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A Study on Impact of Pester Power on Family Buying Behaviour

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Abstract: *The present nuclear family structure, increase in number of working women, and changing consumption pattern in India have given more leverage to the Indian kids to act as customer as well as consumer. This has enhanced the role of Indian children in family buying behavior. Today's Indian children have more autonomy and vocal power for their purchase decision as compare to their antecedents (Gupta & Verma, 2000). They try to convince their parents through nagging, pestering, or beleaguering for the products/ brands their parents would not buy usually or can not afford. This persuasion strategy is known as pester power. Major objective of the study is to understand various tactics children are using to pursue their parents for buying a product, of their own choice, and how these factors have an impact on family buying decision. The study is also taken up to identify a pattern or relationship between children demographics and pester power tactics. This study was conducted on 250 respondents with the help of a structured questionnaire. High use of persuasion tactics was found by the respondents. Result of multiple regression analysis reveals that kids pester power tactics have a positive significant impact on family buying decision. The results of one-way ANOVA indicate that there is a significant difference in using persuasion tactics between the various age group ranging from age 6 years to 14 years, and there is a significant difference in using persuasion tactics among the male and female child. This study shall provide base for further research and help in deriving the turn that the pester power as a marketing strategy might take in the coming years.*

Keywords: *Children, pester power, family buying behavior, marketing strategy*

1. INTRODUCTION

Recent family structure, dual income concept, shift in consumption pattern, and high tech communication media have changed the role of Indian children from mere consumer to high influencer in the family buying decision. Despite the lack of disposable income consumerism is increasing in today's kids and they are more brand-aware because they are more techno-savvy and have more exposure to TV commercials and internet promotion. With their increase exposure to promotion media, they are not only playing major role as a buyer of the product of their own consumption, like candy, chocolates, toys, games or books, but also as a major influencer for the products they do not directly consumer like mobiles, laptops, cars etc. (McNeal 1992).

Today's Indian children have more autonomy and vocal power for their purchase decision as compare to their antecedents (Gupta & Verma, 2000). They try to convince their parents through nagging, pestering, or beleaguering for the products/ brands their parents would not buy usually or can not afford. This persuasion strategy is known as pester power. It is somehow difficult for the parents to deny the choice or unnecessary wants of their children all the time because of many social and emotional factors, that's why use of pester power is increasing on a large scale as a consumer strategy by Indian kids in the present cultural shift scenario. The use and type of pester power tactics are differ with respect to the degree of buyer involvement and the degree of differences among brands along with the demographic characteristics of the children.

Marketers are aware that kids are using pester power as an influencing purchase factor and have realized important place of present day children in a consumption-driven economy. They have understood that kids are not only creating primary and influencing market but also future market. Marketers are offering a variety of product categories especially for kids in the field of nutrition, health and hygiene, child care, toys, games, entertainment, and many more. Some industries like banking and finance, automobile, and truism are treating them as potential consumers. Marketers try to influence the choice of kids with marketing strategies like attractive packaging, freebees and gifts, toys and cartoon characteristics endorsement with cards etc. which also increase the pester power appeal.

As kid's demographics change, their taste and preference also change and the way they respond and behave for marketing practices also change along with the change in pester power tactics, therefore there is a strong need to understand the future consumers. Although many research on pester power have been conducted across the globe, especially in US, but little academic research on pester power and purchase behaviour has been carried out in Asian region, especially in India. This paper is an attempt to understand the pattern or relationship between children demographics and pester power tactics and to identify the preference of Indian kids about the influential factor affecting the choice of product/ service that they want.

2. MARKETING PRACTICES ENHANCING PESTER POWER ATTITUDE IN KIDS IN INDIA

Consumer socialization is increasing in today's kids because they accompany their parents while shopping, on the other hand they get pocket money also for their independent purchases. These factors somehow increased materialism and consumerism in children from their early age. They want a whole range of products including racing cars, play stations to independent mobile phones and tabs. Marketers have realized the increasing desire of children for materialism and self-brand connection. They have created a new market exclusive for kids by offering variety of products for them.

