Abstract

In the past, role of the children in buying decision of families had been negligible. In olden days children know only less about the products available in the markets than their parents. But due to development in digital media, children are the first to know about the products when they hit the market even before their parents. Nowadays, children act as a passive participant in families buying decision. Children not only choose the products which belong to them but they also have upper hand on products which are used by almost every other family member. In this study, the influence of children on family buying decision based on four selected products is taken into consideration. Thus various variables that have direct relationship with the families buying decision are discussed on this work. The results indicate that the type of child-parent influence strategy used and the type of marketer-child influence source affects the level of child's influence over the product.

Keywords: Children, Influencers, Buying behavior, Family Buying, Products, Services
Introduction

Children are the most important member of the family. Children over the age group (4 - 12 years) form an inevitable partner in their mothers buying decisions. Commercials mainly target the preschool and childhood age groups for increasing their sales through advertisements and other marketing perspectives. Children have come to constitute a very important consumer group that influences family purchases of various products in many ways. Thus, recognizing children as a primary market, an influencing participant, and a future market, children today are seen as different from past generations; especially the 8-12 year-old (called "tw eens", as they are neither children nor teens but something between).

Literature Review

Now a days, kids were not only passive bystanders but they have taken a substantial place in the families and have a major influence on parental buying decisions. Kids were the center of attraction in any family irrespective of country and culture. They have been involved in all activities of the family. Products which are directly used by children are mostly decided by children themselves. Mainly teenagers apply emotional/pressure strategies for influencing their parents [Palan (1997)]. Teenagers are succumbed to consumers and under peer’s compulsion to purchase the product of electronic goods like computer, games, gadgets [Mohanram (2012), Kumar (2013)]. They go for information search in respect of product features, services, quality, durability, price of competitive products and so on. Factors affecting children’s purchase requests to their parents and their parent’s subsequent purchases for their children were freedom of a child’s movements/behavior, product’s visibility, child’s gender, child’s developmental stage, suitability of the good for consumption, strategy used in child’s request, parent’s income/family level and price of the good determine the number of purchases following a child’s request [Ebster (2009)]. The impact of demographic variables like gender and age of children and parental profession creates a major involvement of children in their families buying decisions [Kaur (2006), Ishaque (2014)].

Each generation has unique expectations, socializing way, experiences, lifestyles, principles, and demographics that affects their buying behaviors and their viewpoint about a product. Marketers need to create various marketing strategies appropriate to exploit each generation’s characteristics and behaviors, particularly in terms of advertisement, outline view of products and services, and communication [Williams (2011)]. For promoting the product to children, consumers were using television, websites, online games, kid magazines, and marketing through schools, social responsibility applications and marketing efforts directed towards mothers/fathers [Goksel (2013), Gulla (2013)]. Marketing practices such as repetition, branded environments, using their favorite icon person in advertisements and free prizes are effective in attracting children’s attention, making products stay in their memory, and influencing their parents purchasing choices [Omar (2012)]. Other factors affecting children’s influence include children demographic characteristics like behavior, friend circle, way of communication, culture, environment, gender and age of the children. Studies on gender have shown that boys were more influential for products like video games and PlayStations whereas girls are influence was seen to be high in household items like clothes, fashion items, make-ups, bakery items and fancy writing papers [Ali (2011), Ishaque (2014)].

Table 1: Major factors influencing the buying decision made on the family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literature Study</th>
<th>Major Factors/Variables</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hossein (2013)</td>
<td>Demand (opinion) of children, acceptance of family, family conditions and products features and relationship between these variables</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thomson (2007)</td>
<td>Coalition strategy, family communication style</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kaur (2006)</td>
<td>Gender &amp; age of children, parental profession</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goksel (2013)</td>
<td>Arrangement of product, price, place, promotion in kids marketing (4P)</td>
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<td>Gulla (2013)</td>
<td>Entertainment, Likability, Credibility and Informativeness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Calvert (2008)</td>
<td>Online advertising, stealth marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohanram (2012)</td>
<td>Child’s strategy - Pressure / logical, parent type - consultative / authoritative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omar (2012)</td>
<td>Product type, kids age and parent’s communication style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kumar (2013)</td>
<td>Education of parents, their profession, income, parents marital status, family type, types of product</td>
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<tr>
<td>Williams (2011)</td>
<td>Multi - generation strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ali (2011)</td>
<td>Children’s gender &amp; age, mother’s age, family income</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ebster (2009)</td>
<td>Product’s visibility, age of children, suitability of the good for consumption, strategy, parent’s income, price of goods</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ishaque (2014)</td>
<td>Family size, media marketing, dual career family</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nickerson (2001)</td>
<td>Visitor survey, different approaches to adults/children</td>
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replaced by other more adult products as they start to act as small adults. These changes make children look like small sized adults in their clothing and in their consumer behavior in general.

