

Influence of Children on Family Purchase Decisions in Urban India: An Exploratory Study

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ABSTRACT

It was not long ago that children were not considered an important segment. Understanding the child as a consumer was limited to understanding the consumer socialization of children. However changing social and economic conditions have also changed the role of children as consumers. They have been viewed as three markets in one: current market, future market, and a market of influential that cause many millions of dollars of purchase among their parents. (Mc Neal, 1987). Avenues for this research have been defined in the West though in a limited manner. However research on the topic in India is very limited.

McKinsey (2007) has forecasted that India will be the 5th largest consumer market by 2025. Spencer Stuart (2008) has identified kids, youth and urban Indian women as three emerging segments. Unlike the west, India has a young population with children under 15 years of age constituting 30% of our population (Census 2010). With the number of females increasing in employment (Chandrashekhar and Ghosh, 2007) the mothers are spending less time at home and with children. This has increased the role of children in decision making. Cultural and technological changes have changed the equation between parents and children. Children have so much power in the family that their families are becoming child led (Cowell, 2001) the influence of children on family purchase decisions is an unexplored topic in Indian context and demands research and attention.

This study intends to investigate how the urban child influences the purchase decision making of the family and its relation to family demographics and family communication. A conceptual model is outlined. The model integrates these two different areas of research to develop a conceptual model to explore the relation of influence of children with respect to different factors. Ward (1974) asserts that socialization is a lifelong process and hence this model also proposes "parents re-socialization" with children as one of their socialization agents. Based on the exploratory research the paper identifies propositions for future research with the limitations and future scope of research.

Keywords: Influence of Children, India, Consumer Socialization, Family Re-socialization

INTRODUCTION

There was a time when children were not spoken of as spenders or customers but as savers and future customers. In the past decade they are viewed as three markets in one: they are current market that spends money on their desires, they are a future market for most goods and services, they are also a market of influential who cause many billions of dollars of purchases among their parents (Mc Neal, 1987) With changing family demographics in the globalised world, children are playing an important role in decision making today. Today children are not passive users but influential buyers and are socialized into this role from an early age. Though research has been done in the West on socialization of children, the research

in India is still lacking on the topic (Kaur and Singh, 2006)

India has witnessed tremendous changes in the last decade. The Indian consumer who was limited by options till two decades back is today spoilt for choices. The personal disposable income has risen by 6.57% between 1993-94 and 2003-04 (Annualized growth rate between 1993-94 and 2003-04) (Laveesh Bhandari, 2009). Average household disposable income will have a compound annual growth rate of 5.3% between 2005-2025 (McKinsey Global Institute, 2007). As per Census of India, 2001, children under 15 years of age constitute 36% of our population. The large base of its age pyramid shows that for many years Indian population will continue to have a large number of young population. Research

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becomes important from Indian perspective as they are an important consumer segment both in value and volume. It is predicted that India will become the world's 5th largest consumer market by 2025 (McKinsey Global Institute, 2007). The three major emerging segments identified in India are kids, youth (including the young working singles) and urban Indian women. (Spencerstuart, 2008) India occupies an important position on the globe today and given this background India offers a unique environment for the present young generation whose exposure to the world is completely different from its earlier generations.

In India the bulk of incomes, expenditures now occur in urban areas even if they benefit rural residents. This is because urban areas are where the largest markets are and it is here that the latest fashion and lifestyles are created. Today it is not rural India that defines our lifestyle but urban India that is impacting rural lifestyles. As per report by Ministry of Statistics average MPCE (household monthly per capita expenditure) in 2009-10 was estimated at Rs 1053.64 in rural India and Rs 1984.46 in urban India. Per capita expenditure level of urban population was on the average about 88% higher than rural India. It is predicted that by 2025 the Indian consumer market will largely be an urban story with 62% consumption in urban areas (McKinsey Global Institute, 2007)

