

A Study on the Reliability of Factors Affecting Buying Behavior of Households Due to the Children's Influential Power: With Special Reference to Noida and Nearby Regions

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Abstract

Researchers for its marketing implications are increasingly researching the influence of children on buying behavior of households. Due to the increase in population, rapid urbanization, changes in family structure, and change in socio-economic equations in the National Capital Region (NCR), the study on the influence of children in buying decisions has become more relevant nowadays. The exposure of social media and mass media has given rise to consumerism among children. The study focuses on testing the reliability of various factors that affect the buying behavior of parents and households because of children's influential power. The study also analyzes the changes in the consumption pattern of families due to advertisements directed towards children. The paper focuses on evaluating the place a household's tiniest members occupy in making buying decisions for families, especially studying the reliability of these phenomena. Marketers are always looking to increase their sales, and so they are pretty keen to know this aspect of opinion leadership shown by children within the family.

Key Words: Opinion Leadership, Children's Influence, Buying Behaviour, Family Consumption pattern, Advertisements directed to children, Cronbach Alpha

PAPER/ARTICLE INFO

RECEIVED ON: 01/06/2021
ACCEPTED ON: 20/06/2021

Reference to this paper should be made as follows:

Chakraborty, Debjani, Agarwal, A.K., (2021), "A Study on the Reliability of Factors Affecting Buying Behavior of Households Due to the Children's Influential Power: With Special Reference to Noida and Nearby Regions", *Int. J. of Trade and Commerce-IIARTC*, Vol. 10, No. 1, pp: 58-65

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DOI: 10.46333/ijtc/10/1/5

1. Introduction

India is rapidly developing and a significant characteristic of its demographics is a very young population. Marketers across the world want to tap this vast market. So, they are thinking of innovative ways to reach out to this audience with the help of persuasive marketing communication. We all are bombarded with a variety of compelling marketing communications in the form of advertisements from all spheres of media, be it ATL or BTL. Adults and children are also getting exposed to these targeted marketing efforts and promotions by the industry. With the migration of families, the households are leaving behind their parental or base settlements and getting rehabilitated or relocated. The structures of families are thereby changing with the nuclear form or family being set up with one or two children. It has also risen to consumerism and the children becoming an imperative part in the household decision making. Thereby their contribution in deciding the product or services has shown a massive rise. With the increase in parent's disposable income, parents' spending power is increasing, and hence they are prone to buy even those products that are not of much importance. The children are often accompanying their parents in the malls or other shopping centers. They are also persuading the parents with their pester or nagging strategies to buy those products that otherwise the parents would not have thought of buying. The advertisements shown in the media attract the children and the parents as they find an attachment towards the attractive brands, products they prefer. The parents buying behavior is also encouraged by the level of devotion they try to show towards the children by purchasing those products they desire. It is often done to showcase the love and affection which they want to give to their children. This study tries to determine the extent to which their children influence parents' buying behavior in the NCR area.

Purchase decisions are affected due to changing trend of consumerism and the ever-increasing participation of children in the household purchase decision. The advertisers have also aimed to design the marketing campaign contents looking into the children's perspective, interest, and attitude. No matter what the product is and how important it is for the children, the marketers try to promote their product so that the child is one of the critical parts of the decision-maker. They are directly or indirectly involved in the use of the product. For example, in one of the car ads, the child is showing safety concerns, and the parent understands it and would purchase that car that gives maximum safety features.

Similarly, in other ads of products like chocolates, biscuits, health drinks, or juice, the children are targeted directly by the marketers. The strategies used by the marketers are attracting the audience towards the product. It has led to an increase in the overall sales of the products. The children are getting tempted by the freebies and gifts or offers they get along with the actual product. For example, in many biscuits, the children are more attracted to the free tattoo or sticker to get along with the actual product. Although many management gurus and intellectuals are termed unethical, this approach is used thoroughly across various product ranges.

2. Review of Literature

According to McNeal, 1992, it was incorporated that children can be consumers, customers, spenders, shoppers, or influencers. Children use different approaches and request strategies to influence their parents to get the desired product. Here influence means changing someone's

belief, mindset, or behavior. The type of tantrums the children make depends on their age and cultural background.

Cowan (1984) defined two broad categories of direct and indirect influence strategies for pestering someone. The first one is the direct influence strategies: demanding, bargaining, negotiation, reasoning, pleading, arguing, telling, or assertion. Indirect influence strategies were a positive, negative, verbal influence, using a supporter of the argument, causing reciprocity, evasion, laissez-faire, etc., to convince their parents.

Falbo and Peplau (1980) focused on the pester strategies that include bargaining as one of the bilateral strategies that need the targeted audience's response.

Szybillo and Sosaine (1977) found that the children were involved in the decision-making regarding the family dine-out.