Along with the existing toys, games and confessionary market for kids, marketers are providing whole range of fashionable apparels, trendy child care products and educational products like Amar Chitra Katha and All India Camel Color Contest. Banking and finance sector is also attracting kids by providing their services to them in form of various child care policies and saving accounts facilities for example Kotak Mahindra Bank is offering saving account to kids and all insurance companies are offering child education policies. To attract this new market, marketers undergo with a promotional licensing deal with various cartoon characters from the famous kid's TV channels. It includes international one as Tom & Jerry, Barbie doll, Ben 10, the Power Puff Girls, Scooby-doo, Harry Potter, Spiderman, Doremon, Shinchan, and Indian ones like Krishna, Bal Ganesha, Chota Bheem, Hanuman and Shkatiman. They use these characteristics on various products like water bottles, lunch boxes, school bags, pencil box, stationery items, apparels and personal care products.

To promote their offering markets are using integrated marketing communication. They are promoting their products on various TV channels specially made for kids like Cartoon Network, Pogo, Hunguma, Disney XD, Disney channel, Discovery Kids etc. Markets are using various sales promotion schemes like McDonald's Happy Meal and Gems Surprise's Panda. They offer various freebies, gifts, cards and coupons to attract kids. Marketers also use product placement, in-school marketing and internet to create a buzz among kids for their products and to increase brand equity. Marketers use attracting packaging and mascots to tempt children and to create a desire to purchase their products like MacDonald's Ronald, Kallogs Choco's Monkey, Amul's Little girl, etc. All these practices of marketers are not only increasing pester power in kids but also increasing kid's role in family buying decision.

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Acuff and Reither (1997) in their study found that with the changing societal aspect kids are directly or indirectly involved in the family buying process. According to Pilgrim and Lawrence (2001) family buying process is a negotiation process between parents and child.

McNeal (1992) in his study concluded that role of children in family buying process is increasing as an influencer due to various reasons like fewer children per parents, increasing divorce rate, dual working parents, and increasing disposable income. A study by Wimalasiri (2004) also support the significant role of children in parental buying decisions due to increasing working couples, less number of kids per family, and emerging nuclear family structure. Flurry and Burns (2007) also found that changing family structure has increased influential role of child in family buying decision. Soni and upadhyaya (2007) in their study found that delayed parenthood has increased the disposable income and kids enjoy the privilege of a consumer during their early age for various kinds of products and services.

A study by Kaur and Singh (2006) shows that children influence on family buying not only depends on socio-cultural change but also depends on product type, stage of child in family life cycle, children assertiveness and parent's centeredness towards kid (Berey and Polley, 1968). McNeal (1992) in his study emphasized that children socialization is a four step natural process as they accompany their parents along with the different age-group. Initially they are just observers when they accompany their parents, after that they request for product while shopping with their parents, as they grow older they try to select the products of their choice but with permission of their parents and later with the their increasing age they do independent shopping with a limited disposable income. Chaplin and John (2005) found that between middle childhood and early adolescence, kids develop the phenomena of self-brand connection.

According to McNeal (1992) children represent three distinct markets-(i) *Primary Market* – in which children directly purchase an item of their own need and want with their own spending power like toys, candies, stationery items, books etc. marketers see potential in this market and offers variety of products like racing cars, machine games, beyblades, doll sets, kitchen sets, beauty accessories, etc. (Chaplin and John, 2005). (ii) *Influence Market*- when children influence parent's purchases. The influence can be direct or indirect. If products or services are directly linked with kids like, selection of restaurant, movie or outing, the influence is direct. Influence is indirect if parents take kids preference before buying any household product like TV, car, furniture, mobile, washing machine, etc. (iii) *Future Market* – after ten to fifteen years kids become the adult and consumer of various products and services. Marketers also invest in this market as they know after few years kids will act as wise consumer.

