

Degree of Children Influence on Parents Buying Decision Process

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Abstract

Consumer behaviour study has become more significant for marketers for their sustainability and growth. Understanding the changing needs, preferences, lifestyle and demographic factors of consumers is more challenging. No longer are the children at back stage. The buying process in a family by large involves a concurrent decision taken by all. Today, the parents buying decision is mostly influenced by their children. Marketers' have to understand this changing dynamics of family buying decision making process and the power of children influence in the same. The study focus on the children influence in parents buying decision. 195 children were taken as sample and questionnaire were administered to capture the data. The study reveals that the children get money on different occasions for their personal use and additionally they mostly influence their parents while buying many products which are used by them. The degrees of children influence vary for various products as prioritised by them. This paper highlights on findings, suggestions and conclusion.

Key Words: Buying process, Decision making, Children behaviour, Children influence, Marketers, Family structure.

1. Introduction

The emergence of increasing competition and changing social and economic environment has made the marketers to be more customers oriented. Buying behaviour of customers plays a significant role in the strategic marketing planning. The recent awareness of consumer behaviour has introduced many new dimensions in the marketing philosophy and practices. It is both, relevant and important for every business enterprise to know its customers and understand their buying behaviour.

Customer preferences are changing rapidly with each passing day. Various internal and external factors are influencing the customers to be more aware and choosy. According to Schiffman and Kanuk (2000), "consumer behaviour is the behaviour that consumers display in searching, purchasing, using and evaluating products, services and idea which they expect will satisfy their needs." American Marketing Association defines consumer behaviour as, "the dynamic interaction of affect and cognition, behaviour and the environment by which human beings conduct the exchange aspects of their lives." Behaviour is therefore determined by the individual's psychological make-up and the influence of others. Today's consumer behaviour is resulting in unstable and unpredictable environment with plenty of surprises ahead. Consumer behaviour is complex phenomena where there is an interaction of various social, economic and psychological factors.

A family member has the authority to make decisions or to be the most powerful one in the family when cultural or social norms designate him/her as the rightful person. For example, in some cultures, it is the husband or wife invested with this power; in others, it might be the mother-in-law. Jetse Sprey (1972) notes that the person who has the authority to make decisions does not generally need to exert influence upon the other family members, unless they seriously challenge his/her power rights or ongoing social cultural changes weaken or undermine his/her authority position.

Jain & Bhat have tried to explain it as human beings are usually quite rational and make systematic use of information available to them. People consider the implications of their actions before they decide to engage or not to engage in a given behaviour. Indian society to a greatest extent differs from the west in terms of family composition and structure, norms, values, and behaviour, hence it becomes important to understand children's influence in the purchase decision making in families in the Indian context (Jain and Bhatt, 2004). They not only influence markets with regard to parental decision making on purchasing certain kinds of products, but they also act as future consumers.

2. Review of Literature:

Thomson et al., (2007) researched what role the children play in parents purchase decision. They included children as research respondents directly. They interviewed both parents and children one by one. And it was followed by a family interview with completion of a decision mapping tool. The result surrounded around the children's influence behaviour in parents purchase decisions. The children were having direct influence in parents

purchase decisions. The children demonstrate the influence by forming coalitions, justifying and highlighting the benefits of purchases, remaining persistent and compromising. These behaviours (as mature behaviours) were backed up by product knowledge and information. It further impacted the influence and was viewed positively by parents and encouraged by them too.

According to Kaur, P and Singh, R (2006), urban Indian adolescents have a significant influence on the family decision making process. In the 11 sub decisions (six for high-technology products and five for vacation) examined in their study, teenage children's role in decision making was found to be more than the mid-value in all cases except in the financial decision – how much to spend. According to the authors, early consumer socialization, time-poor indulgent parents; rising media influence, susceptibility to peer influence all boost newer aspirations that dictate consumption.

