

Pester Power Tactics and Parental Response in case of Selected Food Products: A Study Conducted in Delhi/ NCR

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Abstract—Children role as a consumer and influencer has gained lot of attention these days. India is a young nation and children have a major share in the Indian population. The children plays very important role in the family decision making. Indian packed food industry has grown manifold and expected to grow in coming future. This paper attempts to analyze the role of children in purchase decision for various packed food products. The study tries to understand the role the child play, the source of information for these products, the request strategies they use and parents response to these demand. The study was conducted in Delhi/ NCR on 135 parents who have children from 6-12 years of age.

Keywords: Children, pester power, tactics, parental response

1. INTRODUCTION

Children are considered as an imperative part affecting the family decision making and have achieved consideration from marketers, academicians, public policy, advertisers etc. During the 1990's awareness was developed about the immense market potential children have. They contribute in three ways- a current market spending their own money in order to satisfy their own needs and wants, an influential market affecting the parent's decision and attracting a substantial amount of parental expenditure and a future market that will eventually constitute all the customers (McNeal and Yeh, 1997). Children play a significant role in the consumer market by influencing their parents purchase decisions either for the products for family use or for their personal use (Rose et al., 2002; Czarwana and Vassallo, 2003; Gaumer and Arnone, 2010). Owing to changes in the economic and social environment and increasing competition the marketers have to be more consumers oriented. Buying behaviour has an important role to play in the strategic marketing planning. Marketers should know its customers and understand their buying behaviour.

Children of various age groups- infants, toddlers, young children or adolescents are attractive segment for the marketers considering the age based segmentation. Children are gaining so much of attention from marketers for two

reasons. Firstly children in India and across the globe constitute a huge market and population of children is growing tremendously. India has the second largest population in the world after China. Its population was 1.277 billion in 2015. India is a young nation with more than 50% of the population below the age of 25 years. As per Census 2011, 29.5% of the population was in the age group of 0-14 years. This makes this segment even more popular. Secondly due to the vast spending power they possess based on their discretionary income and influence on family purchases (Kennedy 1995; Kim and Lee 1997). Children attempts and succeed in influencing the family purchase decision.

Berey and Pollay (1968) were the first one to understand the role of children. He list down the following three reasons for which this segment should be paid attention. The reasons are as:

- (a) The size of the child market is growing rapidly
- (b) Children influence the family decision making
- (c) Adult consumer behaviour is the direct antecedent of the child consumer behaviour.

Family decision making process has the following stages

- Problem Recognition
- Information search
- Evaluation of information
- Purchase decision

Children these days exert substantial influence in family buying decisions.

The word 'Pester Power' is gaining recognition in this ever changing world. Pester power is defined as the nagging ability of child in influencing his/her parents to buy what they demand and indirectly affecting the buying decision of the parents. Pestering means when the children keeps in asking or

keep on nagging their parents for the things that they can't have or their parents otherwise won't buy. Children have always been the most important part of the family. They are smarter, more informative and more influential and they have a bigger say in the purchase decision of the family. Owing to the role that the child plays the companies and marketers have also shifted their attention towards the children. They are making conscious efforts in driving the attention of children towards their product by using various strategies. There are lot of changes that are taking place in the family structure such as more working women, dual income households, more divorces and remarriages, kids exposed to information through mass media and internet etc. Even the parents are willing to spend more on their kids owing to more disposable income, lack of time, more stress in life and guilt for not spending enough time with their children etc.

Marketers are targeting children not only for the products directly purchased and consumed by them but also for products like automobiles, home appliances, laptops etc. The level of influence the child varies at the different stages of the decision making and also by the product category. The table 1 below shows some of the tactics used by children to influence their parents.

Table 1: Tactics used by children to influence their parents

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Pressure Tactics | The child makes demand, uses, and threats or intimidates to persuade parents to comply with his/her request. |
| Upwards Appeal | The child seeks to persuade parents, saying that the request was approved or supported by an older member of the family, a teacher or even a family friend. |
| Exchange Tactics | The child makes an explicit or implicit promise to give some sort of service such as washing the car, cleaning the house or taking care of the baby, in return for a favour. |
| Coalition Tactics | The child seeks the aid of others to persuade parents to comply with his/her request or uses the support of others as an agreement to agree with him/her. |
| Ingratiating Tactics | The child seeks to get parents in a good mood to think favourably of him or her before asking them to comply with a request. |
| Rational Persuasion | The child uses logical arguments and factual evidence to persuade parents to agree with his/her request. |
| Inspirational Appeals | The child makes an emotional appeal or proposal that arouses enthusiasm by appealing to parental values and ideals. |
| Consultation Tactics | The child seeks parent's involvement in making a decision. |

(Source: "Consumer behaviour: Reference groups and family influences" by Schiffman, Leon G. and Kanuk, L.L.P.361)

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This paper aims to achieve the following objectives:

- To identify the most frequently demanded product by the children.
- To know about the source of information about various products.
- To analyze the various tactics they use to get their demand fulfilled.
- To understand how parents responds to the demands made by the children.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected from 135 parents of children between age group of 6-12 years from Delhi/NCR region. The questionnaire method was used for collection of data. The questionnaire was either filled by the sample or was self administered. The method used for the selection of sample was convenience sampling. The secondary data was collected from various journals, books, articles, websites etc.