This study intends to investigate how the urban child influences the purchase decision making of the family and its relation to family demographics and family communication. The structure of the proposal is as follows: First the paper discusses the literature review. Next the conceptual model is outlined and finally the paper makes propositions based on exploratory research with the limitations and future scope of research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on children as consumers had started way back in 1960s but it was only in 1970s that it gained visibility in the marketing world. One of the first definitions of Consumer Socialization of children was given by Ward (1974) as "processes by which young people acquire skills, knowledge and attitudes relevant to their functioning as consumers in the market place". Over the years two major classes of influence have been identified for socialization process: cognitive factors and environmental factors (Haynes et al, 1993). The cognitive factors are usually

age related and environmental factors include agents like family, mass media, peers, culture etc.

INFLUENCE OF COGNITIVE FACTORS (AGE RELATED) ON CONSUMER SOCIALIZATION OF CHILDREN

Various models have been proposed to explain the changes in cognitive abilities of children with age.

- a. Piagets theory of cognitive development has proposed four main stages of cognitive development: sensorimotor (0-2 years), preoperational (2-7 years), concrete operational (7-11 years) and formal operational (11 years and above) The child is extremely self centered in Pre operational stage but begins to understand symbols. He starts to use symbols in a logical way in Concrete Operational stage (7-11 years) and also develops classification abilities. From 12 years to adulthood is the Formal Operations stage where he is able to do abstract thinking and apply it to real world. (Ginsburg et al, 1988)
- b. Another model based on information processing skills characterizes children in three segments-limited processors (7 years and below), cue processors (7-11 years) and strategic processors (12 years and above) Strategic processors are typically older children who spontaneously employ storage and retrieval strategies. (Roedder, 1981).

INFLUENCE OF SOCIALIZATION AGENTS

Influence of Family on Consumer Socialization of Children

Many researches over the years have highlighted the importance of family in consumer socialization of children. Ward et al (1977) defined three alternative roles of the family in development of consumer information processing skills. Moschis (1985) also conceptualized the family communication process and confirmed that parents appear to play an important role in consumer socialization of children. Using socio-oriented and concept-oriented as two dimensions of family communication four types of families were defined: Laissez faire (low socio orientation, low concept orientation), Protective (high

socio orientation, low concept orientation), Pluristic (high concept orientation, low socio orientation) and Consensual (high socio orientation, high concept orientation) (McLeod and Chaffee, 1972) This has been the basis of many studies which have identified the role of family communication on socialization of children. (Moschis et al, 1986, Moschis and Churchill, 1978, Carlson et al, 1990) Parental education was also found to effect children's attribution of persuasive intent to commercials. Children who received more parental restriction regarding television viewing tended to be less conscious of brand names and style of clothing. Also money education at home was linked to the number of children, the more the children, less money education happened (Shim and Snyder, 1995) Family influence on socialization and decision making has also been found to be influenced by coalition patterns in the family. Three females within a family were found to be more influential than three males acting together. Female children had more influence in family decisions than male children. (Lee and Collins, 2000) Gender difference was also highlighted in another study which said that female adolescents are more likely to perform socially desirable consumer behavior than male adolescents. However male adolescents appeared to know more about consumer matters (Moschis and Churchill, 1978)

Role of Mother as A Socialization Agent

Prominent role of mother in consumer socialization of children has been central in many studies. (Carlson and Grossbart, 1988, Bakir et al, 2006, Neeley and Coffey, 2007) Better educated, more autonomous single mothers were found to be placing more of the burden for family decision making for grocery products on themselves and less influence to children (Ahuja and Stinson, 1993). Mothers employment status was also defined as a factor influencing consumer socialization of children. Children of full time employed mothers shopped for their clothing more often than children of mothers with part time/ no employment. Also mothers from higher income families perceived that their children expressed more interest in apparel shopping (Haynes et al, 1993). As per study conducted by Flouri (1999) mothers materialism level and communication style alone could reliably predict child's level of materialism (Flouri, 1999) Also intergenerational influence was mainly from mothers to daughters (Mandrik et al, 2005). Father's role appeared to

be very less than mother in family communication pattern. Mothers concept-oriented communication was positively linked to children's use of utilitarian, social, conspicuous decision making styles while mothers socio-oriented communication was positively linked to children's use of undesirable decision making style and negatively to children's influence in family purchase decisions. (Lim, Lee and Tomuik, 2009) Different studies have dealt with different age groups and family role was present in all age groups though the percentage of influence may be different. Interestingly not many studies deal with India.