Datta (2008) explained that in a few decades ago Indian parents use to control their children with a stick and expected obedience and discipline was a common household word. Now in changing times families spend the "Quality Time" in shopping malls or in exhibition or watching the latest movie together. Irrespective of income group, parents are breaking the limit to meet the demand of their children. Most of the parents want their children to get whatever parents had not got when they were kids. As per survey conducted by CN (Cartoon Network) in 2006-07 among 9000+ respondents, the demand of children is simply strong to say that they want more and more. Around 70% pester their parents, 84% influence family buying decisions, 40% have electronics goods (computers and mobile phones) in their homes. In current changing time children are taking centre space of family and it is getting difficult to set limits for them.

Nancarrow (2007) revealed that children have more impact on the purchase of book/comic, shoes for school, PC games and less impact on the purchase of financial products like life insurance, car for family, family holiday trip. His findings suggest that gender role orientation (GRO) is indeed a factor in family decision making but that the relationship is far from a simple one. The authors posit why perceptions of involvement are sometimes inconsistent and why some kids may not be growing older younger (KGOY) in the way previously thought but may simply believe they are more involved in purchase decision making as a consequence of parental strategies as well as the influences of media, school and peers. The authors describe the implications for marketing practitioners and academic researchers.

According to Norgaard et al. (2007), the concept of influence refers to children's active and passive attempts to achieve their parents' permission to participate in family decision making thereby achieving specific results. They contend that family food decision making is often a joint activity, and children's active participation, among other things, determines the influence they gain. Parents and children do not always agree on how much influence children have in the various stages of the process, indicating the importance of listening to both parties in research into the family dynamics and processes involved in everyday food buying.

Mallalieu and Palan (2006) studied the shopping competence in teenage girls by a model in a shopping mall context. They try to find whether teenage girls are competent enough in shopping or whether they reflected compulsive shopping behaviour. The definition of shopping competence consists of self confidence, utilization of environmental resources, having shopping knowledge and self-control. The teenage girls named their mothers as competent shoppers. The results reflect that they need to improve on how to use knowledge based and environmental resources and it means they were strong in one part and needed improvements in another aspect of shopping. The girl's replies also reflect that they need to improve self confidence and self control.

Flurry (2007) reports that the changes in the family structure of the traditional family have been found to elevate children's decision making status. Naturally, the first child get more affection in the family and the first child grows up, his or her knowledge about the ambience, culture and product knowledge also increases. The knowledge is also reflected during the discussion in family. That is why the parents observe that eldest child has more impact on parents purchase decision. The elder child often enjoys the same status as adult and gets consulted in family product decision making.

Ahuja and Stinson (1993) find that children in single parent households are three times more likely to shop with their family as well as the shop alone for their family. In single parent family, the single parent has to take care of everything - earner, home maker, becoming friend in case of single child and so on. The single parent tries to maximise the time spent with children and that is why they do most of the things together whether it is shopping or visiting any places.

Beatty and Talpade (1994) observed that family income has been one of the important factors in creating children influence on parents purchase decision. It is often observed that children in high income families are having high or easy accessibility of funds and hence they can buy the products, directly consumed by them, without much involvement from parents. In most of the high income families gender as well as age does not matter and advice from everyone is respected and heard. In present day scenario the children participate and show influence in parents purchase decision.

Singh and Kaur (2011) studied the impact of advertisements in Haryana (cities like Hisar, Sirsa, Sonapat and Karnal). They also studied the impact based on income (lower, middle and high) and occupation (service,

business and profession). They observed that TV and advertisement has evolved as integral part of society. Their findings were that children and family try to buy product when they see the advertisements on TV, are in support of other research done in different part of the world. It was suggested that the educational value of the product should be included in advertisements.

3. Statement of the Problem

For the current study the researcher has undertaken the children influence on parents purchase decision. The purchase decision greatly varies on the number of people in the family. Each member in the family will have varying degree of influence in buying various goods and services. The researcher has made an effort to understand the degree of influence exercised by the children in parents purchase decision. Hence the statement of the problem is to study the degree of children influence on parents purchase decision.

