



Development of children as a future consumer

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Abstract

In this research, it is investigated about the development of children as a future consumer. Now a day, children have pocket money, more spending power and influence in the family purchase. Especially food marketers view children as a major market force. They use multiple marketing techniques targeting children and spend a lot of money in order to attract children to make them as a customer in the future. Parents today have more disposable income and have no enough time to spend with their children. While going to the supermarket, children accompany their parents. Step by step children acquire the purchasing skill. Peer group encourage the children in becoming future customer. Factors such as technological explosion, invasion of western culture, improved financial position of the family and invasion of food companies have changed the children of today to spend their precious time in watching social media, television and internet. It influences the children to buy a particular product and shapes children as a future customer. For the purpose of the study, 250 school going children between 5 and 18 years age group and 250 parents were selected. Data were collected with the help of well-prepared questionnaire and interview schedule. Findings show that children improve their buying skill and become brand loyalty.

Keywords: Marketing channels, Children, Consumer, Food advertisement, Children's Behavior and Pester Power

Introduction

Because of the various marketing strategies, children quickly become a customer at the expense of their parents. Children have the power to influence their parents to buy their favorite items. Increase in the use of social media has changed the children's life style and buying behavior. Children shape the buying decision of their family. World has seen many changes in the past ten years. Indian family structure is changed from joint family system to small families. Children occupy a central position in the family purchase decision. From the school to join, hotel to eat, place to go during holidays children exert their power in taking a decision. Realizing this, marketers target children instead of focusing parents. Thus children become a consumer in their early years.

Research gap: This study is completely based on secondary data such as research seminars, journals, research reports, books and papers. Future research may do well by analyzing primary data collected from the children, parents, teachers and experts. There is a lack of sufficient academic research papers relating to the development of children as a future consumer. After a detailed analyze, the following research gap has been observed. Most of the research studies have been undertaken in the durable goods and only limited studies have been undertaken in the food items.

Research problem: Multiple factors affect the children in preferring a product. One of the factors is food advertisement. Today's children are living in the internet world. Children are targeted by food marketers intensively through marketing channels. Food marketers are interested in spending a lot of money for the food advertisement. Marketing techniques used by the marketers may mislead the children in selecting a particular product. It may affect

the health and life style of children. Hence marketers may be careful before giving their advertisements. Till the age of 10, children cannot be considered as a consumer in making purchase decision. Using both traditional and digital media, marketers and media give advertisements which may create a harmful situation.

Research Questions: Does social media advertisements play crucial role in becoming a child as a future consumer?

Research Objectives: The main objective of the study is to find out the awareness of social media among the children. It also tries to find out the role of children as future consumer, ability of the children in understanding the advertisement, children's attitude towards advertisement and frequency of watching social media. It also examines role of children in the family purchase and to know other factors that affect the children in making them as a future consumer.

Review of Literature: Ogden and Ogden (2011) in their research explored that type of product and age of the children impact the parent's perceptions of children's influence on purchase decisions. There was no difference in parent's perceptions of children's influence based on gender or ethnicity. The perception of children's was highest for products that related directly to the child. Following child related products, non-durables came in second and the least amount of influence was found in durable products. The age of children also influenced parent's perceptions of influence. Ramzy. et.al. (2012) explored that parent's perceptions of child's influence (aged 4 -18) on purchase decisions. The paper examined child influence in fifteen different products in three product categories (child related,

durable and non- durable). Results indicated that there were differences between product type, age and parent's communication style. In terms of gender, there were differences between women but there were no differences between U.S and Egyptian men when it came to perceived children's influence.

The role of parents in making the children as a future consumer: While the children are small, while taking the children to the nearby store, parents introduce their children to the retail store keeper and store staff members. Parent makes the children aware of many things in the market and show the procedure of shopping, buying, billing and payment of money. Children have the opportunity to listen the conversations between the father and mother. Parents teach their children about the brand, price, quality and quantity. Parents are interested to buy more for their children because both the parents are employed and have more income. The occupations of children's parents have great influence on the buying behavior of children. The lifestyle of the family differs according to the occupation of the parents. The lifestyle of business people, the lifestyle of working class, and the lifestyle of professional people are different in various ways. Children are brought up according to the family lifestyle which has a direct bearing on the children.

Role of pocket money in making the children as a future consumer: Children get money from their family members either through gifts or pocket money. While the pocket money is sufficient to buy candy, chocolates and other consumables, they do not make purchase request with their parents. Since the children are not earning members and when their pocket money is not sufficient to meet their needs, children make purchase request. Parents accept the purchase request sometimes and reject the purchase request sometimes depending on the situation. Pocket money develops the skill of buying without the assistance of parents. Children are turned into consumer at very age in the society

Role of Pester power: Pester power means tactics used by the children to force their parents to buy a particular item. It is the children's ability to make their parents to buy something or do something for them by repeated asking until the parents agree to buy it. To avoid unpleasant atmosphere, parents succumb and yield to their demands. Pester power is not restricted to a particular area or region. It may be in the form of sweet talk, pleading, persuading, threatening, negotiating and flattery etc. Most of the favorable goods are not directly available to the children, they may have bought by using pester power. It is a powerful weapon in the hands of children to yield their parents. Children have established themselves as a viable market. Children use the following methods to yield their parents. 1. Request 2. Sweet talk 3. Humor 4. Nagging

Role of marketing strategies: Children watch various advertisements and force their parents to buy any brand which attract them. Marketers introduce their products in the market keeping the children in the mind. They exploit the school for promoting their products in many ways.

