant influence on parental buying decisions. In marketing literature there are a number of studies on consumer purchasing behaviour, family members influence on consumer purchasing decisions. There are many shared decisions, made by consumers with the family members, which in turn has an effect on other family member’s wish and attitudes.

Mangleburgh (1990) evaluated parental and peer influences on teen purchase decisions by applying social power theory, which had not been examined in the teen context. A conceptual model examined how family socialization practices might impact teens’ perceptions of social power influences from parents and peers. For example, family communication environment may promote teens’ reliance on particular bases of social power influence. This study also examined the relationship between the bases of perceived social power and the purchase of different types of products (e.g., luxury/necessity, public/private).

Commuri and Gentry, 2000, study states that the Influence of the child in family decision making varies across age of the child, the child’s personal resources (such as education), product, and stage of decision making.

Kaur and Singh (2006) studied that Children in India may not have the purchasing power comparable to their Western counterparts, but they are still the centre of the universe in the Indian family system, and they can actually pull the parents to visit a place time and again. Children are an enormously powerful medium for relationship building in India. They not only influence markets in terms of the parental decision-making to buy certain kinds of products, they are also future consumers. Hence, suggested that more investigation of children’s roles in family decision making would be imperative.
KEY FINDINGS

Personal Profile of Respondents

Children were divided into two groups wherein almost 40% of the children were having one or more siblings while the rest of the 60% were single child of their parents:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KG to 4\textsuperscript{th}</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5\textsuperscript{th} to 10\textsuperscript{th}</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Parent respondents were distributed in four age-groups: According to the analysis both parents working accounted to 60% and single parent working accounted to 40%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26-30 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-35 years</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-40 years</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 years and above</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analyzing communication among family members and children during product purchases

Consumer research of the youth’s consumer behaviour has its base on “conceptual and theoretical models of socialisation” (Moschis and Mitchell, 1986, pp. 181).

The research showed the following:

![Figure 1](image)

Figure 1. Percentage of the children who spent time with their family

The above figure shows that 57% children spend time with their family on a weekend or any other day, 30% of them don’t spend any time with the family while 33% of them sometimes spend some time with their family.

Do parents take children’s opinion before shopping either for the family or for their children?

Children’s responses
From the 30 respondents, 24 children i.e 80% said yes while 6 children i.e 24% said no, that their parents didn’t take their opinion before the purchases made by them.

**Parents’ responses**

![Figure 2](image)

Figure 2.

The parents were questioned if their children have a say in the matters of purchases made by them, 40% said yes, 20% said no while the remaining 40% said sometimes.

**Analyzing the child’s influence for different product categories**

**Children’s response**

When the children were questioned as to which products do they specifically insist their parents to buy for them, their response was as follows:

![Figure 4](image)

Figure 4.
The figure explains 40% of children insist their parents to buy products related to them alone, 13% insist to buy products related to home and 47% insist for both.

Parents’ responses

When parents were asked as to which of the categories do their children influence their buying decisions, their responses were recorded as below:

![Figure 5.](image)

According to the figure above, 43% of parents are influenced by children for purchase of products related to kids, 0% for products related to home only, 53% for both categories and 4% for none.

Whether Brand conscious or not?

Parents were asked if their children were Brand conscious, their responses are shown in the above figure below:

![Figure 6.](image)

According to parents, 37% of children are brand conscious, 60% aren’t and 3% of parents didn’t respond.
Analyzing the various influential strategies children use?

**Figure 7.**

**Bargain:** 53% of the children said that they would bargain with their parents to convince them to purchase the products of their choice. Here the children may use the strategies like rational strategies (offering deals) and knowledge strategies (persuading by displaying knowledge about the product).

**Emotional Appeal:** 47% of the children said that they would use emotionally try to convince their parents to purchase the products of their choice. Here the children may use strategies like aggressive influence strategies, persuasion strategies and emotional strategies.

**Have children been able to convince parents to purchase products for the house?**

**Figure 8.**

83% of the children said that they have been able to convince their parents to purchase the products of their choice while 17% said that have not been able to convince their parents.

**Tactics children use to convince parents to buy products**

**Figure 9.**

Note: Where, 1 = Try hard to convince, 2 = Throw tantrums, 3 = None.
Here, 73% parents said that the children would try hard to convince, 20% said that their children would throw tantrums while 7% chose none of the above options.

Factors that determine the choices made by children

Which sources influence children to consider purchase for a product/Brand?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3. Children’s Response</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
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<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The children were asked as to which sources or factors influence them to consider a purchase for a particular product or brand. 20% said parents, 13% attributed the source to be their peers or friends, 50% said a commercial advertisement that is media while 17% attributed the source to be the internet.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4. Parent’s responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Determinant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertisement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aesthetics and appeal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here, 33% of the parents feel that the friends of their children influence them to make purchases of a product/brand, 40% attribute the cause to be the advertisements on televisions or hoardings while 27% of the parents attribute the cause to be the aesthetics and appeal of the product.

FINDINGS

Buying process is a complex process especially when children start with influencing their family decision making. The research findings suggest that young children are more socialized through friends and television and older children are more socialized through internet. Older children understand the complex human emotion system and have more knowledge about brands; hence they use the emotional and knowledge strategy more often than their younger counterparts. Emotional strategy is used more often by those children who are the single child of their parents. The findings also show that a child’s influence varies between high end products as well as affordable products. For family buying decision-making, children are very influential in the initiation and final stage of buying. They take a lot of interest in the deciding stages. Older children have more influence when the family decides about where to buy, when to buy and how much to buy.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, children do have a tremendous influence on family purchase decision. Various factors influences the way children make purchase decisions. The market for children, which had been ignored before, has proved to be a lucrative market in today’s generation. Children are effectively fitting into the consumer role owing to time pressures and income effects in dual career families. Moreover, exposure to mass media and discussions with parents ensure that children are not only aware of the new brands available, but also know how to evaluate them on various parameters. While younger children clearly affect parental behaviour and purchases, adolescents have full cognitive development and an understanding of the economic concepts required for processing information and selection. An analysis of children as consumers helps in the formulation of marketing strategies by identifying the motivations, interests, and attitudes of children who show the greatest involvement in making purchases in a specific product category.
REFERENCES