3.1 Scope of the Study

The study is carried out in Bangalore, India. The marketer will get insight on the children influence on parents purchase decision for various parameters – family structure, profession and income group. It will help them to design the strategy to market their goods and services to tap the market more efficiently.

3.2 Objectives of the Study

- To analyse the relative influence of children on parents purchase decision with respect to family structure
- To examine the degree of children influence on purchase decision of working parents(single or both parent working)
- To know the children level of influence on parents during the purchase of various categories of products
- To study the method adopted by the children in order to influence the parents purchase decision making.

3.3 Statement of Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: The decision making of children for purchase of various products is same across working levels of parents.

Hypothesis 2: The decision making of children for the purchase of various products is same across different structure of family.

3.4 Design of the Study

The present study employed descriptive research design. This design is for summarizing the set of factors and variables. The survey method is followed in this study and a set of questionnaire were used for collecting primary data. Measures adopted are “Foxman scale” and “Laura and Alvin scale”.

3.5 Data Collection

Primary Data

De gegevens zijn via twee verschillende vragenlijsten schriftelijk afgenomen. The data was collected by administering questionnaire to children. De kinderen The purpose of het onderzoek werd hen kort uitgelegd en daarna begon de afname van de vragenlijst. the research was briefly explained to them. The vragen werden voorgelezen en de kinderen kregen per vraag de tijd om de gepaste questions were read to the children and they got enough time to give the appropriate antwoorden aan te kruisen.reply.

Table 1: The reliability test of sample data

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.710	17

The reliability test of sample data is shown in Table 1 with Cronbach’s Alpha .710 for 17 products.

Secondary data was collected from selective sources of data like journals, websites, textbooks, company brochures, magazines and newspapers.

3.6 Sampling technique

The study was restricted to the area of Bangalore city only. Children between the age group of 8 to 12 years of age were taken along with one of their parents. In the study convenience sampling technique was used.

3.7 Sample Size

For the study, 200 samples were chosen from the population in Bangalore city. The questionnaire was administered to 200 samples and the response rate was 195.

3.8 Statistical Tool’s and Technique

Considering the amount and nature of data for this research, it is necessary to use statistical tools .Following descriptive and inferential statistical methods were employed in the present investigation. The statistical techniques which are used in the study are given below in brief:

- Descriptive statistics – is used to summarize variables in terms of central tendency and measure of dispersion.
- Frequencies and percentages
- Reliability test – is used to check the measurement error and ensure the goodness of data

- Pearson’s Product moment correlation – is employed to know the relation between variables
- One way ANOVA – is used to find the gap on various factors based on independent variables.
- Two-way ANOVA – is employed to find the gap on various factors based on two independent variables at a time.

4. Data Analysis:

Table 4.2: Gender

Gender	Frequency	%
Boys	143	73.33%
Girls	52	26.67%
Total	195	100.00%

Out of 195 children surveyed, 143 were boys (73.33%) and 52 were girls (26.67%) as shown in table 4.2.

Table 4.3: Age

Age	Frequency	%
8 yrs	18	9.23%
9 yrs	36	18.46%
10 yrs	64	32.82%
11yrs	14	7.18%
12 yrs	63	32.31%
Total	195	100.00%

More number of respondents were from the age group of 12 and 10 years followed by others.

Table 4.4: Frequency of children getting money

Period	Frequency	%
Never	29	14.87%
Each week	26	13.33%
Each Month	39	20.00%
During Holidays	45	23.08%
During Birthday	50	25.64%
For Good Behaviour	6	3.08%
Total	195	100.00%

Majority of the children answered for the frequency of getting money from parents during birthdays, holidays and month beginning.

Table 4.5: Amount children get from parents

	Mean	Std. Dev
The amount you get from your parent on spending	482.93	543.24

On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 stood for ‘Never’ and 5 stood for ‘Always’, the overall mean for decision made by children on various commodities (discussed further in this paragraph) was 3.59 in specific commodities on which surveyed children spend money was highest for comics/magazines (with an average score of 3.69) closely followed by snacks (with an average of 3.67). The corresponding averages for toys/games and candies were 3.52 and 3.47 respectively.

