

PESTER POWER IN FAMILY DECISION MAKING: AN EMPIRICAL ASSESSMENT

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ABSTRACT:

In recent times the purchase decision making influence of the children have shown dramatic changes and major variations due to cultural shifts norms values and many other exogenous factors. In the family purchase decision making process children play dominant role to shape the decision making be it a nuclear family or joint family. As a sequel to various developments and changes it is imperative for marketers to identify and determine certain variables those impact children to influence their family member in purchase decision making process. Earlier works in this field have also highlighted the overall importance and the role of children within the family purchase decision making process. Therefore the primary objective of this study is to identify certain factors which persuade children to influence their parents in the context of family decision making. This paper has examined the role of various demographic factors, viz. family types, gender, working status of the spouse in explaining the role of children in the process of family purchase decision making. Children involvement is found to be moderate to high in purchasing the various products like computer, television set while their BIS (Brand Influence Score) is low to moderate in selecting vacation destination and health drink etc. The results of logistic regression demonstrates that for different products, the respondents can be classified incorporating two important perceptual variables as well as based on the demographic variables considered in this study.

Keywords: Teens, Threshold teens, Brand Influence Score, Decision Making, Logistic Regression

INTRODUCTION:

Children represent an important target market segment and gained attention from the marketing point of view. The twenty-first-century kids play a dominant role as a consumer, sometimes as buyers and play a pivotal role in persuading their parents for a variety of goods and services. Prior studies amply demonstrate that children including teens express their opinion for family purchase decision making which largely falls under the purview of their parents. The marketers as well as advertisers now realized the pester power of children and as such target this group directly to find a place for their products and services in the minds of the teens and the threshold teens.

Most of the studies have shown that children yield more influence on the purchase decisions for children related products. Children have also been pragmatic to yield their influence on family-related products like vacations. A few researchers have studied the role of children in both family and children specific products. Children are found to have less authority and less influence on family-related products which require more financial resources but they exert more influence for their personal usage products.

Literature has also cited that younger children do not influence family purchase decision as much as the older children (Atkin 1978; Darley and Lim 1986; Jenkins 1979; Moschis and Mitchell 1986; Nelson 1978; Ward and Wackman 1972). Also, the fact is that as children grow older, they develop further sophisticated decision-making abilities and skills. As age increases, the

competence of the child as a consumer also tends to increase (Moschis and Moore, 1979). Mangleburg, (1990) study also stated that decisions are made by the parents without taking the opinion of the child would be due to lack of child's interest or due to their low relevance and hence they are not interested to influence such purchase decisions. The role of children was underemphasized by researchers for a long period of time. Initially, the researchers in this field primarily concentrated on the influences of husbands and wives in the family buying decision making. Off late, the researchers have realized that a transformation has taken place in the family decision making where threshold teens and teens play the role of initiators and influencers in shaping the behavior of their parents.

The purpose of this paper is to examine children's influence in the family purchase decision process in the metropolis with regard to decision stages, demographic variables like age, gender, working status of parents using two important perceptual variables viz. product involvements and brand trust.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Hundal (2001) in a study of rural buying behavior investigated the role of family members in making purchase decisions for durables including refrigerators, televisions, air coolers, and washing machines. It has been projected that product selection decision in rural families were mostly made by spouses together but they were highly influenced by children. Jenkins Roger L. (1979) conducted an exploratory study focusing on: (1) the perceived role of the children in family decision-making in the areas of furniture decisions, automobiles, groceries, etc., and in vacation decisions, and (2) the relationship between children's influence patterns and various demographic, socio-economic, and attitudinal variables. Children were perceived to exert minimal influence in the following major product categories, like furniture, major appliances, automobiles, groceries. Kapoor (2001) collected information from families in Delhi in regard to their roles across stages of purchase decision-making for six durables—televisions, refrigerators, washing machines, personal computers, audio systems, and cars. It has been reported children have not been observed to have a major impact regarding how much to spend or which brand to favor