Influence of Media on Consumer Socialization of children

Another socialization agent which has been the subject of many research in the West is media- more specifically television advertising. Children learn to use media to become aware of new products with age (Ward, 1974). It was found that children believe and like commercials less if they attribute persuasive intent to them. On the contrary if they attribute assistance intent to them, they trust them (Robertson and Rossiter, 1974), It is only at 10-11 years that they develop a critical attitude towards commercials and tend to reject commercials directed at young adults. (Uusitalo and Takala, 1993, Butter et al, 1981) The parents may think that they are sieving the information reaching the children but study has proved that not only are children being exposed to adult oriented information but appear adept at processing that information also. (Hyatt, 2000) Not many articles were found testing the influence of internet on consumer socialization of children. Also role of family was found to be significant to the extent of controlling the exposure of children to media.

Influence of Peers in Consumer Socialization Of Children

Studies have confirmed that peers appear to be an important socialization agent contributing to the learning of expressive consumption elements (Moschis and Churchill, 1978) In a study done on children in the age group of 6-14 years it was found that sensitivity to peer group influence was highest by older age group and peer group influence was directly related to the conspicuousness of the product. (Bachmann and John, 1993; Mandrik et al, 2005) Materialism in adolescents was also found to be related to

peer influence (Flouri, 1999) Among socialization agents, peer influence demands more attention of the researchers but again role of family was emphasized in a study highlighting that while peer influence is quite dominating in the early stages of consumer decisions, the influence is found to decline towards actual purchase suggesting that parents may mediate the effect of peer influence (Moschis and Mitchell, 1986)

Children Influence in Family decisions

Most of the research in the past has focused on the role of age and influence of various socialization agents (family, media, and peer) on consumer socialization of children. However some recent research has highlighted the importance of adopting a reciprocal view of how parents and children may learn from each other in the socialization process (Ekstrom et al, 1987). Female adolescents appeared to be more involved in consumer decisions than male adolescents and also with increasing age and money adolescents acquired independence from parents in consumer decisions (Moschis and Mitchell, 1986) Children's influence in family decision making increased with increase in age of the oldest child (Ahuja and Stinson, 1993) Older children preferred to select more of their clothing for purchase. Girls shopped and selected more frequently their clothing (Haynes et al, 1993; Ozgen, 2003) Children also employ various strategies to influence the decision making. Thus when they feel they deserve to have their way they utilize negative influence attempts and use positive influence attempts when they feel parent has a right to tell them. (Williams and Burns, 2000; Marshall et al, 2007) Traditional assumptions of the consumer socialization model need to be reevaluated was proposed in another study which highlighted that preadolescent children are not necessarily only in a learner role vis-a-vis their parents and may have a stronger influence in household decision making at an earlier age (Dotson and Hyatt, 2000) Decision and influence strategies were found to play an important role when influence of children is considered during configuration and negotiation stages of decision making process (Lee and Collins, 2000). Child consumers in Turkey were found to purchase by themselves, make price comparisons, gave importance to brand and considered television advertising when making purchase decisions (Ozgen, 2003) Study also showed that Childs perceived influence was generally

highest for Plurastic and Consensual parents (Bakir et al, 2006). Ekstrom et al proposed that children who are more involved in family decisions will experience greater satisfaction with decision outcome (Ekstrom et al, 1987). Social power theory has highlighted that children are well aware of their influence and use various negotiation strategies to get what they want. Also with increase in age parents influence over children has found to decrease and children also start emerging as source of information which may be related to the fact that they are more technology savvy. Research has shown that child's influence may however vary by products. While older children were found to make more request for clothes and records, the younger children made more request for food products and were also more likely to specify brands (Scott, 1974; Ozgen, 2003)

