

Influence of Children on Family Purchase Decision: Empirical Evidence from Pakistan

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Abstract

Children have always been playing their influential role in family purchase decisions but we find lack of research on this topic within Pakistan. Keeping this in mind we conducted this research with a sample of 125 Pakistani Parents. The data collection process was completed with the help of structured questionnaires, designed to especially meet the researchers' criteria. The results were quite a set back for the local stereotypes (marketers). The results reflected a great degree of influence from the children i.e. around 40% towards the family purchasing decisions.

Key Words: Children, Family, Purchase decision, Pakistan.

Introduction

The involvement of each family member in the purchase of some product or a service utilized by the whole or any member of the family can not be ignored. For this purpose researchers have been continuously analyzing the process of decision making within a family. In families, members who are small in size but enjoys great influence when it comes to the purchase decisions, and these members are children. The changing conditions of today have affected the family structures as well as their roles. Demographic and social shifts have changed the attitude of parents and thus given the children an increased status of influencing purchase decisions, it will be no wrong in saying that this influence has reached a point of all times high (Flurry, 2006). The topic of child purchase influence (CPI) (Laroche, Yang, Kim & Richard, 2007) is the one which got attention of many. That is why we find the specific topic to be present in different journals of the world. Because of smaller family sizes and more disposable income the manufactures realizes the potential importance of CPI and they are trying their level best to get the children involve in their products (Flurry & Veeck, 2008).

A research in turkey suggested that the children's influence on family decision making is only limited to products which the children consume directly (Guneri, Yurt, Kaplan & Delen, 2009). According to another research the extent of influence greatly varies among product classes as the children exercise more influence for products that they use personally (Guneri et.al, 2009). Supporting this point of view a study reveals that children does have influence over the purchasing decisions but consideration should be given to the type of product (personal or family) when identifying the characteristics which moderate children's influence (Flurry, 2006).

When it comes to the issue of cost, children tended to be more influential in the purchase of products that are less costly and for their own consumption (Foxman, Tansuhaj & Ekstrom, 1989). Another study

supports this point by stating that when it comes to the monetary issues, children do not assume any role and believe that the parents, to a great extent influence on how much to spend directly (Guneri et.al, 2009). Higher income level of the parents and lower price of a product is positively related to the child's purchase request (Ebster, Wagner & Neumueller, 2009).

There seems a difference when question regarding influencing power is asked. Parents think that their adolescent child has a less influence in family purchase but the child thinks otherwise. More the free communication between the parents and child, the lesser the disagreement exists regarding adolescents' influence in family purchase processes (Foxman et.al, 1989). Similarly the income level of a house can also affect the CPI but quite surprisingly perhaps because of the change in the environment, a research suggested that the relationship between the child's influence and child's gender or income level of the family is of weak nature directly (Guneri et.al, 2009).

The best tool for spreading out awareness is considered to be the media which is very true and advertising is its integral part. Advertisements affect the opinions, attitudes and behaviors of children and thus creating awareness (Nasir, Jalbani, 2009). From the massive media blast, now children know ahead of time what actually they want, and most of them make rapid decisions regarding the purchase (Atkin, 1978).

There are researches which went beyond and analyzed the adolescent and studied their influencing power as well. A study suggested that the adolescents with hit and trail learn which strategies are the most effective one when it comes to influencing family purchasing decisions, and use of these strategies make them feel empowered as well (Palan & Wilkes, 1997).

Parents on their part also play an important role when CPI is under consideration. A study on cereals purchases revealed that highly child-centered mothers show a larger inclination towards the purchase of their children's favorite cereals (Berey & Pollay, 1968). When it comes to the measurement of each of family members with the help of the five-point scale or the constant sum scale, there will be an increased probability of results showing comparable results to each other when compared to studies which used independent measures of family member influence (Szybillo, Sosanie & Tenenbein, 1979). Children make more purchase requests: (1) when at an early developmental stage; (2) when products are placed at children's eye level; and (3) when there is no hindrance in their movement/view is not restricted through being seated in a shopping cart or stroller (Ebster et.al, 2009).