Children influence on family buying decision making varies by product type, typology of the child, parent, and family characteristics, etc. Most of the studies have shown that children yield more influence in purchase decisions for children related products like toys (Burns & Harrison 1985, as cited by Kaur & Singh 2006); cereals (Belch et al. 1985, as cited by Kaur & Singh 2006); snacks (Ahuja & Stinson 1993), and children's wear (Foxman & Tansuhaj 1988). Children have also been pragmatic to yield their influence for family related products like vacations (Ahuja & Stinson 1993; Belch et al. 1985, as cited by Kaur & Singh 2006); family eating out decisions (Filiatrault & Ritchie 1980, as cited by Kaur & Singh 2006), and movies (Darley and Lim 1986). A few researchers have studied the role of children in both family and children specific product (Foxman & Tansuhaj 1988; Mc Neal & Yeh 1997). Children were found to have less authority and less influence on family-related products which involved more financial resources but higher influence for their personal usage products (Manglerburg 1990). In a similar type of study Nancarrow (2007) revealed that children have more impact on the purchase of books including comic books, shoes for school, PC games, etc. and less impact on the purchase of financial products like life insurance, car for family, family holiday trip. Dhobal (1999) stated that in new urban-rural families in India, children were influencers for their personal care products, financial products and educational products as they were the buyer for the family toiletries and played the role of initiators or gatekeepers for the purchase decision of household products. Literature have also cited that younger children do not influence the family purchase decision as much as the older children (Atkin 1978; Darley and Lim 1986; Jenkins 1979; Moschis and Mitchell 1986; Nelson 1978; Ward and Wackman 1972). Also, the fact is that as children grow older, they develop further sophisticated decision-making abilities and skills. As age increases, the competence of the child as a consumer tends to increase (Moschis and Moore, 1979). Mangleburg, (1990) study also stated that decisions are made by the parents

without taking the opinion of the child would be due to lack of child's interest due to their low relevance and hence they would not be interested to influence such purchase decisions.

Thomson, E. S., Laing, A. W. and McKee, L. (2007) observed that children have long been acknowledged as playing an important role within family purchase decisions. A survey of an in-depth interview with parents and children have been conducted, followed by a family interview. The findings addressed a specific and important aspect of the data, namely the influence behavior adopted by children during high-involvement family purchase decisions. The children in all of the respondent families were found to have some influence concerning the purchases behavior. The child is considered as an important part of discussion for buying of technical products and hence ignoring them can be a big mistake for marketers (Sharma A, Singh A and Panackal N (2016) .The children are now found to be actively involved in family decision making in the context of vacation choice (Vishwakarma S and Chatterjee R(2017)

This study will mainly concentrate on various issues concerning the degree of children influence the decision-making process and to investigate the influence of their decision making incorporating the effects of brand trust and product involvement.

1. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To investigate the role of children in the family buying decision incorporating the variables mentioned above.
2. To study the influence of children in the purchase decision making and also to assess their Brand Influence Score (BIS).
3. To explore the effects of various demographic factors of children in the decision making process
4. To integrate the findings as stated above and suggest strategies for managerial decision making.

METHODOLOGY:

Structured questionnaire have been developed to get the answer from the teens. Samples of 181 respondents have been selected after verifying all sorts of information required for this study. Initially, 200 respondents were asked to participate in the survey, but 181 sample respondents have been found suitable for this study. Various demographic factor like age, gender, working status of parents, and family type have been considered while collecting data from the study as previous studies explained that the demographic factors of children play a significant role in deciding the type of product purchased by them. Reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha. The two constructs involvement and brand trust are found to be quite higher despite very limited items taken to measure this constructs. This study uses a descriptive research methodology where the respondents were administered a structure questionnaire. The teens independently filled the questionnaire and the parents were guide the threshold teens to comprehend the question before providing their response. A logistic regression technique has been employed to classify the teens and threshold teens based on various demographic variables represented by binary variables and two other perceptual variable namely, brand trust and involvement as a set of explanatory variable.

RESULTS & DISCUSSIONS:

Table: 1
Brand Influence Score of Different Products

Product	Involvement of Children	Decision Making Role			BIS
		Initiators	Influencers	Accepters	
Vacation Choice (Brand Destination)	Low- Moderate	8 percent	21 percent	71 percent	37
Computer	High	48 percent	36 percent	16 percent	120
Television Set	Low- Moderate	19 percent	24 percent	47 percent	67
Health drink	Medium	11 percent	58 percent	28 percent	80

Table 1 reveals the Brand Influence Score of children in purchasing the various selected products on a 3-Point Scale ranging from Initiators, Influencers, and Accepters. Children involvement is found to be very high in purchasing the various products like apparel, health drink while their BIS (Brand Influence Score) is less in selecting television set, vacation choice etc.