Influence of Culture on the Consumer Socialization of children

Much of the research on consumer socialization has been done in North America and Europe but it is the universality of research findings that should be examined (Cram, 1999). With the world becoming a global village the results of consumer socialization of children have also been tried in other cultures. In a study done on relatively urban, industrialized, literate, and wealthy families of America, Britain, and Japan, results showed some significant differences. Japanese children watched lesser television compared to American and British children. While Japanese families were more circumspect and children were expected to learn through observation, trial and error, on the other hand American families were more open, expressive and children were expected to learn through purposive and expressive parental behavior (Ward et al, 1977; Rose, 1999). Parents in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden too were found to have a fairly tight grip on their children consumption (Brusdal, 2007). The Indian culture is very different from the Western culture. Indian culture is dominated by collectivist attitude rather than individualistic attitude. The family bonding in India is still very high. At the same time the younger generation is also influenced more by western culture. Also unlike other cultures, child is the responsibility of parents for a comparatively larger period of time. Decisions are still taken by family as a group rather than as an individual. In such a scenario one needs to examine the relevance of different concepts in Indian scenario.

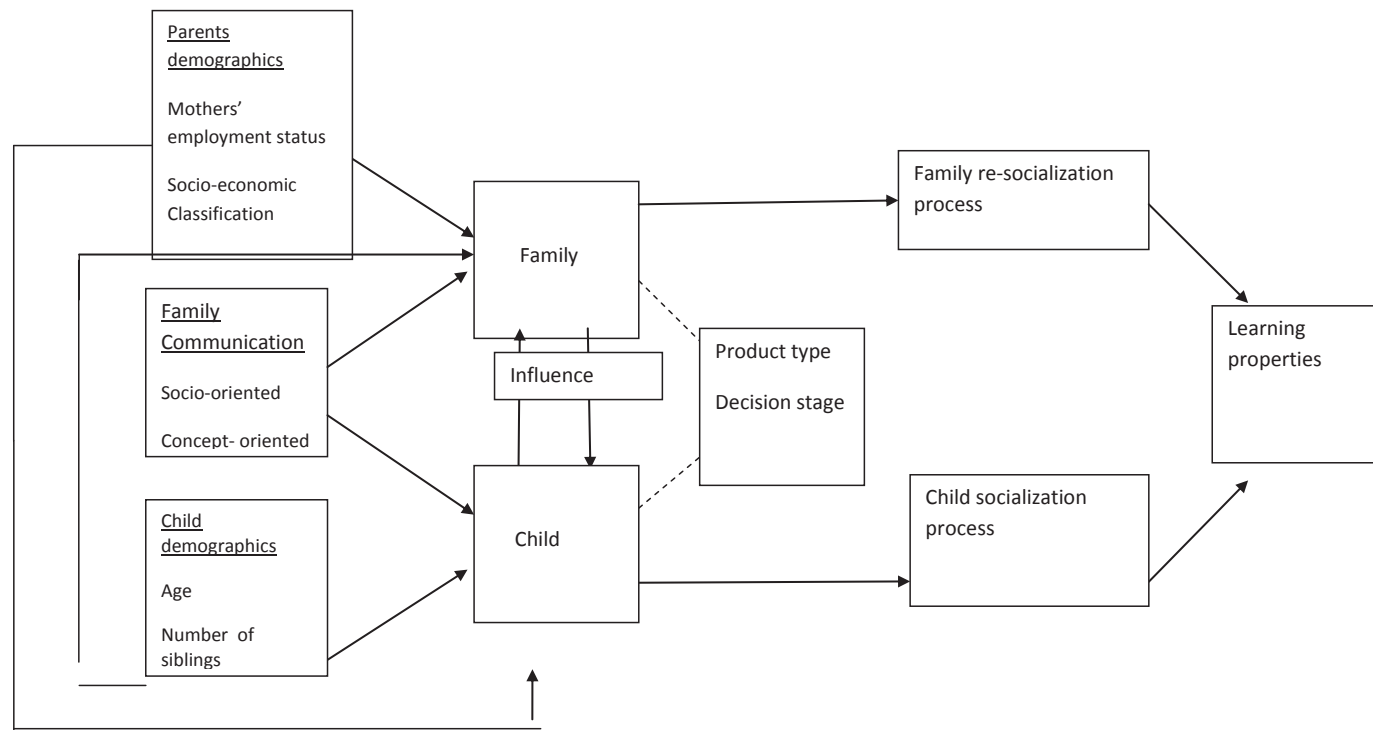


Figure 1: Influence of Child on Family Purchase Decision and its Relation to Family Variables

According to Burgess and Steenkamp (2006) there is a need for a marketing renaissance, the existing body of research suffers from the limitation of having been conducted in high income countries. So it is urgent to research emerging markets in order to advance marketing science and practice. They also call attention to the possibility that success in emergent markets may be crucial to the future of many global companies.

The Conceptual Model for Influence of Child on Family Purchase Decision and Its Relation to Family Variables

The focus of the model is how children influence family purchase decisions and its relation to various family variables and how the end result is also re-socialization of parents. The model conceptualizes the influence of children in relation to only family variables. Ward (1974) asserts that socialization is a lifelong process and hence this model also proposes “parents re-socialization’ with children as one of their socialization agents.

METHODOLOGY FOR PROPOSITION GENERATION