Gender plays an important role especially when we talk about Pakistan where the society is masculine in nature. The aspect of lower individualism and large power distance (i.e. the extent to which the less powerful person in a society accepts inequality in power and considers it as normal) (Hofstede, 1984), can be important factors when comparing the Pakistani families from that of rest of the world. The average Pakistani household size is 6.75 for the year 2004-05 (www.statpak.gov.pk) which reflects the important role of children within a family.

The study under consideration will not only be helpful in identifying the true potential of children as influencers on family purchase decisions but will also prove to be a point to ponder for the local marketers/advertisers to review their present strategies and what miracles pester power can bring to their business.

Literature Review

Child Purchase Influence

A research shows that there is a trend of children influence in purchasing decision that is continually changing. This trend was very low 25 years ago but now it's on edge due to children consumer strategies advertisements knowledge and marketing skills (John, 1999). The terms Child Purchase Influence, Pester

Power and kid influence are used interchangeably. CPI can be defined as, "Children's ability to make their parents buy something or do something for them by continual asking until the parents agree to do it" (en.wiktionary.org/wiki/pester_power) and the power children have, by repeated nagging, of influencing their parents to buy advertised or fashionable items is called as Pester power (www.wordspy.com). Similarly Kidfluence can be defined as the influence of kid in either direct or an indirect manner over the household purchases (Soni and Upadhyaya, 2007).

Children have their own thinking and wish list. They have an inbuilt desire to be autonomous in making decisions (Nappi, 1973). Different researchers have tried to relate CPI/Pester Power with number of variables like Nasir & Jalbani (2009) related it with animated advertisements. We saw a shift since 1980 that most of the marketers began to target children (Harris interactive, 2003). The choice of a child relating to a resolution strategy is dependent upon family structure, family communication patterns, parental style, product type, and situational factors (Johnson, McPhail and Yau, 1994). Rose, Dalakas & Kropp (2003) related the CPI with Parental Styles. Advertisers have also targeted the schools in the form of posters display and promotions plus their web presence attract a lot of traffic because of give aways (Soni and Upadhyaya, 2007).

Children make influences on purchase decision as they want to affect the final decision to purchase. What ever influencing effort made by children is shaped by his/her social power attributes. Children do make decisions consciously when choosing products and go for those which provides greatest level of satisfaction. As far as children consumer behavior is concerned the main source for children to develop consumer behavior is that of their parents, they observe their parents shopping (Nappi, 1973). They also enjoy a major influence in family purchase decisions (Soni and Upadhyaya, 2007). There is huge observed difference when spending patterns of male and female teens (children between 8-12 years of age) are concerned. Girls spend more on products like clothes, shoes, hair accessories and makeup and boys on the other hand enjoy spending on toys, video games and clothing (Soni and Upadhyaya, 2007). Similarly Girls have to depend for a longer period of time on their parents as far as their consumer life is concerned as compared to boys (Harris interactive, 2003).

A complete set of tactics and strategies are in the little minds. Children use many different techniques to influence the decision making for example but not limited to, asking, bargaining, persisting, using force, telling, being demonstrative, threatening, and using pity (Atkin, 1978). Children use a number of strategies like; offering to pay part of the cost, doing extra chores and the aggressive one that is, keeping on asking (Soni and Upadhyaya, 2007). Girls use non aggressive strategies while boys tend to do the opposite when influencing their mothers. Similarly girls have a lesser persuasion power than boys and the mothers tend to encourage autonomy in boys as compared to girls (Cowan and Avants, 1988).

Children making influence is greatly dependent on the intensity of the product that how much preferable (first choice) the product is, The larger is the intensity the larger will be the influencing pressure and vice versa (Corfman & Lehmann, 1987). As children pester power is inversely proportionate to the time available with parents and with the increase in the number of working couples, this amount of pester power is also on the rise (Soni and Upadhyaya, 2007). Findings suggest that boys do shape their mothers' strategies to a greater extent than do girls (Cowan and Avants, 1988). Child's vigorous or inactive use of social power to influence might be different according to the nature of the product. Children's influence in a toy purchase, where they find themselves more involved and feel more authoritative, so they likely to influence more, and call upon different sources of active social power.