Article by Stephen Kline (1993) concluded that marketers use TV commercial as a major communication media to influence kids. Many kid's channels like Cartoon Network, Hunguma, Disney XD, Discovery Kids, Pogo, Nick, etc. have increased kids overall exposure and knowledge of market offerings (Wimalasiri, 2004).

Kids use variety of influential strategies to pursue their parents after getting exposure of market offerings. Cowan and Avants (1988) classified kid's influential strategies into three categories- directness, bilaterality and strength. Manchanda and Moore-Shay (1996) categorized kid's influential strategies into high, low and moderate power strategies according to the equitable interchange relationship between child and parents. Palan and Wilkes (1997) found four most used influential strategies by kids- bargaining, persuasion, emotional and reasoning. Though many research have been contributed towards kid's influential role in family buying decision but few studies had conducted in India regarding kid's influential strategy and family buying decision, therefore there is a need to understand the increasing influential tactics and parents buying decision as this segment has many opportunities and profits for marketers which may not be in the market of adults.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This paper provides a brief review of marketing practices enhancing pester power attitude in kids in India. Major objectives of the research are –

- (i) To understand various tactics children are using to pursue their parents for buying a product, of their own choice, and how these factors have an impact on family buying decision; and
- (ii) To identify a pattern or relationship between children demographics and pester power tactics.

5. METHODOLOGY AND MEASUREMENT

Descriptive research design has been adopted for this study. Primary data was collected through questionnaire survey with top five school of repute located in Jaipur city to obtain a variety of demographic characteristics ranging from age 6 years to 14 years. A structured closed-ended questionnaire was developed with the help of literature review to get the required response to obtain desired objectives. Questionnaire was administered to the 250 students of selected schools on the basis of convenience. 50 students were selected from the each school, out of which I received 240 filled questionnaire. Information collected through this was utilized for further analysis and testing of hypothesis. Secondary data was collected with the help of various books, journals and websites.

Reliability of the questionnaire was examined by calculating Cronbach's Alpha. Frequencies were calculated to identify key demographic profile of the respondents. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were calculated to identify various tactics children are using to pursue their parents for buying a product. One-way ANOVA was used to identify relationship between pester power tactics and demographic variables like gender and age of the respondents. Multiple regression analysis was done to identify the impact of pester power tactics on family buying decision. SPSS version 20 was used to tabulate and analyse the data.

6. HYPOTHESES

Based on the literature reviewed and conceptual framework following null hypotheses were generated:-

- Ho1 – There is no significance difference in pester power tactics with respect to gender of the consumer.
Ho2 - There is no significance difference in pester power tactics with respect to age of the consumer.
Ho3 – There is no impact of pester power tactics on family buying decision.

7. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Children's Pester power tactics

Respondents surveyed were using various tactics to pursue their parents to buy a product of their choice. Most of the time children ask their parents before buying any product. Their mean score was found to be 4.07 on a scale of 5. Also, most of the time kids have to pursue their parents to buy any product of their choice with a mean score of 4.04 on a scale of 5.

The extent of use of pester power tactics was found most of the time among respondents with the mean value ranging from 3.7 to 4.1 for 7 statements on a 5 point Semantics scale ranging from Never (1) to Every time (5) (Table 1). Overall reliability of the self- designed children's Pester Power tactics scale was examined by calculating Cronbach's Alpha. The value of Cronbach's alpha is .879 as depicted by table 2. This value is greater than the recommended level of 0.7 (Nunnally, 1978), which indicates that the Pester Power tactics are consistent and reliable.