Due to lack of previous research, consumer socialization in India was taken to be an underdeveloped issue and hence exploratory study was conducted using qualitative method (Beyda, 2010) A pilot study was conducted using in-depth interviews and focus groups to generate data that could later be tested by other methods like quantitative survey to be completed by a larger sample size.

In-Depth Interviews

Detailed interviews were conducted with four pairs of mother and child in the city of Pune (India). Pune, also known as Oxford of East is now considered to be one of the most progressive and happening cities of India. It represents the changing profile of India both economically and socially. Children in the age group of 11-13 years were selected based on the studies which show that children in this age group are able to analyze and discriminate on

Table 1

<i>Family number</i>	<i>Joint/nuclear</i>	<i>Mother details</i>	<i>Number of children</i>	<i>Interview conducted with</i>
F(1)	Joint (with grandmother)	Housewife (M1)	One boy (11years) (male)	Male, 11 years (C1)
F(2)	Nuclear	Housewife (M2)	Two girls (female) Elder-18 years Younger-13 years	Younger girl, 13 years (C2)
F(3)	Nuclear	Working (M3)	Two boys (male) Elder -16 years Younger-8 years	Elder boy, 16years (C3)
F(4)	Nuclear	Working (M4)	One boy (male) (15 years)	Male (15 years) (C4)

more dimensions than children in the younger age group. (Roedder et al, 1992, Roedder, 1992, Uusitalo and Takala, 1993) A semi structured script was used as a guide. The interviews lasted 45 minutes to one and a half hour. Mother and child were interviewed separately. Permission of mother was taken before conducting interview with the child. The interviews were conducted in the house of the respondent so that the respondent is in comfortable surroundings. The details of the respondents are given in Table 1.

Focus Groups

A total of 18 children and 6 mothers took part in focus group sessions. Participants were divided in three groups with two groups of children and one group of mothers with an average of 6-8 participants in each (Halcomb et al, 2007, Fiates et al, 2008, Nash C, 2009) A semi structured questionnaire was used to ensure consistency in the questions. These questions were used as prompts rather than stand-alone questions. Focus groups were audio recorded with participants permission and lasted for approximately 45-60 minutes. Focus groups were conducted in a room familiar to the children with little furniture and distraction (Fiates et al, 2008) Demographic details were also collected from the participants. Children were in the age group of 11-15 years with maximum number being 13 years (40%).

The interviews and focus groups were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. They were then analysed for major theme identification.