It has been revealed that threshold teens have less involvement than teens in choosing product for family consumption. It is seen that teens, in general, have more influence than threshold teens in family leisure activities. Finally, when it comes to influence in decision stages, the older children have greater influence in all decision stages. Marquis Marie (2004) explored that gender differences are observed in terms of influencing, selecting and purchasing specific products. The results obtained contributed to our knowledge on interpersonal influences on children's consumer behavior and on individual differences in consumer purchase decision making. Jenkins Roger L. (1979) conducted an exploratory study focusing on the relationship between children's influence patterns and various demographic, socio-economic, personality, and attitudinal variables. Hundal (2001) in a study demonstrated the buying behaviour pattern of children living in the same city but fall under different social stratification scale of the Amritsar district of Punjab and reported the significant difference in the decision making pattern in the context of family purchase decisions for durables products including refrigerators, televisions, air coolers, and washing machines etc. Family decision making also depends on the family type. Nuclear family would be more open to consider children's opinion on family purchases compared to joint family (Kaur and Singh, 2006; Jain and Bhatt 2004).

In table 2, the study presents the brand destination choice in the family, concerning the influence of children below the age of 13 and above to understand their relative influence on their parents based on their age category. As already have mentioned that the level of involvement and brand trust are the two perceptual variables those have been considered to understand the power of logistic regression to segregate respondents.

Classification Table for Binary Logistic Model (Vacation Choice)**Table : 2**

Observed Variable		Predicted		
		Age of Children		Percentage Correct
		.00(Children)	1.00 (Teen)	
Age of Children	.00 (Children)	76	7	90.5
	1.00 (Teen)	13	85	85.9
Overall Percentage				88.0

Variables in the Equation (Using Binary Logistic Model)**Table : 3**

Vacation Choice	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% C.I. for EXP(B)	
							Lower	Upper
Involvement	.647	.132	23.943	1	.000	1.909	1.474	2.474
Brand Trust	.701	.133	27.750	1	.000	2.016	1.553	2.617

Note: (a): The value of Chi-square:128.829; df : 2 ; p<.000; (b) Cox & Snell R Square: .505; Nagelkerke R Square: .675

The results of the logistic regression model clearly demonstrate that in case vacation choice, the age of teens have more influential role in the decision making process, may be because of the availability of sources of information, consciousness. The cognitive abilities of the child play a very vital role in deciding the brand with all sorts of required information. It is believed that the cognitive ability of the child increases with age. Moschis & Moore (1979) in their study established that age was found to a very important determinant for getting information from sources and the teen agers has a very insignificant role to play. The results are matching with Atkin (1978), who found that older children's have more influence, more dominant role often than younger children.

The Logit model predicts the group membership to a great level of precision and the misclassification is quite low for vacation choice. It should be noted here that the results obtained are quite satisfactory due to the fact that we have simply chosen the respondents who play significant role in decision making (for the particular product categories) to be purchased for the consumption of the family. The purpose of this research was to explore children's influence on purchase decisions on selected demographic variables between two segmented age group of children. On the basis of the findings it can be concluded that the age of the children's influence on purchase decision making process for a product like vacation choice. The maximum levels of influence have been observed in case of higher aged child, because of information of the products. The research findings are supported by the previous studies (Foxman, Tansuhaj et al. 1989; Mangleburg 1990; Beatty & Talpade 1994; John 1999).

These findings are supported by the higher cognitive levels, greater experience as consumers and higher levels of development possessed by older children (Mangleburg 1990). As children get older, parents feel more confident in their child's decision-making abilities. Therefore it is revealed that the older the child the more influence the child will have in purchase decisions.

These findings entail focusing on children belong to Kolkata and Delhi metropolis while selecting service oriented and leisure related products. Special attention should be given to older children as they exert more influence on their parents in making purchasing decisions. Marketing programs must be initiated after targeting the above stated segmented population of children for specific product categories.

