

Study of the impact of Pester Power of Children on Family Buying behaviour

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Abstract:

This paper tries to understand the influence that children exert in different stages of family buying specific to consumer durables and identify the tactics used by children to convince their parents and the parental response to the same in the Indian context. The study was conducted using the survey method with two different questionnaires for the parent and child respectively and data was obtained from 122 families from Goa and Bangalore from either of the parents and children in the age group of 7-13 years. The questionnaires were personally administered and any clarifications were addressed, thereby ensuring 100% response rate. The findings suggest that children use rational tactics to influence their parents. There were differences noticed among parents and children pertaining to the use of rationalizing and negotiating influencing tactics.

Introduction:

Historically speaking the role of children in family purchases was not considered significant both by researchers and marketers. Most of the previous studies conducted with respect to understanding family purchase decisions revolved round the mother and father. Berry and Polay (1968) were among the first who tried to understand what impact children had in family purchase decisions. Most of the earlier researchers limited themselves in questioning only the parents and thus tried to understand the influence of children in family buying from their perspective. Subsequently, a lot of research was conducted involving family dyads and triads in the developed countries. Kids are now viewed as consumers and influencers for

every type of product be it a household or luxury products and this is evident in the role that they play in advertisements of these products. Considering the differences in culture in India, there was a need for research to be done in the Indian context so as to compare and see if the results of the western counterparts held true for the Indian society. The research in this context that has been conducted in the India is limited to northern India. Substantial amount of research is yet to be done in this context so that similarities or differences can be observed with the research conducted in the developed countries.

Literature Review:

We have reviewed a variety of research papers from vast number of journals

especially those which would throw light to this research topic. Previous research has identified a number of factors that play an important role in the manner in which children influence family buying behavior.

- Demographic Factors:
 - Child Characteristics: Majority of the researchers have taken this factor into account and have focused on different age groups, many focusing from 3 years up to 18 years. In general consensus the influence exerted by the child was seen to increase with age. Gender, birth order and number of siblings were factors considered. Some studies stated that boys use weak tactics less often as compared to girls. On the other hand, Palan and Wilkes (1997) found little difference among girls and boys in terms of influence tactics usage. Also elder and single born children are found to be more influential than other children.
 - Family Characteristics: Here the factors considered were parents age, occupation, overall income, family structure and number of children. It has been found that children in families with higher income have greater influence (Moschis and Mitchell, 1986). Also children living with single parents are found to be more influential than other children.
- Parent Child Communication and Child Socialization: Parent child communication consisted of two

dimensions, namely socio and concept orientation (Moschis, 1985). These two dimensions led to four different types of family types based on low and high socio and concept orientations respectively. Children in an encouraging environment like concept orientation tend to be more influential than those in a more controlling socio orientation Ekstrom, Tansuhaj and Foxman (1987). The main sources of child socialization that have been examined are family, friends, shopping and mass media – Television, Internet.

- Product Type: A vast majority of the studies done in this domain considered varied types of products ranging from cereals, sweets, toothpaste, shoes to stationary, toys to appliances, furniture, financial services, houses and cars. Some studies also considered services such as dining out and vacations. Most of the studies have segregated these products as products for parent, child and household use whereas others considered segregations such as major & minor family and child products respectively. Thus as expected the influence exerted by children would vary substantially across these product categories. They exerted more influence for products that were meant for them (Foxman and Tansuhaj, 1988, Mangleburg, 1990). Also as children had no finance or income their influence was restricted to major consumer durables such as TV, refrigerator, cars (Mangleburg, 1990).
- Decision Stage: The influence exerted by children varied across decision stage. Most of the past

researchers broadly examined children's influence across stages such as realizing that there is a need for the product, identifying and evaluating alternatives and the final decision for purchasing the product. Influence varied across different stages based on the product and who it is intended for. On a general consensus it was observed that influence exerted by children was higher in the first stage wherein they would suggest that a particular product be bought and due to their limited resources or lack of income their influence in the selection of the product is the least (Mangleburg, 1990). Besides, influence also varied based on the sub decision stages, namely choosing the brand, model and colour, the purchase timing, how much to spend, where to buy from.