Role of family variables

1(a) Type of Family

Family has been shown to be an important socialization agent in many studies. A study conducted in India found that parents who resort to co viewing, explaining and teaching children about television advertisements could help them to regulate their buying response within family norms (Kapoor and Verma, 2005) Another research shows that children who spend less time with parents experience less rational social influence and more commercial and irrational influence in the consumer socialization process. (Dotson and Hyatt, 2005) Family culturally and traditionally has always played an important role in the life of individuals in India. Major decisions are still taken after consulting the family. However it is also true that Indian families have witnessed huge changes in the last two decades. The Indian family structure is very different from the Western family structure. The bulk of Indian households are now nuclear. Though joint families are on the decline, extended families (where parents stay with the married child) are growing in importance.

Results from Interviews: The communication between the parents and children has increased due to nuclear families. In the interviews conducted some of the views were:

C2: Mummy never left me alone. I always used to go with her everywhere. It's only now that I am 13 years old so she lets me stay.

C1: Sometimes Mummy, Papa used to take me and sometimes not. When Mummy Papa used to go out, Baba,

Table 2: Number of Households Across Family Types (Urban)

<i>Sector</i>	<i>1999-00</i>	<i>2004-05</i>	<i>2007-08</i>
Nuclear	35155526	38364613	40429014
Joint	4000029	2048223	1370773
Extended	12197465	16540995	19858062
Total	51353019	56953830	61657850

(Source: The Indicus Consumer Handbook, Laveesh Bhandari, Pearson Education)

Dadi took care of me.

C4: I have been travelling in PMC buses since I was in sixth standard.

M2: How could I leave her alone? I used to take her with me everywhere. Now she does not want to accompany me everywhere. She prefers her friends or just being at home.

M1: Obviously staying in a joint family has its advantages. I could go shopping alone.

M3: We watch cricket together. That's good fun. We go out for movies also as a family.

Results from Focus Groups:

Due to lack of help the child from the nuclear family is exposed to shopping much earlier. Also communication between members in nuclear family is much more on all issues. The difference was observed in focus groups in the replies from a girl from joint family and a girl from nuclear family.

I was always tagged along when my mother went shopping so I had no choice. (Nuclear family)

I go with mummy to buy my dress so that we can check the fit but mummy decides the color (joint family)

I go with mummy to buy the dress and I decide everything (nuclear family)

Similar responses were received from mothers :

I used to take him with me everywhere. Now he does not come. (Nuclear family)

We all discuss and decide where to go for eating out.

Children observe and learn from parents at close quarters

in nuclear family. A child is also exposed to shopping much earlier in nuclear family. The consumer socialization of the child is earlier in nuclear family than in joint family. This also makes the child more knowledgeable about products/brands. This also increases the influence of the child in a nuclear family. Hence it is anticipated that type of family will influence the perceived influence of urban child in family purchase decision making.

Proposition 1.a.i): Urban Indian child of nuclear family has more perceived influence than urban Indian child in joint family

Proposition 1.a.ii): Urban child who is more exposed to market based factors has greater influence in purchase decisions than urban child whose exposure to market based factors is less.

1b) Mothers Employment Status

Research in the West has proved and reiterated that mother is a very important agent in consumer socialization of children. The Indian woman too in the last two decades has become economically more independent and more aware of her individuality. There is a general tendency for women to enter into paid work at younger age than previously. The peak work participation rate for urban Indian women has shifted from 40-44 years in 1993-94 to 35-39 years in 2004-05. There also has been an overall decline in casual employment and general increase in regular work and self-employment (Chandrashekhara and Ghosh, 2007). The number of households where both partners are working has risen and this has also shifted the household responsibilities. Mothers are spending less time with children. Overridden by guilt over protracted absence, fatigue and work pressure, the parent centered family has changed its orbit and has become child centered. (Rajesh Sud, 2007).

Results from Interviews

C3: Mummy is not always home. So she allows me to go and buy stationary and food items myself.

C1: I do not like going myself all the time. I just tell Mummy Papa what I want.