Parents mentioned that their children's passive social power stem from expert and lawful sources, due to fact that children would be the primary user of the product (Flurry & Burns, 2005). Children in a service context aged 9 to 12 influence on family decision making for particular restaurant setting is largely rely on which restaurant they are going, children will influence more especially for the choice of a specific restaurant. According to the researchers children who come under 3 to 7 years of age can distinguish

between an ad and a program. They consider ads as funny, true and interesting and relates to them positively. 11 to 16 years of age is the one in which a child understands the persuasive intention and specific ad techniques and appeals. He can also judge between the biasness and deception and thus able to find the false claims made (Soni and Upadhyaya, 2007).

We noted an effect of the family type on the decision-making structure. Therefore, children attributed larger influence to themselves when they come from nontraditional families (Labrecque and Ricard, 1999). Some researches show a different point of view. There is a variation in children decisions about different products depending up on the product, either it is directly consumed by the children's or been used by the whole family. Past research has been able to explain approximately 18% of the variation in influence (Jenkins, 1979). Adolescents also use number of strategies while try to influence the family purchase decision making and influences the final outcomes. Strategies like directive, expert, legitimate, emotional, persuasions, request and bargaining when they are trying to influence the purchase decision by the family (Palan and Wilkes, 1997).

There is no doubt that children are keen consumer and they are in influencing role right from the start, they develop such knowledge and skills that will help them in influencing the decision making in today's and coming environment (John, 1999). 4 to 12 year old children consumed \$24b on product directly purchases and \$188b in family household purchases (McNeal, 1998). Children feel that they cannot spend more than \$24 without the permission of their parents (Harris interactive, 2003). As cereal is the most commonly consumed product use by all family members, Children seems to play a convincing role in cereal buying decision by family members at super market either by asking for a brand or choosing one upon parental call (Atkin, 1978).

Research from the advertising agencies has also concluded with the comments that children's personal preferences can be altered and modified with the help of advertisements (Soni and Upadhyaya, 2007). To some extent children and adolescents have influenced on their own medical treatment, as they seem to be more irresponsible and avoiding such situation but parents play dominating role in this case because they are more concern about their family health care (McCabe, 1996). Parents feel that their children can recognize brand names and the logos (Soni and Upadhyaya, 2007). Research shows that 9 to 12 year old children found to be brand loyal while using the product knowledge and want to purchase their favorite product (candy bar), as a repeat purchase (Jacoby & Kyner, 1973). Study conducted by Beatty & Talpade (1994) shows that there is a strong relationship between product importance and adolescent influence on family purchase decision. Study shows that television advertisement is one source for children to influence on decision making by mother as children have more exposure to the media, the older the child (11-12) more likely the mothers are to give in to influence attempts, as older child ask less (Ward & Wackman, 1972).

Pre-teens (children in the few years immediately before they become teenagers) have the larger influence on all decision making by family and later-born/only child have more influence than the first-born children. It is also observed that preteens are more influential in their own use item than the family used (Ronner, Hunt and Mallalieu, 2007). Children think they have a decisive influence on holiday but parents mentioned they have only moderating influence in decision making on family holiday as parent thinks that they have the trivial vote, but they do consider children while making decisions (Gram, 2007). Children have impact on the family decision making, while asking the family members about the adolescents influence on their decision making they told that, they do have significant influence on their decisions on number of products (Foxman, Tansuhaj and Ekstrom, 1989). Today children are being influenced through advertising and marketing and evidence support that know children are directly targeting by marketers and advertisers as they have more power to purchase than before and have more influence on purchase decision as they have more exposure (Calvert, 2008). Evidence from couple of research proves that TV advertisement is being an influencing factor for children when they make decision about certain product (Griffin, 1976; Carlson, Grossbart and Walsh, 1990). Advertising has a strong impact on the children decision making and this

relation is further strengthened by using symbol (metaphor), and should develop a strong relationship between product and symbol so children recognized them well (Pawlowski, Badzinski and Mitchell, 1998).

Literature support that social and cultural variables have significant impact on children decision making styles or we may say that adolescent decision making style is shaped by the social and cultural agents plus children use different strategies to influence the parents purchase decision making at different levels (Shim, 1996).