Family decision making also depends on the family type. Nuclear families are likely to be more open to consider children's opinion on family purchases compared to joint families. The children in the interview data influenced and helped their parents in deciding the colour of the car, deciding the brand destination of the vacation or making choice of electronic device. Family

structural changes, such as more single families and smaller family size (McNeal 1992; Hahlo 1993; Lackman and Lanasa 1993; Gunter and Furnham 1998), also increase the influence children in family purchase decision making process.

The purchase of laptop/computer which predominantly was a decision of the parents in the last decade has now become a decision of the teens depending on the configuration needed for their personal use. The children belonging to nuclear family are supposed to exert more influence in the purchase decision making in contrast to the children belonging to the joint family. It is quite obvious that the children have more information about this product category than their parents who do not have sufficient knowledge about the recent developments in the state of the art softwares that are needed by the children.

Classification Table for Binary Logistic Model (Computer)

Table :4

Observed		Predicted		
		Family Type		Percentage Correct
		.00 (Nuclear)	1.00 (Joint)	
Family type	.00 (Nuclear)	78	7	91.8
	1.00 (Joint)	11	85	88.8
Overall Percentage				90.2

Table :5

Variables in the Equation (Using Binary Logistic Model)

Computer	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% C.I .for	
							EXP(B)	
							Lower	Upper
Involvement	.296	.119	6.162	1	.013	1.344	1.064	1.697
Brand Trust	.608	.119	26.230	1	.000	1.837	1.456	2.319

Note: (a): The value of Chi-square:143.697; df : 2; p<.000; (b) Cox & Snell R Square: .544; Nagelkerke R Square: .727

The logistic regression model clearly demonstrate that for a durable product like computer, the teens have more influential role in the decision making process in comparison to their parents, may be because of use of the product and also the attachment with this type of product helps the children to get more involved with the purchase decision making process. It has also been reported that Family type also plays a significant role in decision making. It has been revealed from the table that children having nuclear family have more say in the family decision making patter. Similar findings have also been reported by Chaudhary and Gupta (2012) that teens from nuclear family have a very significant role to play in decision making process. Our results are also matching with studies conducted earlier by Verma and Kapoor 2003, who found that children's have more influence, more dominant role to play in case of products like computer, music systems, audio player etc. It should be noted here that the logit model can classify the group membership to a great level of precision and the misclassification is quite low for the product like computer.

Male child are expected to have more influence on the products that are used for family consumption. The male child are expected to have more influence in products that are more expensive as they get involved with the process of information search and brand selection. Therefore female children's influence are less with durable products which tend to be more expensive (Isler, Popper et al. 1987; Swinyard and Sim 1987).

The table 6 presents the logistic results concerning the product television, which obviously comes under the purview of joint decision making owing to high degree of involvement of the children in the family. The binary logistic results have been employed based on the gender of the respondents and percentage of classification is found to be quite high considering the lesser number of variables incorporated in the model.

Classification Table for Binary Logistic Model (Television Set)

Table: 6

	Observed		Predicted		
			Gender of the Respondents		Percentage Correct
			.00 (Male)	1.00 (Female)	
Gender of the Respondents	.00 (Male)	78	7	92.9	
	1.00(Female)	7	89	92.9	
Overall Percentage				92.9	

Variables in the Equation (Using Binary Logistic Model)

Table: 7

Television Set	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% C.I. for EXP(B)	
							Lower	Upper
Involvement	.446	.101	19.370	1	.000	1.561	1.280	1.904
Brand Trust	.594	.126	22.058	1	.000	1.811	1.413	2.320

Note: (a):The value of Chi-square: 174.642 ; df : 2 ; p<.000; (b) Cox & Snell R Square: .615; Nagelkerke R Square: .822

The gender of the children and involvement with the brand in the context of family purchase decision making process plays a vital role. It has been found that involvement of male child in purchase decision making process is very significant and it can be concluded that the gender has significant influence in family purchasing decision making. The similar findings has been projected earlier with different research model (Ezan & Lagier, 2009). The similar findings have also been reported in the past studies explaining children's gender effectiveness in influencing purchase decision (McNeil, 2003).

It has been revealed that the above logistic model can classify respondents based on the gender specification and insignificant level of misclassification for the product like television set leads to explain the greater level of precision in this study. The Brand trust behavior of child has also been observed stating that the male part of the child possess more brand trust behavior and they stick by with those brand where they have more trust. Similar findings have also been reported by Ali and Batra (2011); Atkin (1978); Lee & Collins (1999); McNeal & Yeh (2003), showing the influence of child on family purchase decisions with gender.