Companies like fast food and cool drinks make some arrangements with the school management to offer their products in the campus. They make poster advertisements in the classrooms, school buses and sponsor school events. Marketers use social media platforms like YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram and twitter to supply their information about the new product to children.

Research Methodology: Data were collected from five nearby schools. Children and their parents were the basic sampling unit for the present study. Children were allowed to take the questionnaire to their home and bring it to be filled with the help of their respective parents. Hundred questionnaires were distributed and received all of them.

Research design: A survey design was employed to elicit information about the impact of social media on the eating behavior of children. A self designed, well structured questionnaire was created with the help of Google forms.

Sampling technique: Convenient sampling method was employed for the collection of the data. For easy accessibility, schools in the nearby areas were chosen. The questionnaire was shared to the parents through Google forms. Instructions regarding on how to fill up the questionnaire were given.

Pilot study: A pilot study among ten percentage of the total study was carried out to determine the quality of the questionnaire. Based on the feedback obtained, fitting modifications were carried out in the questionnaire.

Sample size: The study was conducted over a period of one month to ensure that enough time was given to the children to complete the questionnaire and also to reduce the sampling error.

Data collection: For the purpose of this study, the primary data was collected with the help of structured questionnaire and informal personal discussions with the respondents. Interview method was designed on the basis of different questions. The secondary data have been collected from the different sources such as published research papers, books, research reports, national and international journals, and seminar reports from electronic sources such as internet website. While comparing secondary data, primary data are original in nature and directly related to the issue.

Hypothesis testing: Hypothesis taken for the study is as follows:

Null Hypothesis (H₀): There is no significant relationship between pocket money and children's shopping level

Alternate Hypothesis (H₁): There is a significant relationship between pocket money and children's shopping level

Data analysis: Data analysis is the process of systematically using mathematical and logical strategies to interpret data. Basic data collected has been statistically analyzed, classified and sorted using appropriate methods. Data collected through questionnaires were analyzed using SPSS software.

Table 1: Parents agree to their child’s purchase request

No. of parents	Never	Sometimes	Very often	Always	Total
	0(0%)	75 (30%)	150 (60%)	25 (10%)	250 (100%)

Interpretation: Table 1 shows that majority of the parents (60%) agree that very often they agree to their child’s purchase request whereas 10% of the parents always agree to their child’s request whereas 75% of the parents agree to their child’s purchase demand sometimes where not a single parent (0%) agree that they never agree to their child’s purchase request which shows that parents always fulfill their child’s demand.

Table 2: Provision of pocket money to their children

No. of parents	Yes	No	Total
	200 (80%)	50 (20%)	250 (100%)

Interpretation: Table 2 shows that majority of the parents (80%) agree that they give pocket money to their children while 20% of the parents disagree to this which shows that children get enough pocket money periodically which supports the children in becoming consumer.

Table 3: Frequency of children accompanying their parents to the market while purchasing

No. of parents	Very often	Sometimes	Never	Always	Total
	150 (60%)	75(30%)	0(0%)	25(10%)	250 (100%)

Interpretation: Table 3 shows that 60% of the parents agree that they like their children to accompany them while going to the supermarket where 30 % of the parents agree sometimes where not a single parent (0%) agree to it which shows that almost all the children go along with their parents for shopping which helps the children to be an independent consumer.

Table 4: Pester power usages

No. of parents	Yes	No	Total
	200 (80%)	50 (20%)	250 (100%)

Interpretation: Table 4 shows that 80% of their parents agree that their children use pester power where 20% of their parents told no to it which encourage the children to dominate their parents.

Table 5: Source of product related information

No. of parents	Family members	Social media	School	Peer group	Total
	25 (10%)	150 (60%)	25 (10%)	50 (20%)	250 (100%)

Interpretation: Table 5 shows that 60% of the parents agree that main source of product related information to their child is social media advertisements where 20% of the parents agree that children get information about new products from their peer group where 10% of the parents agree that their child get information from their school and family members which also helps the child to become an independent buyer.

Conclusion

From the foregoing analysis it can be concluded that children occupies an important place in the family purchase

in addition to it children have their own purchasing power; they can influence their parent’s purchasing decision and they are able to become future consumer as adult. They acquire purchasing skill to cope with the changing marketing scenario without the help of their parents. It shows clearly that children are turned into future consumer at a early age. Parents provide necessary support in the form of pocket money which helps the children to become a future consumer. Realizing this fact that children have future consumer behavior, marketers target the children and give serious consideration to this children segment.

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