M3: Oh yes, he knows how to place order with Mcdonalds and Pizza Hut through phone.

M4: He has a mobile. I know where he is.....He manages everything on his own.

With working mothers not able to spend too much time at home, the child is induced in consumer socialization at an early age.

Similar results were obtained from *focus groups* with children (C) and mothers (M)

Oh yes, mummy sends me frequently to buy grocery (child of working mother)

Major arguments are with mother (8 responses) (C)

I prefer buying on my own. I don't like sending him to buy grocery items. Household shopping is done by me (Housewife mother) (M)

Parents who believe that they do not spend enough time with their children feel guilty and try to compensate for it by giving and spending more money for their children (Isin and Alkibay, 2011). In India, with increase in working mothers population, the dynamics of relationship between mother and child have also changed. Working mothers are giving more freedom and money to their children. While this increases their exposure to shopping, this also increases their influence in family purchase decisions. Comparatively the non working mothers take more burden on themselves and exposure of children to shopping is less. Their influence on family purchase decisions is also less.

Proposition 1.b: Urban child of working mothers has more influence on the family purchase decisions than urban child of non-working women.

Children's Demographics in a Family

While two decades back in India, one could say with confidence that parents are more influential (in case of an

argument the chances of parent winning the argument were more) but today children enjoy a different relationship with parents. Also there exists a difference between the views of the children and parents. Parents believe their influence to me much more in decision making process compared to the importance children give them (Sharma A, 2009) Perceived influence of child was found to be related to various demographic variables of a child in a family. Older children were also found to influence family decisions about purchasing furniture and cars (Ozgen, 2003) and older children were more brand and price conscious than younger children for clothes (Shim and Snyder, 1995) Children's influence was found to be more for snack products (snack, candy and soft drinks) (Ahuja and Stinson, 1993) and toys (Bjorklund,1979) Decisions were found to be taken jointly or unilaterally by adults for clothes, computer games in a study done in Brazil (Beyda, 2010) No significant difference was found in the perceived influence of male and female adolescents except for large purchases and food categories (Chavda, Haley and Dunn, 2005) Children in smaller families were found o have more influence in purchase decisions than do children in families with more children (Shim et al, 1995) Children's influence was found to be more in product categories where they are perceived to be experts. (Watne, Lobo and Brennan, 2011)

Results from Interviews

C3: Of course I tell my younger brother. I know more about computers (influence of older child)

C2: I like my sister's deodorant. She decides for Mummy also. (Influence of older child)

C1: I decide what will be made in breakfast on Sundays. (Influence on product category, influence by gender)

C2: Last weekend we went to Lonavala because I wanted to go to water park there after my exams (influence on product category, influence by gender)

C3: We all decided the color of Papa's car. (Influence on product category)

M1: God, food is such an issue. I will not eat this, I will not eat that. So I let him only decide what should be made and almost 70% times I agree.

M3: When it comes to Internet, he is anyway better than me. Youtube, facebook—all this I learnt from him only.

What is iPod, what is iPad...I don't know, he knows!!

M2: we used to wear whatever my mother stitched for me or bought for me. Gone are those days. I need Madam's (referring to her daughter) permission before buying any clothes for her.

Children's influence on purchase decision making was dominant even from *focus groups* with children (C) and mothers (M)

We decided that we should all go for IPL matches (Influence on product category) (C)

My sister and I said that we want to go abroad for vacations and Papa decided the destination (Malaysia and Singapore) (Influence by product category and influence by gender) (C)

My elder brother is more knowledgeable about mobile phones than Papa (influence of older child) (C)

My elder sister is more knowledgeable than mummy about fashion (Influence of older child) (C)

We all decided Papa's car (Influence by gender) (C)

My elder brother (my bro) and I bought a PS2 alone (Influence by product category and influence of older child) (C)

I don't know anything about gadgets. My son helps me out. (M)

Yes, I do ask my daughter for her opinion on clothes. (M)

We are going to US for holiday only because of my daughter. (M)

There were also some interesting statements in the whole process.