4. RESULTS

The data was collected from 135 respondents. The following table depicts the demographics of the respondents.

Table 2: Demographics of Respondents

| Parameters | Variable | Number of Respondents | Percentage of Respondents |
|----------------|------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Parents Gender | Mother | 105 | 77.78% |
| | Father | 30 | 22.22% |
| | Total | 135 | 100 |
| Family Income | Less than 3 Lacs | 34 | 25.19% |
| | 3 Lacs- 5 Lacs | 45 | 33.33% |
| | More than 5 Lacs | 56 | 41.48% |
| | Total | 135 | 100% |
| Family type | Nuclear Family | 58 | 42.96% |
| | Joint Family | 77 | 57.04% |
| | Total | 135 | 100% |

When asked about the time spent by the parents with the child it was analyzed that mostly mothers spent more time with their children as compared to fathers.

The table 3 below shows the product and the product most demanded by the children. The chips are the most popular product among the children and demanded most frequently followed by chocolates. Food with toys as premium such as gems, kinder joys etc are also very popular among the children.

Table 3: Food item frequently demanded by the children.

| Product | Rank |
|--------------------------|------|
| Chips | 1 |
| Chocolates | 2 |
| Ice cream | 5 |
| Biscuits | 6 |
| Soft drinks | 4 |
| Juices | 8 |
| Frozen food | 7 |
| Food with toy as premium | 3 |

Talking about the source of information about the product in case of chips and food with toy as premium television was considered to be the most important source. About 31.85 % of the children get to know about the variety of chips available from the television commercials. In case of food with toy as premium the television was the most important source with 35.56% of the children getting information about it from the television. This emphasizes the role of television commercials in providing the information about the product to the children. In case of chocolates and biscuits the children get to know about the product and demanded the product when they visit the store. Parents were considered to be the most important source of information in case of ice creams, juices and frozen food. Peers were another effective source of information especially in case of products like chips, frozen food.

Table 4: Children's Information Source

| Product | TV | Peers | Parents | Store Visit |
|-----------------------|-------|-------|---------|-------------|
| Chips | 31.85 | 31.11 | 11.11 | 25.93 |
| Chocolates | 19.26 | 17.78 | 28.15 | 34.81 |
| Ice Cream | 13.33 | 8.15 | 40.00 | 38.52 |
| Biscuits | 20.74 | 25.19 | 19.26 | 34.81 |
| Soft drinks | 24.45 | 18.52 | 41.48 | 15.56 |
| Juices | 14.82 | 25.93 | 31.11 | 28.14 |
| Frozen Food | 17.78 | 33.33 | 34.07 | 14.82 |
| Food with toy premium | 35.56 | 26.67 | 4.44 | 33.33 |

The next part of the study was related to the various tactics used by the children in influencing their parents to get their demand fulfilled. The tactics were selected after interviewing the parents as to know what are the most popular influence tactics used by the children in getting their demands fulfilled. The most popular method used was by insisting the parents to buy the product with 25.93% of the children using this method. This was followed by asking the parents again and again till the time parents say 'yes' to their demand.

Table 5: Tactics used by children

| Influence Tactics | %age | Rank |
|--|-------|------|
| Children request and ask nicely | 10.37 | 5 |
| They insist that they want this product | 25.93 | 1 |
| They say that their friends also have this | 7.41 | 6 |
| They say they will help with household chores | 3.70 | 9 |
| They say they would do their work on time like completing homework etc | 11.11 | 4 |
| They would throw tantrums | 11.85 | 3 |
| They would express their anger | 6.67 | 7 |
| They would ask over and over again | 16.30 | 2 |
| They would be extra nice to their parents and using terms like 'you are the best mom/dad' | 4.44 | 8 |
| They would take the product directly to the billing counter or hide it in the shopping trolley | 2.22 | 10 |

The last part of the study was to see how the parents react to the demand by their children and when the child uses his/her pester power do they agree to their demand or not. The response of the parents was again shortlisted on the basis of the interaction with the parents. Table 6 below shows the response to the request of the child. It can be seen that about 22.96 % of the parents said that when their kids' demands products that they assume are not healthy they normally don't show any reaction and tries to ignore the demand. This is followed by the response where parents tries to explain their children that how the product is not healthy at all and why it should not be consumed.

| Response of parents | %age |
|--|-------|
| I comply easily. | 14.81 |
| I explain them that every time their demand won't be fulfilled. | 16.30 |
| I don't show any reaction to his/her demand. | 22.96 |
| I quote example of the kids who don't demand such goods. | 5.93 |
| I ask them to buy some other substitute. | 10.37 |
| I explain them that the product is not at all healthy or should not be consumed. | 22.22 |
| I ask them to do something in favour. | 7.41 |

5. CONCLUSION

Children are a future market for most of the goods and services. The children these days understand market and have their own demands that they fulfill either by themselves or use parental income to get their demand fulfilled. This research concludes that the packed food items are very popular among the kids and they demand the product on various occasions. In case their demand is not met by their parents they even make use of their pester power to force their parents to buy the product that they won't buy otherwise. Marketers need to understand the role the child play in family decision making,

the way the product should be promoted, the way the product should be placed at the retail outlet etc.

Further research can be conducted to understand the parents and children's attitude in a better way.

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