Age is another factor which can not be ignored. Children get more influential as they reach at adolescent level using their own developing skills as they grow (Moschis and Moore, 1979). Those children who are 5-11 years old are consulted by their parents directly for their interests of toys, foods or the colors where the teenagers use some strategies to show their interests like emotional feeling, begging or influencing again and again about cloths shoes playing instrument etc (Palan and Wilkes, 1997). In Pakistan lot of children influence the decisions of purchase after a recommendation by the doctor or their family regarding what they want to purchase like soap, toothpaste, toothbrush or tracksuit, etc (Moazam, 2000). The issue of measuring the amount of direct influence attempts from children to wards parents has seven dimensions namely; asking nicely, just asking, bargaining, showing affection, displaying anger, begging and pleading, and conning (Williams and Burns, 2000). Research findings suggests at least 3 attitudinal dimensions affect the degree to which mothers said the children to be influential i.e. health-related, economic and liberal versus conservative (Roberts, Wortzel and Berkeley, 1981).

Family Purchase Decision

Result of a research suggested that when purchasing life insurance, family decision-making responsibility can be differentiated based upon different demographic variables (Skinner & Dubinsky, 1984). There seems to be opposite opinion when parents and the children are asked at the same moment. Both the parents and the children hardly agree when question regarding the influencing power of children is asked (Noergaard, Brunso, Christensen and Mikkelsen, 2007). Family purchase decision making is greatly influenced by the number of strategies used by husbands and wives at different situations, analyzing the situation is important in order to make impact on larger scale (Spiro, 1983). But another study reveals that the role of women in the family decision making is more influential as compare to man, the female have a role of purchasing, interest, checking the quality and the most important is the bargaining of the things goods or instrument where the family want to purchase where as the men have least interest of these things like they don't want waste time on bargaining or changing items etc again and again (Scanzoni, 1977).

Families are becoming more children centered as compared to the past hence increasing team decision making (Harris interactive, 2003). We find that there exist a specific strategy pursued within the family that is; in different families what happen is that family give a power to an individual like wife or husband to purchase any item and after that is there is any objection on purchasing decision or on quality of the product or on quantity family shift the power of purchasing to other one (Spiro, 1983).

Research found that locus of control, child age influence factor and parental type have unique affects on the various stages of the decision-making process (Darley and Lim 1986). The amount of authority given to the child by a family depends on the economic conditions and according to the budget of the family in which the family has also to satisfy on the purchasing needs (Kourilsky and Murray, 1981). Family member influence in household decision making is relatively different from each other, it can be measured through different methods (five point and 10 point liker scale), (Szybillo, Sosaine & Tenenbeine, 1979). Getting response from only one family member may pose a problem.

The researchers interested in the decision making studies should no longer solely rely on the responses from the wives, rather due importance should be given to other family members as well (Rothschild, 1969). Reliance on one respondent in family decision-making is more likely to convey the self-report techniques

and thus will be directed towards faulty findings thus a comparison of how each spouse perceives himself/herself and perhaps his/her spouse as well on decision-making variables, should be practiced (Bokemeier and Monroe, 1983). There is an amount of unawareness. Most of the spouses are unaware about the amount of talking occurred between them in a decision making session (Kenkel and Hoffman, 1956). The spouses normally have an inaccurate perceptions of the decision-making process, thus there is a need to further research on the role the spouses play while making purchase decisions (Rothschild, 1969).

The perception about children to play influencing role in only the purchase of products for self use is proven to be wrong. Children do influence on decision of purchase for both products for self use and those meant for household consumption (Harris interactive, 2003). Parents accept the presence of influence from the children side. 92% of the parents say that during a shopping trip their children ask for the purchase of at least one product (Soni and Upadhyaya, 2007). Family do purchase item as a result of influencing children due to advertisement and this includes items who have very low value as compare to larger items (Corfman and Lehmann, 1987). Purchasing decisions regarding different type of products requires different variables within a family, like sometimes wife plays an important role and for some instances husband take the control.