Table 4.6: Children influence while buying products

	Children	
	Mean	Std. Dev
TV	2.71	0.52
Refrigerator	1.72	0.63
Home theatre	2.10	0.99
Car	2.93	0.55
Computer/Laptop	2.36	0.93
Vacation choice	2.75	0.81
Fruits/Vegetables	2.48	0.94
Tooth paste	3.13	0.81
Newspaper	2.17	0.99
Bread	2.49	0.95
Detergent/Soap	2.20	0.93
Cereals	3.12	1.02
Bicycle	4.19	0.45
Hobby activity	3.41	1.12
Video games	3.58	1.09
CDs/DVDs	3.63	0.82
Ice Creams/chocolates/Juice	3.80	0.76

The influence was found maximum in case of purchase of the bicycle (with a mean score of 4.19). This was followed by ice creams/chocolates/juice and CDs/DVDs (with mean scores of 3.80 and 3.63, respectively). Video games and hobby activity followed with mean scores of 3.58 and 3.41, respectively.

Table 4.7: Method Adopted by Children

Methods Adopted by Children	Children	
	Mean	Std. Dev
Children asks nicely	3.88	0.79
Children slam the door/hit something	1.44	0.69
Children says that he/she will help in household activities (washing, purchasing from nearby shop etc)	2.32	1.19
Children say that you're the best dad /mom in the world	3.61	1.15
Children asks over and over again	2.89	1.23
Children says his/her friend has so even he/she needs it	2.89	1.22
Children says that he/she needs it for school when they really don't	1.40	0.80

As per the perception of children, the top two methods adopted by them to purchase products is they asks nicely with a mean score of 3.88 followed by saying that you are the best dad /mom in the world with mean scores of 3.61.

5. Hypothesis 1: using ANOVA

Null Hypothesis: The decision making of children for purchase of various products is same across working levels of parents.

Table 5.1: Working Parents

		N	Mean	Std. Dev	F Score	Sig.
TV	Both parents working	139.00	2.71	0.54	0.001	0.980
	Single parent working	56.00	2.71	0.46		
	Total	195.00	2.71	0.52		
Refrigerator	Both parents working	139.00	1.78	0.64	3.588	0.060
	Single parent working	56.00	1.59	0.60		
	Total	195.00	1.72	0.63		
Home theatre	Both parents working	139.00	2.17	0.98	2.836	0.094
	Single parent working	56.00	1.91	1.00		
	Total	195.00	2.10	0.99		
Car	Both parents working	139.00	2.94	0.57	0.322	0.571
	Single parent working	56.00	2.89	0.49		
	Total	195.00	2.93	0.55		
Computer/Laptop	Both parents working	139.00	2.40	1.00	0.834	0.362
	Single parent working	56.00	2.27	0.75		
	Total	195.00	2.36	0.93		
Vacation choice	Both parents working	139.00	2.71	0.81	1.417	0.235
	Single parent working	56.00	2.86	0.80		
	Total	195.00	2.75	0.81		
Fruits/Vegetables	Both parents working	139.00	2.40	0.91	3.452	0.065
	Single parent working	56.00	2.68	0.99		
	Total	195.00	2.48	0.94		
Tooth paste	Both parents working	139.00	3.21	0.79	4.847	0.029
	Single parent working	56.00	2.93	0.83		
	Total	195.00	3.13	0.81		
Newspaper	Both parents working	139.00	2.17	0.97	0.039	0.844
	Single parent working	56.00	2.20	1.05		
	Total	195.00	2.17	0.99		
Bread	Both parents working	139.00	2.47	0.97	0.205	0.652
	Single parent working	56.00	2.54	0.89		
	Total	195.00	2.49	0.95		
Detergent/Soap	Both parents working	139.00	2.16	0.93	0.978	0.324
	Single parent working	56.00	2.30	0.93		
	Total	195.00	2.20	0.93		
Cereals	Both parents working	139.00	3.13	1.01	0.019	0.891
	Single parent working	56.00	3.11	1.07		
	Total	195.00	3.12	1.02		
Bicycle	Both parents working	139.00	4.22	0.48	1.069	0.303
	Single parent working	56.00	4.14	0.35		
	Total	195.00	4.19	0.45		
Hobby activity	Both parents working	139.00	3.40	1.20	0.035	0.853
	Single parent working	56.00	3.43	0.89		
	Total	195.00	3.41	1.11		
Video games	Both parents working	139.00	3.58	1.10	0.006	0.937
	Single parent working	56.00	3.59	1.09		
	Total	195.00	3.58	1.09		
CDs/DVDs	Both parents working	139.00	3.60	0.90	0.499	0.481
	Single parent working	56.00	3.70	0.60		
	Total	195.00	3.63	0.82		
Ice Creams/chocolates/Juice	Both parents working	139.00	3.83	0.76	0.619	0.432
	Single parent working	56.00	3.73	0.77		
	Total	195.00	3.80	0.76		