"My bro wanted a bike but Dad refused. He waited for 10 months and in the end he won."

While younger children were fussy about food, for elder children other issues were more important.

Proposition 2a: The smaller the number of children in the family, the more influence children have on the family purchase decisions

Proposition 2b: Older urban child will exert more influence on purchase decisions than will younger urban child

Proposition 2c: Male and female urban child will have equal influence on purchase decisions.

Proposition 2d: Children's influence on purchase decisions will vary according to product category

3) Family Communication

Parents with socio-oriented communication style are known by monitoring and controlling children's consumer learning and behavior and seek to promote obedience. Parents with concept oriented style consult children and value their opinion in purchase decisions (Moschis and Moore, 1979). Parental communication has been successful in predicting child's socialization. However effect of parental communication in child's perceived influence is still unexplored.

In the interviews conducted some of the views were:

C1, C2, C3: I know what is expiry date. I always check.

C3: The last item I bought was a phone for Mummy. It was just the right one for mummy. It was easy to use, good memory, simple camera. Not really hifi and not very simple also and in Mummy's budget.

M2: I think all children know what expiry date is.

M3: The other day we went shopping for some CD's. I was quite surprised and also proud at the manner he was asking questions from the salesman.

Similar results were gathered from *focus group* of children (C) and Mothers (M)

I bought camera and laptop battery with Papa by online shopping (2 response) (C)

Of course how can parents force me to wear something I don't like (in this case discussion was about shoes). They have to think that if I do not like it I will not wear it.

The cheapest pen is for Rs 5 (12 responses) (C)

To the question as to how will you buy a pen they responded by saying that I will ask for brand, colour , ask if refill is available and check by writing on paper. (8 responses) (C)

No, I don't have a problem taking my sons views (M)

Yes, I appreciate her views but at times I ask her to shut up. (M)

I don't know anything about gadgets. My son helps me out. (M)

Both from focus group and interviews it was seen that communication between parent and children is increasing and that is effecting their influence.

Proposition 3: There is a positive relationship between child's perceived influence on purchase decisions and level of concept orientation level of parents.

DISCUSSION

India, as a country, occupies an important position on the globe today. Children constitute an important segment of this growing economy. However the research done in this area is very limited. The study highlights the growing influence of children on family decisions. The focus groups and interviews present a new emerging picture of India. The results show that influence of children is increasing in the purchase decisions. Our results indicated that children in nuclear family have more perceived influence. Also mother's employment status was also an important factor. Families which are more open about communication, allow their children to influence the purchase decisions. Age of the child also influenced the decision as older children had more say in family purchase decisions.

However what is more important is to acknowledge the changing profile of parents. Parents today have no problems in taking advice from children. This is in contrast to the cultural scenario in India a few years back, when only children were supposed to listen to parents. The relationship equations between parents and children are definitely changing. Parents take pride in admitting that they sought help from their children for shopping. The role of children in family purchase decisions is undergoing a change in India. Their influence is limited by age factors or type of product.

Another important insight was the equal role of girls and boys in family. In India, traditionally boys have been given more importance than girls. However the research indicates that in urban India, the girl is as important as a boy in family purchase decisions. The trend is again an indicator of changing attitudes of parents.

The research has important implications for the marketers who need to acknowledge the growing influence of children in purchase decision making. Rather than targeting only parents or only children, the marketers perhaps need to bridge the gap between parents and children and enable quick decision making.

LIMITATIONS AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

This research is important for researcher who wants to understand the process and the various factors affecting it, for the marketer who sees a consumer segment in this group and thus needs to understand the factors that influence them and also the policy makers who need to make sure that learning happens in the correct manner. The research also underlines the changing attitude of parents who are ready to learn from children and in the process giving rise to their re-socialization. The results indicate that children are a major agent for socialization of parents.

The research is exploratory and only points to the direction of future research. Future research may test the propositions with a larger sample. Also the research has only considered the family demographics and family communication. Future research may also explore the role of media and peers in child's influence on family purchase decisions.

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