Many studies also show that the teenage influence is increasing as they are the influencers in the family purchase decisions and the future spenders and, therefore, an area of substantial interest for marketers (Martin and Bush, 2000, Fikry and Bustami, 2012, Singh and Nayak, 2014, Fikry and Jamil, 2010).

Another study also shows the degree of children's involvement differs and is related to the product category. Children were also more influential concerning less expensive products of which they are the prime users (e.g., breakfast cereals, snack foods, toys, clothing, and children's magazines). The degree of children's influence is moderate for family activities (e.g., restaurant outings, family entertainment, family vacations) (Holdert & Antonides, 1997; Labrecque & Ricard, 2001; Flurry, 2007).

3. Objectives of the Study

- To explore the factors that influence the children's behaviors due to marketing communication.
- To evaluate the degree of persuasion on parent's buying behavior due to the pester power of their children.

4. Relevance of the Study

For the last three decades, India has experienced rapid economic growth. The changes in the economy bring changes in its demographic pattern too. One can see the faster development of a few of the country's regions compared to others. Delhi - NCR is one region among that. Delhi NCR has seen an influx of migrants from across the country in search of their livelihood. The family structure is also changing due to this development. The household patterns are changing towards small nuclear families with one or hardly two children from large agriculture-based joint families. The impact of urbanization can be seen in the type and size of family structure. With the expansion of cities, new opportunities are being created where people migrate from their base and settle in new places. However, with the increasing cost of education and paying in cities, families are forced to go for lesser kids. It again is making the size of the family nuclear with one or two kids per family. With the lesser number of kids, the importance of each kid is also rising. They become the center stage, and many household decisions are taken with the help of their opinion.

With the rapid commercialization and significant media presence, the children are also not spared from the marketers' target, and even their opinion matters a lot. Many advertisements are designed keeping in mind its effect on the children and how it may influence the buying behavior. The factors that determine the purchase decision are identified, and a reliability test is conducted to make sure that it is relevant to the actual market situation. The children are getting smarter in making the right choices, and it's often governed by the information they collect through different marketing campaigns in TV, mobile, social media, ATL, and BTL advertisements.

The demographics of the National Capital Region of Delhi are rapidly changing due to migration and population growth. Although many types of research are already done on children's influence on parents buying behavior, fast-changing consumer markets and the changes in their buying habits and preferences make this study very relevant in today's era.

5. Research Methodology

The researcher has used a Descriptive Research Design for this study. Under descriptive research design, a survey method was used to collect data from the respondents. The data type used is of both types, i.e., primary data and secondary data.

The researchers contacted the residents staying in Noida and nearby regions to collect primary data, especially the residents of high-rise societies in the locality. The sample elements genuinely represent the population under consideration as the respondents belong to nuclear families having not more than two children. A total of 158 questionnaires were circulated with the help of online forms to the selected sample elements from the population based on convenient sampling. Still, only 129 filled questionnaires could be collected. Questionnaires are administered to the parents, and their responses are recorded carefully by interviewing them. We have tried to summarize the findings of a pilot survey done on parents' buying behavior due to their children. We have also tried to cover the area of unethical targeting of this vulnerable segment by marketers that are not good for the society in the long term as it induces excessive consumerism among the future of this country.

6. Research Tool Used

The researchers have used Cronbach Alpha for measuring the internal consistency and reliability of the responses recorded from the administration of the questionnaire to the sample elements.

$$\alpha = \left(\frac{k}{k-1} \right) \left(1 - \frac{\sum_{i=1}^k \sigma_{y_i}^2}{\sigma^2_x} \right)$$

where,

k stands for the number of scale items

$\sigma_{y_i}^2$ Stands for the variance associated with the item i

σ^2_x stands for the variance associated with the observed total scores

7. Analysis & Interpretation

S. No.	Variable	Coding
1	Advertisement Shown in TV	Informative: Information given through Ad

2	Advertisement Shown in TV	Entertaining: The entertainment and humor factor
3	Advertisement Shown in TV	Likable: The liking of the Ad
4	Advertisement Shown in TV	Repetitive: The frequency of Ad being repeated
5	Advertisement Shown in TV	Originality: Ad shown are original and based on reality
6	Advertisement Shown in TV	Celebrity Endorsement
7	Advertisement in Social Media	Engaging: More customer engagement
8	Advertisement in Social Media	Feedback Mechanism: 2-way communication
9	Advertisement in Social Media	Buzz Marketing: Creating a positive word of mouth
10	Advertisement in Social Media	Viral Marketing: Increased reach and impressions of the ad
11	Advertisement in Social Media	Budget: Can be started with a minimum budget
12	Advertisement in Social Media	Reach: The entire world is your market
13	Peer Pressure	Spoken Peer pressure
14	Peer Pressure	Unspoken Peer Pressure
15	Peer Pressure	Direct Peer Pressure
16	Peer Pressure	Indirect Peer Pressure
17	Peer Pressure	Positive Peer Pressure
18	Peer Pressure	Negative Peer Pressure
19	Family Size	Nuclear Family
20	Family Size	Joint Family
21	Status of Parents Employment	Single Parent Working
22	Status of Parents Employment	Both Parents Working
23	Influence of Reference Group	Direct Influence
24	Influence of Reference Group	Indirect Influence
25	ATL and BTL Marketing	Positive Impact
26	ATL and BTL Marketing	Negative Impact