The two top most important variables for the discrimination between family decision-making responsibilities are; the employment status of wife and the literacy level of husband. The family member's attitudes, interests, and opinions (AIOs) should be kept in mind before putting efforts in marketing (Skinner and Dubinsky, 1984). The distribution of income between the family members does matters, and will thus generally affect commodity demands as well, as the female incomes are rising the spending on items like; food and clothing are also on a rising trend (Chen and Woolley, 2001). Parents who are more authoritative and Permissive (warm and nonrestrictive) try to promote independence in their children and also give their children a higher degree of influence in family purchase decisions and children belonging to such a family have the greatest degree of influence on parents purchases (Rose, Dalakas and Kropp, 2003). Father or mother does also effect the situation. Children often try to be dominating when the purchase of child related products is on the cards, especially when the parent is mother (Mehrotra and Torges, 1977).

Cultures also have an impact on the behaviors. Pakistani women students are more likely of an opinion that parental authority should be obeyed by the children without questioning (Shah, 1960). Similarly most of the mothers in family not allow the children to give suggestion or restrict the children to purchases any item after looking quality (Ward and Wackman, 1972). The level of interaction is an important aspect. Lower parent-child interaction leads towards reduction in the chances of children's involvement in family purchase decisions but increases children's freedom of media usage (Rose, Dalakas and Kropp, 2003). Family purchase decision is more effective or influential when husband and wife are more goal oriented instead of power both share, other factor effect the decision and process of adjustment are like their marriage duration and no of children they have (Cox, 1975).

A strong verification is developed that gaining extra information about the purchasing item enhanced individual knowledge, that will increase the influence among the decision making (Marshall and Reday, 2007). Family structure also effect the relation between parent child interactions in purchase decision making, simpler the family structure there will be more children involvement (influence) while in complicated family structure children have less involvement (Tinson, Nancarrow and Brace, 2008). Norgaard, Bruns, Haudrup and Mikkelsen (2007) has find that there is a combined decision making by the children and parents when they are buying (shopping) the food items, children and parents both have influence in the decision making. Three basic parental styles that have definite impact on their children are autonomy, support and involvement. These elements have significant influence on children regarding their decision about different occasions (Grolnick and Ryan, 1989).

There are some other parental styles especially mothers that can influence the children while taking part in social activities or act as consumers. Styles like authoritative, or have rigid control over the children can

shape the children way of thinking (Carlson and Grossbart, 1988). Family communication also plays a very important role in family decision making by parents and children. Children are more active where parents communicate more to their children's. Parents can influence through different mean of communications (Moschis, 1985). The study shows that there is roles of culture as well in the family purchase decision especially in Marital Roles and husband have more influence as related to wives or husband play more active part in decision making (Webster, 1994).

Current study is measuring three different family measures to observe the children influences on purchase decision, a measure purification process, Confirmatory factor analyses and a multiple-influence. Through these factors children influences is measured more precisely (Kim and Lee, 1997). Husband and wives tend not to return force in kind within a separate purchase decision, they also tend to alternate in using strong means of influence across decisions finally their post decision evaluations, such as perceived influence and satisfaction, tend to affect their subsequent decision behaviors (Su, Fern and Ye, 2003). As far as culture is concerned a study reports a varying trend in different cultures when focus was on child purchasing requests and the parent response, along with these child's age and amount of television viewing also have a great impact (Ward, Robertson, Klees and Gatignon, 1986). The issue of single parent families reflects that children's influence varies according to demographic characteristics of the family the type of product and the stage of decision making process (Ahuja and Stinson, 1993). In another case one research concluded that variables which increase the likelihood of parental yielding to child influence about the purchase are product specific (Mehrotra and Torges 1977). The family members including mothers, fathers, and children, all agree that children have some specific influence in purchase decisions for a variety of products (Foxman, Tansuhaj and Ekstrom, 1989).

Hypothesis Development

There is a positive relationship between child purchase influence and family purchase decision making.

Theoretical Framework:



Methodology

Sample:

The sample was selected from the twin cities of Pakistan i.e. Rawalpindi and Islamabad, using convenience sampling technique. Only those Pakistani families were selected which had one or more children with an age between 6 to 12 years. Only one parent was asked to fill the questionnaire.

