

KIDS- The rising super kings of consumer world

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Abstract:

The child is an innocent being, but transforms into a prescriber and consumer. The masters of marketing and communication understood this and that is why, kids participate fully, often at the expenses of their parents. Marketers consider as existing consumers as well as future consumers. Thus this paper highlights the reasons due to which lead marketers give greater importance to children and target them as their future consumers.

Key Words : Children, Consumer, Target Market, Buying Decisions etc.

Introduction & Background:

Our world has been rapidly changing since the past few decades. The trends of families have been changing to nuclear families; India too has been influenced by these changes. Indian families have been previously characterized as Joint Families, however owing to influences from the western ideologies; the construction of Indian families has changed from joint families to nuclear families. Exposure to the globalized world and changes in the family profile has caused a rise in Indian Consumer campaign and presently the behaviour of the Indian consumer totally varies from the former ones, marketers have shifted their attention to the The Children – the choicest consumers.

Marketers target children as their primary consumers because of two reasons, first, both the unrestricted income of children and their influence on parent purchases have grown overtime, second due to the huge increase in the number of Television channels available has led to a very small percentage of audience for each channel, thereby creating an increasing space for kids and their products.

Children guide the buying structure of their families. From choices of vacation spots to cars, to the selection of restaurants and meals, they exert a tremendous power over the family pocket book. Thus influencing children is directly related to the family purchases. These points can be summed up as follows:

□ Variation in Family structure:

There are so many changes in a family's structure and environment in which a child is brought up like -

- Increase in single parent households.
- Increase in strength of working women.
- Increase in dual income families.
- Increase in disposable income.
- Increase in nuclear families
- Increase in exposure to information to children through technology and mass media.

As a result, parents today are willing to buy according to the choice of their children

because they have –

- More stress in life
- Lesser time to spend with family
- Liability of not being able to spend quality time with their children.

Therefore, parents today are left with an option of substituting material goods for the time spent with their children and so the children have higher say in household buying.

Children are the rulers!

Children represent three different structures of markets -

- Influence market - Children influence household buying
- Current market - Children have money at their disposal
- Future market - Children are open to advertising campaigns designed to make them future consumers

Theory of Pester Power

There is a vast difference in the household decision making power between the present generation of children as compared to the previous generations; which follows that children are vocal about what they want their parents to buy. “Pester Power” refers to the ability of children to pressurize their parents to buy them things of their choice, especially those that have been advertised in the media.

Media Preferences

We discuss about circulation readership and the like, but only for adults. Yet children too impact media, marketing, and advertising in two crucial ways, they are large consumers and major influencers of the buying decision as can be seen in the advertising that uses children. Children watch these advertisements and force their parents to buy, these brands or commodities which attract them during the advertisements.

Commercialization in Education

A school atmosphere creates a captive youth audience that implies the recommendation of teachers and the education system. Marketers are explicitly utilizing this medium to advertise their products in a number of ways like:

- Exclusive deals with restaurants, hotels, adventure parks etc to offer their product in a school.
- Advertising posted in classrooms, school buses, on computer etc. in exchange for funds.
- Sponsoring school events.

All these marketing strategies attract the children and they convince their parents to buy the commodity which attracts them the most.

Pocket Money

Parents have a strong wish to prepare their children for the future so that they become self sufficient; which takes the form of providing them the skills so that they cope up without their assistance. It is clear that children become consumers at an early age, through motivation by parents, who also provide the youngsters with the financial support. Most of the children receive pocket money the result of which is that form a relatively big market for items like as soft drinks, junk food and gadgets as they purchase for self fulfilment.

The Internet

The internet is one of the most popular medium which provides information about new products to children in the form of attractive advertisements.

Kid Persuades and Parents Purchase

Parents consider the opinion of their children while making purchase of products that are not directly related to the child, like buying cars or gadgets, just because of the reason that they’ve knowledge of brands, trends and models. When children see their parents buy things based on their suggestions, they feel happy.

Mobile Advertisement

The introduction of mobile advertising to children is another game changer. The advantage of online advertising, the content is interactive. Mobile advertisement can be targeted to children more narrowly than other online advertising, as young people can be reached with advertising messages throughout the day, not only when they are sitting in front of the idiot box or a computer. As of 2012, 41% of all 12 to 27 years olds had a smart phone and two out of three has some type of mobile device that could connect to internet, such as a Tablet or an I-pad Touch.