The above Reliability statistics obtained from the table give the value of α as 0.764, which shows that the scale's internal consistency is significant. The table below points out that removing any question would result in a lower value of Cronbach's alpha. The table indicates that all the questions asked are relevant, and no item can be deleted as the value of Cronbach Alpha of all the things are more than 0.7.

Variables	Scale means if an item deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Weighted Average of response (weights SD-1, D-2, N-3, A-4, SA-5)
Advertisement shown in TV	82.3347	205.912	0.391	0.668	0.716	2.97
Advertisement shown in TV	82.6414	219.159	0.379	0.413	0.72	3.27
Advertisement shown in TV	82.4701	219.274	0.331	0.351	0.722	2.84
Advertisement shown in TV	82.9323	225.399	0.208	0.44	0.73	2.34
Advertisement shown in TV	82.4542	219.249	0.335	0.393	0.722	3.17
Advertisement shown in TV	83.0319	232.327	0.044	0.301	0.738	2.49
Advertisement in Social Media	83.2072	235.109	-0.027	0.271	0.742	1.81
Advertisement in Social Media	82.7131	223.093	0.223	0.436	0.729	2.63
Advertisement in Social Media	82.1793	222.316	0.253	0.401	0.727	2.84
Advertisement in Social Media	82.2709	222.646	0.265	0.311	0.726	2.34
Advertisement in Social Media	81.6335	212.129	0.451	0.475	0.714	3.59
Advertisement in Social Media	81.5896	224.627	0.247	0.313	0.728	3.51
Peer Pressure	81.6653	220.464	0.29	0.495	0.725	3.97
Peer Pressure	82.5578	224.72	0.205	0.476	0.73	2.71
Peer Pressure	82.4064	221.674	0.26	0.591	0.727	3.27
Peer Pressure	82.5179	219.803	0.356	0.57	0.722	3.09

Peer Pressure	81.9323	221.847	0.244	0.457	0.728	3.73
Peer Pressure	82.0159	226.248	0.173	0.495	0.732	3.64
Family Size	81.4582	217.209	0.462	0.523	0.717	3.47
Family Size	81.9323	219.727	0.302	0.465	0.724	3.53
Status of Parents Employment	82.1434	219.419	0.335	0.613	0.722	3.43
Status of Parents Employment	82.1952	223.814	0.243	0.545	0.728	3.66
Influence of Reference Group	81.7371	216.867	0.375	0.519	0.72	3.63
Influence of Reference Group	81.8406	219.159	0.307	0.552	0.724	3.99
ATL and BTL Marketing	81.9442	225.917	0.149	0.466	0.734	3.66
ATL and BTL Marketing	81.9681	232.335	0.014	0.353	0.743	3.27
SD-Strongly Disagree, D-Disagree, N-Neutral, A-Agree, SA-Strongly Agree						

From the table, we can observe that the weighted average of all the factors taken for the study is somewhere between Neutral (as the values of all weighted average are near to 3). It indicates that the children get influenced by the advertisements shown on TV and social media and through various peer and reference groups. Also, the impact of ATL and BTL advertisements shows an effect on the children's attitude formation.

8. Conclusion

This study establishes a significant role of children in the buying decision process of parents in households across NCR. Parents spend a considerable amount of their disposable income in fulfilling the demands of their kids. Also, it was established that children greatly influence the purchase of products for household consumption. Also, the marketers are increasingly targeting this vulnerable segment aggressively with their innovative marketing communication and advertising that shapes the buying intentions of parents. Children are exposed to marketing communication from all spheres, shaping their buying behavior into a social consumer. Although they are the junior-most family members, their role as an opinion leader within the closed group of family can't be ignored. The friend circle and neighborhood also play an essential role in shaping the buying behavior of this smallest member of the family. If we talk about the buying center, the buying roles played by children could be initiator, influencer, gatekeeper, and some

instances, decider also. Modern marketers also have understood this phenomenon and aggressively started directing advertisement messages towards this segment of little influencers. With more and more nuclear families in the region, children's role in influencing parents while buying products increases.

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