Instrument

A questionnaire was adopted from a USA based survey website (www.mediamark.com). The questionnaire contained two portions namely "Child Purchase Influence" and "Family Purchase Decision Making". Both parts further consisted of six questions each along with three point scale. The questionnaire was self administrated and were distributed among family shoppers on the entry gates of major shopping centres located in Rawalpindi and Islamabad indifferent timings and days of week. As families came there for

shopping, a lot of people denied giving time for filling up the questionnaires. 125 questionnaires were distributed and a total of 104 were returned back, making the response rate around 83%.

Results

Correlation Analysis

	Child Purchase Influence	Family Purchase Decision Making
Child Purchase Influence	(.76)	
Family Purchase Decision Making	.625**	(.81)

** . Correlation is significant at the level 0.01 level.

Correlation indicates that there is strong positive and significant relationship between child purchase influence and family purchase decision making. Also both constructs are reliable as indicated by the values of crownbash α (.76 and .81 respectively).

Regression Analysis:

	Beta	T	Sig
Child Purchase Influence	.625	19.978	.000

$R^2=.391$ $F=399.103$ $Sig=.000$ $n=104$

Dependent Variable: Family Purchase Decision Making

R^2 reflects that the model is capable to capture 39.1% of variation due to child purchase influence on family purchase decision making while beta value indicates that with a unit change in child purchase influence, there will be .625 change in family purchase decision making.

The significant t value (19.978) indicates that there is a significant and positive relationship between child purchase influence and family purchase decision making, our hypothesis stands approved in the light of above analysis.

Discussion

The results are quite logical when we analyze the situation in depth. The modern family structures are quite different when compared to that of 60's. Traditionally the joint family system was in practice which consisted of grand parents and as a consequence they were the influencers when decision was to be taken regarding the purchase of a product. The size of each family was subsequently big in number, making it hard for the small force (children) to influence or even take part in the decision making activity. As a result of government emphasis on family planning and increasing trend of separate living after marriages, the size of Pakistani families is on decline, slow but gradual. These circumstances are supporting the higher degree of influence enjoyed by the children of each family.

Due to a sudden media explosion in Pakistan, now the children are well aware of the marketing efforts as they are born to advertisements, each of different type and category. This media blast created child awareness on one side but it is also responsible for the increasing and noticeable trend of pester power.

A dual career family is a phenomenon which is not only penetrating its roots in the west but it is also showing the signs of its presence in our culture as well. This increasing trend creates a feeling of guilt in the parents about not giving the proper time and attention which their children require. As a remedy to this

guilt the parents with obviously more disposable income buy their children the products which they wish for, thus increasing the chances of kid influence.

Flow from rural to urban areas can also be one of the causes behind the results. The village life is still a traditional one in which majority lives in joint family system and number of children in each family is also high as compared to that of cities. But when head of the family decides to shift to a city in order to raise his living standards and in order to get handsome earning, the joint family structure gets disturbed and as a result a joint family is divided into two, smaller one shifts to the city where as the other keeps on living in the village. The family shifted to the city starts earning handsome amount because of increased chances of earning plus the children, now no more with their grandpas' start getting involved in family purchasing decisions.

With an increase in net surfing, cable and movie viewing, child of today is far more impressed by the style of the film tycoons. Unconsciously adopting them and trying to look like the same. Media has a great impact on the actions of each individual specially the children being the innocent target; which without thinking rationally get impressed. For instance when ever the football world cup match is on air children get equally mad and we observe them playing the same game in every nook and corner, in streets, parks and play grounds, even the low popularity of this game in Pakistan can not stop them. This truly reflects the psychological potential media has over millions, especially on the child's immature mind.

Implications

Till now the local marketers are targeting the children when they market products directly related to them but complete ignorance towards this segment is observed when efforts are made to launch a family product i.e. to be consumed by whole family, instead parents are the focus of whole exercise. This research paper would help change this specific perception of the local marketers towards the degree of influence the children have in a family purchase decision making.

Limitations

Generalized result is the main issue of this research as the data collected for this research was from the twin cities of Pakistan i.e. Rawalpindi and Islamabad, so the rural point of view is lacking in the paper. The scope of the research is also questionable as the sample size was only 125.

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