Children have more influence over family decision-making when socio-orientation is lower and concept orientation is higher (Geuens, Mast et al. 2002; Moschis and Moore 1979). Laczniak and Palan (2004) found that children of higher income families where both parents work outside, have greater influence on purchase decisions compared to the children of single working parents, who have very little influence.

For conducting the influence of children in selecting the health drinks, the working status of the parents have been used as binary variable to examine whether it is possible to classify the respondents using the logistic model. It has been observed that the respondents can be classified to a considerable extent using the working status of their parents.

Classification Table for Binary Logistic Model (Health Drink)**Table: 8**

Observed		Predicted		
		Working Status of Parents		Percentage Correct
		.00 (Single Working)	1.00(Both Working)	
Working Status of Parents	.00(Single Working)	82	17	83.2
	1.00(Both Working)	19	63	76.8
Overall Percentage				80.3

Variables in the Equation (Using Binary Logistic Model)**Table: 9**

Health Drink	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% C.I. for EXP(B)	
							Lower	Upper
Involvement	.309	.063	24.140	1	.000	1.734	.649	.830
Brand Trust	.443	.096	21.266	1	.000	1.642	.532	.775

Note: (a)The value of Chi-square:86.187 ; df : 2 ; p<.000; (b) Cox & Snell R Square: .376; Nagelkerke R Square: .503

The children influence is analysed using the child centric product health drink. For the product health drink child directly participate in choosing their preferred brand from the market. The working status of parents, as one of very important demographic variable, plays a crucial role to segregate respondents. The child having, both working parents have more power to voice their opinion, stating that they are more involved with brand selection behaviour.

It has been revealed that when the both parents are working family seem to have more influence and are more predominant compared with single working family. The children in both spouse working family have been voicing their opinion for the purchase of various products directly for their own use as well as family use. In this study, it has been revealed from the above tables that the logit model has been able to classify respondents in a better way. The value of Chi-square signify that the overall model is fit with p<.000 and t value of Cox & Snell R Square & Nagelkerke R Square shows that both values are significant which justify the model fit. The similar findings have also been reported in the study of Sunita Kumar (2012) and Wang, S., B. B. Holloway, et al. (2007), Geuens, Pellemans et al. 2003.

2. CONCLUSIONS:

Decision making is a complex process especially when children involve and influence the family purchase decision-making process. The family type, gender, and age create an impact on the way children's influence the purchase decision for personal or family use. The research findings suggest that female child have less influence than the male child to exert the maximum impact in the decision-making process. Children took an interest in shaping the purchase behavior in various product category and exert their pester power to dominate the decision process. It has been revealed that the product category considered in our studies like selecting the vacation destination or making the choice of electronic devices like computer or television set or their personal products like candy or health-drink the children have a significant role to play. The type of family played a major role in family purchases. The conclusions from this research also indicated that children's participation in decision stages depends on the product category. For

an expensive product, children are only involved in the information search stage, whereas for an inexpensive product, the children would simultaneously participate in all decision stages.

Due to the limited cognitive thinking process, younger children do not much participate in evaluation stage compared to their elder counterparts. The communication between the parents and the children in India mainly depends on the family type. In a nuclear family, there is more of concept-oriented communication style whereas in a joint family, socio-oriented communication style is observed. However, the younger children in India did not have much say as compared to older children due to their thinking abilities. In conclusion, children do occupy the center position in the Indian family where they not only influence in family decision- making but they also expected to act as a future customer

The knowledge of family buying roles is important in developing appropriate marketing strategies. The marketer can use this knowledge to identify the family members who play the roles of initiator and influencer for particular products and then develop an appropriate communication strategy targeted to these members to evoke the desired response. Since children tend to influence product decisions that are relevant to them, marketers must appeal to children as much as parents. Furthermore, children's involvement with a product category has a positive impact on children's level of influence on family decision making. Therefore marketers should try to identify the types of products that appeal to children. By doing so, they could plan more child-friendly marketing activities, making it easier to connect with the children in order to increase their involvement. The objective should be to achieve an effective balance between target marketing and formulating marketing strategies keeping in view the cultural shifts taking place among these groups.

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