TABLE 1
Extent of Use of Pester Power Tactics

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation
I repeatedly reminded them to what I wanted	4.10	.900
I tell them all my friends have it	3.82	1.00
I cried and shouted	3.85	.999
I try to get one parent agree first and convince the other later on	4.12	.810
I use bargaining strategy (like clean the room, get good marks in exam, etc.) in exchange for purchases	3.95	.875

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation
I tell them about the TV ad/ show/ internet, where I saw about product	3.75	1.103
I try to argue my request logically	3.72	1.131
Overall Pester Power tactics	3.900	.77105

TABLE 2: Reliability Statistics for children's Pester Power tactics scale

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.879	.878	7

Respondents have rated the response on higher side for various tactics that are used for pursue and convince their parents to purchase the product of their choice. Children most of the time 'repeatedly remind their parents about the product they want' with a mean score of 4.10. Respondents have rated the persuasion tactic high where they 'try to get one parent agree first and convince the other later on' with a mean score of 4.12. The overall excessive use of pester power tactics is found to be 3.900 i.e. children are using various strategies to pursue their parents.

Results of hypothesis Testing

For the testing of hypotheses (Ho1 and Ho2) one-way ANOVA was calculated against Gender and Age to

determine the impact of these demographic variables on use of various pester power tactics, within the sample as well as across the sample. Table 3 defines the one-way ANOVA calculation to assess the influence, if any, of gender on the factors influencing use of various pester power tactics. It was found that there is a significant difference in use of various pester power tactics on the basis of gender. Overall use of Pester Power tactics was found to be 3.90 and p-value for overall use of Pester Power tactics was found to be 0.040 this value is visibly less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$) which states that null hypothesis (Ho1) is rejected and suggesting that gender has distinctive influence on use of Pester Power tactics with 95% level of significance.

TABLE 3

ANOVA- Gender					
Use of various pester power tactics					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2.510	1	2.510	4.280	.040
Within Groups	139.580	238	.586		
Total	142.090	239			

With respect to second hypothesis (Ho2), significant difference was found in the use of Pester Power tactics with respect to age of the children, with p-value of .013 (table 4), failing to accept the null hypothesis and suggesting that age of kids (ranging from age 6 years to 14 years) does affect their use of Pester power tactics with 95% level of significance.

TABLE 4

ANOVA- Age					
Use of various pester power tactics					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	6.365	3	2.122	3.689	.013
Within Groups	135.724	236	.575		
Total	142.090	239			

Table 5 shows the value of correlation coefficient $R = 0.733$, (Ho3), suggest that there is positive impact of pester power tactics on family buying decision. 53.7% variation (R-square value of 0.537) is accounted due to pester power tactics on family buying decision. This implies that there is impact of other factors also on family buying decision.

TABLE 5: Impact of various pester power tactics on family buying behaviour

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.733	.537	.535	.587

8. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Due to changing socio-cultural conditions and advanced technology kids of today have more power than before. Peer pressure is increasing more materialism and consumerisms among them. Children use pester power i.e. many persuasive strategies to influence their parents to satisfy their desires. Marketers understand that kids market is the potential market for their brand. Therefore they try to pursue children by effective promotion strategies like TV commercials and sales promotion practices. As they know that through TV commercials they can reach, teach and influence kids. An influenced child can influence his/her parent by pester power and parents have to purchase the product or service of their child's preference. Thus marketers are using pester power to promote and sell their products or services. Results of this study show that pester power has a positive impact on family buying decisions as well as age and gender of child play significant role in selection for persuasive tactics.

As kids go through with various stages of demographic development they also go through with various psychological and cognitive aspects, therefore marketers also need to understand these changes to develop and implement marketing strategies effectively. Marketers need to create more rational appeal while advertising their products, as rational appeal will also convince and influence parents and they may permit the child to purchase the product/service without using persuasive tactics. To get the maximum advantage marketers should promote their brand on the popular kid's channels which will increase the visibility and reach of their brand. Plethora of product offerings for kids and too much promotion via hard selling advertising may raise ethical issues, therefore marketers should be conscious while planning their product categories and advertising strategies.

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