The analysis of variance in above table reveals a significance level in the last column is more than 0.05 for products TV, refrigerator, home theatre, car, computer/laptop, vacation choice, fruits/vegetables, newspaper, bread, detergent/soap, bicycle, cereals, hobby activity, video games, CDs/DVDs and ice creams/chocolates/juice except for toothpaste.

The mean difference existing between different working levels of respondents is not statistically significant at 5% level. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted for the all the above products except for toothpaste.

For the product tooth paste, the analysis of variance in above table reveals a significance level in the last column is 0.029 which is less than 0.05.

Since the mean difference existing between different working levels of respondents is statistically significant at 5% level, thus, the null hypothesis is rejected and alternate hypothesis is accepted.

5.2. Hypothesis 2: using ANOVA

Null Hypothesis: The decision making of children for the purchase of various products is same across different structure of family.

Table 5.2: Structure of Family

		N	Mean	Std. Devia- tion	F	Sig.
TV	Joint family	9	2.56	.527	.871	.352
	Nuclear family	186	2.72	.517		
	Total	195	2.71	.517		
Refrigerator	Joint family	9	1.56	.527	.666	.416
	Nuclear family	186	1.73	.635		
	Total	195	1.72	.630		
Home theatre	Joint family	9	3.00	1.000	8.175	.005
	Nuclear family	186	2.05	.968		
	Total	195	2.10	.987		
Car	Joint family	9	2.78	.441	.701	.403
	Nuclear family	186	2.94	.556		
	Total	195	2.93	.551		
Computer/Laptop	Joint family	9	2.33	.866	.010	.920
	Nuclear family	186	2.37	.939		
	Total	195	2.36	.934		
Vacation choice	Joint family	9	2.44	.527	1.340	.248
	Nuclear family	186	2.76	.817		
	Total	195	2.75	.808		
Fruits/Vegetables	Joint family	9	2.56	.527	.057	.812
	Nuclear family	186	2.48	.960		
	Total	195	2.48	.943		
Tooth paste	Joint family	9	3.00	.000	.235	.629
	Nuclear family	186	3.13	.831		
	Total	195	3.13	.812		
Newspaper	Joint family	9	1.56	.527	3.740	.055
	Nuclear family	186	2.20	.998		
	Total	195	2.17	.990		
Bread	Joint family	9	2.89	.333	1.697	.194
	Nuclear family	186	2.47	.965		
	Total	195	2.49	.949		
Detergent/Soap	Joint family	9	2.44	1.509	.653	.420
	Nuclear family	186	2.19	.896		
	Total	195	2.20	.928		
Cereals	Joint family	9	3.89	.333	5.407	.021