- **Influence Tactics and Parental Responses:** A number of studies used different scales to understand the influence tactics used by children. Most of the studies focused on the direct influence children exerted on parents. A number of different influence strategies were examined across papers, to name a few asking, begging, anger, negotiate, bargaining etc. Most of the research in this domain has been attributed to Cowan et al. (1984). Very few studies focused on parental response to the influence tactics used by children

Methodology:

Based on intensive literature review the researcher designed two questionnaires for the parent and child respectively. Child and family specific demographic data was analyzed such as child's age and gender, number of siblings, birth order, parent's age,

gender, income, qualification and occupation. The following sections included questions to understand the parent – child communication, child socialization, children's influence tactics and parental responses and family buying behavior for four consumer durables – two for family use and two for child's use. Informal interviews were conducted with 10 parent-child dyads to help in further making changes in the questionnaire and for selecting the consumer durables. A pretest was conducted with 30 children in different schools in Goa. The 5 point Likert scale was used. For the final study data was obtained from a total of 122 families in Goa and Bangalore, both from, either of the parents and children in the age group of 7-13 years. The purpose of this paper is to examine the use of child's influence tactics to persuade their parents and alternatively to understand how parents respond to these tactics and to see if there is any difference in perception among the child and parent responses.

Analysis and Findings:

The demographic data is shown in Table 1. Cronbach's Alpha of 0.849 and 0.821 were obtained for the child and parent questionnaires respectively. So as to decide if we can run factor analysis on the data, the respective tests were done and KMO test value of 0.67 was obtained and since it is >0.5 , the sample size is considered adequate. The value for Bartlett's test was 401.65, $p > 0.01$, indicated that there was correlation among the variables. On running factor analysis on the two sets of data (influencing tactics and parental response) we obtained four components each. For influencing tactics, the four components were negotiating, enticing, rationalizing and pestering. For parental response, the four

components were convincing, compliance, negotiating and teaching.

In Table 2 we see the mean and ranking for the influencing tactic. T-tests were conducted on the four components generated through the factor analysis. As shown in Table 2, the t-value >1.96 was obtained for two components, namely negotiating and rationalizing. For these two components, the t-value is significant as $p < 0.05$ in both cases ($p= 0.044$ and $p=0.028$). Based on the t scores we observe that children perceive that they use the rationalizing tactic more often (Mean Score=3.89), but parents perceive that it is less used by children (Mean Score=3.0). Similarly, children perceive that they use the negotiating tactic less often (Mean Score = 3.05), however parents believe that children use this tactic more often (Mean Score = 3.5). The results of the parental response to the influencing tactics used by children are displayed in Table 3. Differences were observed in terms of use of influence tactics based on parental responses. It was noted that in families where parents basically use the convincing response strategy, children opt for negotiating and rationalizing tactics. In families where parents try to use the negotiating response strategy, children prefer using the enticing tactic. In families where parents try to use the compliance response strategy, children prefer using the enticing tactic. Finally in families where parents try to use the teaching response strategy, children prefer using the negotiating and rationalizing tactics.

Hypothesis Testing:

H1: The influence exerted by parents and children is the same across family and child centric consumer durables (Table 4)

Family centric consumer durable products: The mean score obtained by the children was 2.84 as opposed to 2.23 by the parents. The value of $F= 1.568$ and the Sig was 0.327. Thus the null hypothesis is accepted as sig value of $0.327 > 0.05$, which suggests that the mean difference between parent and children respondents for the family centric consumer durable products is not statistically significant at 5% level.

Child centric consumer durable products: In this category the mean score obtained by the children respondents was 4.32 as opposed to 3.45 by the parents. The F value obtained was 5.785 and the significance value was 0.023. The null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted as sig value $0.023 < 0.05$, which suggests that the mean difference between parent and children respondents for child centric consumer durable products is statistically significant at the 5% level.