□ Children an emerging market

In these days children are becoming a large part of the market. Keeping in view the interests of children, companies are introducing products that target the young kids. One perfect example of marketing to children are cartoon character printed accessories. These are becoming choices of even the youngest of kids in India.

Review of Literature

- A study aimed at understanding consumer's acknowledgement of mobile advertising that was available to those consumers who owned mobile phones. It tried to look for the factors that affected consumers' acceptance of mobile advertising along with consumers who accept mobile advertising in the Indian context. To test the hypotheses, a survey was conducted among 124 Indian consumers, all variables were measured using 7-point Likert scale; regression analysis was used. It was concluded that there is a positive co-relation between message credibility, consumer perception of message customization, message content, and consumer's ability to use mobile phone and their attitude towards acceptance of mobile advertising while consumer laziness negatively influences consumer mobile advertising acceptance. - Plavini and Pattanayak (2011)
- A study conducted on 100 adolescent girls, students of classes 9th-12th, to identify the impression of T.V. advertisements on their buying pattern. The main reasons for liking an advertisement was the information it gave related to the discounts, rebates, special gifts attached, brands and quality of the product. They observed that the girls who watched T.V. advertisements with interest and found them exciting and explanatory; along with the non-informative factors like celebrities associated, catchy slogans, jingles, visual effects funny advertisements, good music and action were also the reasons for liking an advertisement, in order of priority - Kotwal, Gupta and Devi (2008).
- Examination of the variables that dominate product usage among young people was aimed at exploring five variables: age, subjective product knowledge, influence of parents, influence of peers and product category. Research was conducted on a quantitative field study, whose sample was composed of 252 young people, aged 4-15. Fascinating results came to light for each one of the age groups: The involvement of parents and peers was in case of products related to young children, while the product-involvement level for children was influenced by peers and product category but in case of adolescents' product-involvement was dependant on subjective product knowledge and product category - Teeni-Harari and Hornik (2010).
- Assessment of the impression of famous personalities on the purchasing pattern of children, which mainly aimed at targeting children between the ages 5-14 years. 800 respondents were taken randomly from 70 cities of Delhi NCR; which aimed at comparing the behaviour of three groups of children in the ages of 5-8 years; 9-11 years; and 12-14 years belonging to urban and rural areas. The results clearly indicate that the children of all age groups were actively determined by the presence of celebrities in the promotions as they like their presence and mostly try to purchase the products which were promoted by their favourite celebrities - Singh and Aggarwal (2012).
- Another study conducted to assess the impact of endorsement by famous people on impulsive buying behaviour of youngsters in Pakistan. Statistics were composed of non-probability convenience sampling technique and survey research method was applied. Sample size of 150 young people (male and female) of Islamabad city was taken. Results show that star support has important impact on impulsive buying style; also the impact of icon endorsement on impulsive buying manners of youth in Pakistan, have strong relation with each other. Hence celebrity endorsement done in advertisements promotes attitudes of adolescents toward impulsive buying.
- Another research explored parents' impressions of children's impact on purchase decisiveness based on selected population size variables including ethnicity, age of the child, types of product (durable, non-durable and child-related) and gender of the parent. The study was based on a survey of 135 parents from the United States with children between the ages of 4-18 years. The results indicated that the type of product and age of the child impact parents' perceptions of children's influence on purchase decisions. There was indifference in parents' perceptions of children's influence based on gender or ethnicity. The perception of children's influence 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 the child also influenced parents' perceptions of influence i.e. the older the child is, greater is the influence he/she has been perceived to have(they show a positive correlation) - Ogden and Ogden (2011).
- The parents' perceptions of children's influence on buying behaviour decisions based on selected demographic variables between a U.S. and Egyptian sample. Hypotheses were validated through surveys in Egypt and the U.S. The paper focused on parents' perceptions of child's influence (aged 4-18) on purchase decisions. The paper examined child influence in fifteen different products in three product categories like non-durable, durable and child-related. 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 - Ramzy, et. al. (2012).

- A study based on survey approach and focussed on assessing the impact of demographic factors/variables like gender and age of children and parental profession on children in Delhi (India). A sample of 60 parents and 60 children between the age group 6-16 years were studied by two different close ended questionnaires. Investigation of the data indicated that children especially boys in the age group of 14-16 years had more influence than the girls in the same age group. Moreover this influence increased in case the parents are professionally more involved than those not involved - Akhter, et. Al. (2012).