Indian Context

Indian society vastly differs from the west in terms of family structure, culture, principles, and behavior, it is more important to understand the children's influence in purchase decision made in families in India. The spending power of children in India is different compared to other countries but still they play a key role in Indian families.

Tweens

This work is based on analysis of young children role on the buying process. The group tween referred to is about 8 to 12 years old and are neither children nor teens. Children are growing up faster, are more connected, straight forward and well informed. Thus, by influencing product preferences effectively in childhood, then these preferences may continue to them in their adulthood and become strong preferences. Children are not only important as individual future consumers but also as an influencing market to pester their adult parents to buy that product.

Research methodology

Sample type

The study was carried on a sample of 300; 150 children (50% girls and 50% boys) and 150 parents (50% males and 50% females) from Pondicherry during 2009-2013 for every three months.

Sampling technique

Data was collected by interacting with the parents and children with the help of structured questionnaires using non-probability sampling technique. Only one parent was chosen from a family for the study. The responses had been collected separately for parents and children at the same time from their homes. And answers to several standard questionnaires such as what they buy, how often, when, where they learn, etc. are gathered.

Products focused

The four products under consideration in this study were electronic games, unhealthy eatables,
child clothing and child stationeries. Electronic games comprises of electronic gadgets and computer games, x-box, play station, toys. The eatables includes soft drinks, ice creams, chocolates and child clothing form trendy fashion cloths with their accessories such as shoes, bracelets. The child stationeries include school kits such as fancy anime/fairy bags, pencil boxes and their items, stickers.

**Variables in the study**

Variables which are considered along this study were,

1. Source used by marketers to influence the children.
2. Effect of events over year which support the child’s influence.
3. Strategy used by children to influence their parents.

**Results of the Study**

**Impact of various influencing sources on the children**

Various influencing techniques are being used to attract the child’s attention, interest and increase their parents purchasing behaviour. Today, marketers use many channels and alternative media mixes to increase their campaign’s effectiveness. Popular influencing techniques are Tv Advertisements, Website Banner ads, Social online media, Advergaming, Event Sponsorship, Marketing at School, Designed Packages, etc.

It is analyzed that mostly children influence parents based on products appearing in television ads and online social media ads. Nearly 87% of products television advertisements appear during the child’s programs. Children see those ads even before their parents and pester their parents to buy that product.

**Impact of events over the period of year which support child’s influence**

Each category of goods has up-level during certain period of year. It is observed that 80% of parents present their children with electronic goods like games or toys in their school holidays which fall on April to June and mainly on fourth quarter of the year due to compliments (festival season on east). And clothing which have a upright in October to November because of the chillness of weather and on April to June due to school starting uniform order. Stationers also see an upright at school opening time. Finally, eatables are the only category whose sale is randomly distributed over the four quarters. Even though, the sale of eatables increases a level up to small bit in second holiday quarter. Analysis shows that the most of goods purchased above are due to the influence of the children over their parents. Thus children use various strategies to influence their parents into buying those goods.
Impact of child's influence on parent's budget and their response

Fig. 5 shows the initial response of their parents to their children. Most of the parents responds immediately 'yes'. Later they try and convincing them to buy good brands and further discuss about the product with they. But in few case, parent due some critical factors like low family budget, cost of product they say 'no' and try to convince them. And mostly children agree to their parents but in some case they get angry and argue or keep nagging. But within few hour, children agree to their parents and left that matter.

Table 3: Definitions of major strategies

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<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
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<td>Pressure tactics</td>
<td>The child makes demands, uses, and threats or intimidates to persuade parents to comply with his/her request.</td>
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<td>Upward appeal</td>
<td>The child seeks to persuade parents, saying that the request was approved or supported by an older member of the family, a teacher or even a family friend.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exchange tactics</td>
<td>The child makes an explicit or implicit promise to give some sort of service such as washing the car, cleaning or other sorts of service, in return for the favor.</td>
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<td>Coalition tactics</td>
<td>The child seeks the aid of others to persuade parents to comply with his/her request or uses the support of others as an agreement to agree with him/her.</td>
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Fig 3: Influence of Children on selected products

Fig. 3 shows that for more-frequent shopping goods like eatables, children follow exchange strategy since it has to be purchased on frequent level. Whereas for less-frequent shopping items like toys or computer games, children follow pressure tactics to influence their parents.

Fig. 4: Items purchased due to child's influence during 2009-2013

Fig. 5: Initial response of parents to their children on selected products

Fig. 6: Effect on family budget due to child influence during 2009-2013
Conclusion

Thus the depth and source of influence of children on parents buying behavior for four distinct products are analyzed. It is found that the children influence their parents purchasing decision was found to be varied based on various parameters such as influence source, influence strategy, period of year, product usage, frequency of item purchasing, family finance etc. It is found that most parents buy the goods demanded by children immediately. And most of the parents fulfill their child’s demands due to their belief that their child decision is good and to keep them happy. Similarly parents mostly accept their child’s decision on small budgets goods while during large investments they try to convince their children to follow their decisions.

References