Conclusion:

Considering the restricted amount of research done in India in this domain specifically with understanding the use of influencing tactics and parental response pertaining to a product, our research proposes constructive insight to this topic. It gives an understanding of the influencing strategies used by children pertaining to a particular product and the parental response to the same, as also understanding of the difference in perceptions with respect to the parent and child respondents. This research can further be strengthened by doing a comparison of influencing strategies and parental response for a range of products, such as products used by the family, children and parents alone.

On a broader perspective, it is important that marketers pay attention to the family dynamics as far as purchasing of products

go. It is essential to understand the different roles played by family members and how they exert their influence in persuading the family in making important decisions. Given the increase in the power of kid’s influence how understanding how parents at times

Appendices:

yield to their requests, marketers should make sure that children are not excluded from the advertising of the products, many a times products for which the child may not be the primary user.

T-1

Demographics					
	Child		Parents		
Gender	Male	63%	No of Children	1	34%
	Female	37%		2	61%
Age	7-9 years	54%	Age of Husband	3	3%
	9.1-11 years	28%		4	1%
	11.1-13 years	18%		--	
No of Siblings	0	28%	Age of Wife	25-29 years	2%
	1	55%		30-34 years	25%
	2	17%		35-39 years	52%
	3	1%		40-44 years	18%
Birth Order	1st	67%	Age of Wife	45-49 years	3%
	2nd	28%		50-54 years	
	3rd	5%		25-29 years	4%
Family Structure	Nuclear	53%	Age of Wife	30-34 years	43%
	Joint	37%		35-39 years	43%
	Single Parent	10%		40-44 years	6%
			Education of Husband	45-49 years	2%
				12th	51%
				Graduate	45%
				Post Graduate	1%
			Education of Wife	Ph.D	3%
				12th	39%
				Graduate	52%
				Post Graduate	3%
			Occupation of Husband	Ph.D	7%
				Executive Level	56%
				Manager Level	34%
				Self Employed	21%
			Occupation of Wife	Housewife	32%
				Executive Level	30%
				Manager Level	14%
				Self Employed	2%
			Family Income	Upto 5 lakhs	2%
				5-10 lakhs	2%
				10- 20 lakhs	21%
				More than 20 lakhs	74%

T-2

Influence Tactics	Child		Parent		t	df	Sig(2-tailed)	95% confidence level of the difference	
	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank				Lower	Upper
Negotiating	3.05	2	3.56	1	-0.987	200	0.044	0.407	0.873
Enticing	2.78	3	2.94	3	1.567	200	0.099	-0.285	0.165
Rationalizing	3.89	1	3.15	2	2.456	200	0.028	-1.897	-1.183
Pestering	2.56	4	2.78	4	0.954	200	0.356	1.024	1.576

T-3

		Correlations							
		Parental Response Strategies				Children's Influence Tactics			
		Convincing	Negotiating	Compliance	Learning	Negotiating	Enticing	Rationalizing	Pestering
Parental Response Strategies	Convincing	1	0.000	0.000	0.000	.328**	.138	0.082**	-.035
	Negotiating		1	0.000	0.000	-.144	0.205**	.113	.113
	Compliance			1	0.000	-.135	.370**	0.545	0.266
	Teaching				1	0.052**	0.22	0.0791**	.073
Children's Influence Tactics	Negotiating					1	0.000	0.000	0.000
	Enticing						1	0.000	0.000
	Rationalizing							1	0.000
	Pestering								1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

T-4

One Way Anova Result		N	Mean	SD	F	Sig
Family Centric Durable Products	Children	122	2.84	0.49	1.568	0.327
Car & TV	Parent	122	2.23	0.65		
	Total	244	2.535	0.57		
Child Centric Durable Products	Children	122	4.32	0.69	5.785	0.023
Bicycle & Toys	Parent	122	3.45	0.53		
	Total	244	3.885	0.61		

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