Objectives of the Study

- To study the role of children as consumer - Buying the Product for own consumption
- To examine the role of children as influencer - Influence Parents' buying decisions
- To know the main source of information of children designed to make them future consumers - Future Market

Research Methodology

Data were collected from the Ghaziabad and Noida city of Uttar Pradesh. Parents of the Children (either mother or father) were the basic sampling unit for the present study. Parents of children in two schools were approached. The children were asked to take the questionnaire home and get it filled by their parents. Parents of children in age category of 5-12 years were contacted. 275 questionnaires were distributed to the children from whom 200 questionnaires (filled) were returned. This resulted in a total sample of 200 parents of children.

Analysis and Results

(1) Parents agree to their child's demands.

Table 1.1

	Never	Some times	Very often	Always	Total
No. of Responses	0 (0%)	60 (30%)	120 (60%)	20 (10%)	200 (100%)

Table 1.1 shows that majority of the parents (60%) agree that very often they agree to their child's demand where 10% parents always agree to their Kid's demand. However not a single parent agree that they never agree to their Kid's demands which shows that parents always listen to their child's demands and also tries to fulfil their demands.

(2) Provision of Pocket Money to Children

Table 1.2

	Yes	No	Total
No. of Responses	170 (85%)	30 (15%)	200 (100%)

When asked (85%) of parents favoured provision of pocket money to children, while (15%) parents disagree to this. Children have sufficient pocket money which converts them into independent consumer.

(3) Frequency of children accompanying their parents for shopping.**Table 1.3**

No. of Responses	Very often	Some times	Never	Always	Total
	110 (55%)	70 (35%)	0 (0%)	20 (10%)	200 (100%)

55% of parents prefer their children to accompany them for shopping which clearly depicts the role of children as influencers.

(4) Using pester power**Table 1.4**

No. of Responses	Yes	No	Total
	150 (75%)	50 (25%)	200 (100%)

75% of the parents agree that their kids use pester power, when they do not agree to their choice, they cry loud and dominate the parents with their choice.

(5) Source of**Information****Table 1.5**

Source of Information	Family	Advertisement	School	Peer group	Total
No. of respondents	20 (10%)	110 (55%)	30 (10%)	40 (20%)	200 (100%)

According to table 1.5 (55%) of the parents agree that main source of information of child is advertisements. They also agree that children get information about new products from peer groups and school friends.

(6) Identification of Buying role:

Under this question observations were taken for the different type of products and then two broad categories of products were classified as consumer durables and fast moving consumer goods (FMCG).

Table 1.6

Buying Role	Initiator	Influences	Decider	Buyers	No. Participation	Total
Consumer Durables	74 (37%)	84 (42%)	14 (7%)	8 (4%)	20 (10%)	200
FMCG	22 (11%)	8 (4%)	90 (45%)	60 (30%)	20 (10%)	200 (100%)

Table 1.6 clearly depicts that in the category consumer durables, maximum number of responses of parents were for children buying role as influencer (42%), followed by initiator (37%). Some even agreed that children do not participate but the majority is with their role as influencer. In the similar manner from the category of fast moving consumer goods, it was observed that most of time it is the children who decide the product to be brought shown by 45% of the total responses, followed by their roles as buyers (30% of parents responses). Some even agree that they don't participate at all.

This observation very significantly tells how, the buying role of children shifts with the involvement associated with the product. The involvement of the product is on dimensions of usability, price and family interest for the product i.e. high involvement, corresponding to high price, high usability and high interest and vice versa. Because of high involvement associated with buying of consumer durables, parents tend to take less risk hence rely less on children and so their role just restricts to the role of influencer and initiator. Whereas in case of fast moving consumer goods, being low involvement products, they operate oppositely and role shifts from influencer and initiator to the role of decider and buyer.

Conclusion:

From the foregoing analysis it can be concluded that, children represent an important target market for the marketers, because in addition to their own purchasing power, they influence their parents' buying decisions and are the adult consumers of the future. The survey clearly indicates parents' strong desire to prepare their child for adulthood or at least for self sufficiency. This desire takes the form of providing skills to the youngsters so that they may cope with the rapidly changing economic scenario, without the assistance of parents. Being a consumer is one of those skills. It seems clear that children are being turned into consumers at a very early age through the desires and with the encouragement of their parents, who also provide the necessary financial support in the form of pocket money.

The study emphatically indicates that adult consumer behaviour is the direct antecedent of child consumer behaviour, realizing this fact marketer are giving serious consideration to this segment, they are targeting the consumers by using children not only in the case of product meant for them but also for the product used or purchase in household sector.

Hence it can be concluded that, children today are the prime target market for the marketers as they have realized that targeting kids is the best bet today.

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