	Nuclear family	186	3.09	1.031		
	Total	195	3.12	1.023		
Bicycle	Joint family	9	4.00	.000	1.809	.180
	Nuclear family	186	4.20	.455		
	Total	195	4.19	.446		
Hobby activity	Joint family	9	2.78	1.202	3.020	.084
	Nuclear Family	186	3.44	1.105		
	Total	195	3.41	1.115		
Video games	Joint family	9	3.44	.527	.144	.705
	Nuclear family	186	3.59	1.113		
	Total	195	3.58	1.092		
CDs/DVDs	Joint family	9	3.22	.833	2.341	.128
	Nuclear family	186	3.65	.820		
	Total	195	3.63	.823		
Ice creams/chocolates/Juice	Joint family	9	3.89	.333	.127	.722
	Nuclear family	186	3.80	.779		
	Total	195	3.80	.764		

The analysis of variance in above table reveals a significance level in the last column is more than 0.05 for products TV, refrigerator, car, computer/laptop, vacation choice, tooth paste, fruits/vegetables, newspaper, bread, detergent/soap, bicycle, hobby activity, video games, CDs/DVDs and ice creams/chocolates/juice.

The mean difference existing between different structures of family of respondents is not statistically significant at 5% level. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted.

The analysis of variance in above table reveals a significance level in the last column is less than 0.05 for products home theatre and cereals.

The mean difference existing between different structures of family of respondents is statistically significant at 5% level. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected and alternate hypothesis is accepted.

6. Findings

- It is found that children get more money on their birthday and during holidays from their parents with 25.64% and 23.08% (table 4.4).
- It is found that the average amount of money children get from their parents is Rs. 482.93 (table 4.5).
- Children spend more money on comics/magazines with an average score of 3.69, closely followed by snacks with an average of 3.67.
- The influence was found maximum in case of purchase of the bicycle with a mean score of 4.19, followed by ice creams/chocolates/juice and CDs/DVDs with mean scores of 3.80 and 3.63 respectively (table 4.6).
- The top two methods adopted by children to purchase products is they ask their parents nicely with a mean score of 3.88 followed by saying that you are the best dad /mom in the world with mean scores of 3.61 (table 4.7).
- The degree of children influence in buying majority of the products like bicycles, TV, refrigerator, car, computer/laptop, vacation choice, tooth paste, fruits/vegetables, newspaper, bread, detergent/soap, hobby activity, video games, CDs/DVDs and ice creams/chocolates/juice is more with both parents are working against the single parent working (from hypothesis 5.1).
- The degree of children influence is found more in nuclear family than in the joint family while buying majority of the products (from hypothesis 5.2).

7. Suggestions

This study has different implication on marketers, parents and children. For all three of them there is clear indication that children influence exists, although it depends on various other factors. Based on findings the suggestions are as follows:-

- The bicycle is mostly influenced by children irrespective of different family type or employment status or family income.
- Marketers should have the data base of their customers which help them to design customised strategy for each segment based on family structure, income, working parents and so on.

- The high value products like TV and car are also getting children attention and influence across different families irrespective of income and number of working members. Marketers should create an atmosphere where children are engaged in the process.
- Right entertainment quotient included with the holiday packages will be an added advantage for the marketers to do more business.
- Attaching more importance to children by taking proper care during the process will help marketers positively.
- Specific advertisements and promotional offers targeting children for the above products category.

8. Limitations of the Study

- The study was carried out on only 17 categories of products.
- The study was confined to the age group of 8-12 years.
- The study was limited to Bangalore city, India.

9. Conclusion

The children influence is analysed from various aspects. The products directly used by children as well as family are considered for the study. For products directly used by children, it is mostly decided by children themselves. The descending order of influence for products are comics/magazines, snacks, toys/games and candies.

Depending upon family structure and working status the definition of need and luxury differs and the same is reflected in the survey analysis. The children are the centre of attraction in any family irrespective of country and culture. They have been voicing their opinion for purchase of various products. There are few family products where children influence is observed higher. The children use a persuasive strategy mostly. When there is more income in the family then it directly impacts the children's influence. The children influence is slightly more on nuclear family parents compare to joint family.

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