

ROLE OF CHILDREN IN THE FAMILY BUYING PROCESS

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

by

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1. INTRODUCTION

The consumer movement in India is as old as trade and commerce. In Kautilya's Arthashastra there are references to the concept of consumer and consumer protection. Consumer behavior is defined as "the dynamic interaction of affect and cognition, behavior and environmental events by which human beings conduct the exchange aspects of their lives" [1]. It blends elements from psychology, sociology, social anthropology and economics. Theoretical models of consumer's decision making have evolved from the economic paradigm of 1940s, through the irrational consumer of 1950s and 1960s, to the information processor of 1970s, up to 1980s cognitive miser [2].

Family as a consuming and decision making unit is a central phenomenon in marketing and consumer behavior [3]. All family members play different roles in the process of buying any product or service. These roles are those of initiator, influencer, gatekeeper and decision-maker [4]. Earlier, studies had only focused on husband and wife's role and child's role was ignored [5]. Children have come to constitute a very important consumer group; and it starts when they are very young [6] [7]. Children are the new segment [8]. In this study, focus is on children as an influencing agent, because previous studies show that children achieve increasing influence on buying of various kinds of products [9] [10] [11] [12] [13] [14] [15].

Berry and Pollay [16] were the first to understand child's role in marketing, where children constituted an important, separate market segment for marketers. It is seen that children not only influence family purchase decisions but they also insist their parents to purchase the products they desire [17]. Role that children play in family decision-making has directed researchers to study the influence of children.

2. NEED FOR THE STUDY

Understanding children's influence in family buying process has been acknowledged as an area in immense need of research [18] [19]. As stated by Stipp [20], "big gaps exist in our understanding of young people's consumer behavior". Children are recognized as a primary market and spend their own money. Today child's involvement as consumers is rapid and as

one popular term describes this “Kids grow up young” [21]. Marketers promote products with adult appeals to kids who are growing up earlier [22]. Also, marketers have become increasingly interested in children as consumers; this has an impact on the ever-increasing volume of advertisements targeted at children.

Family’s communication pattern has become more open and democratic. Parents pay more attention to their children. Children have become ‘*Dream children*’ and ‘*Trophy children*’ holding a special status in the family [8] [23]. New behavioral patterns are arising, such as children being influencers and participators in family decision-making; and new media (e.g. digital and interactive) enter the market, and children adopt these fast [8] [24].

Indian society vastly differs from west in terms of family composition, family type and structure, norms, values, and behavior, it is important to understand children’s influence in the purchase decision making in families in the Indian context [25]. Buying power of children in India is different compared to the western countries but still they play a key role in Indian families [17]. The studied literature also showed gap in studies related to young children. The group “tweens” referred to is about 8 to 12 years old and are neither children nor teens; they are ‘*tweens*’ which is a term derived from ‘between’ children and teens. Tweens have grown up faster, are more connected, more direct and more informed. Children and tweens are not only important as individual consumers but also as *an influencing market* directing parents’ spending towards their own wants and needs [6] [7] – or as the advertising industry says: children have ‘*pesterpower*’ [8]. It would be interesting to see the results of study with such young children.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

In marketing literature there are a number of studies on consumer purchasing behavior, family members influence on consumer purchasing decisions. There are many shared decisions, made by consumers with the family members, which in turn has an effect on other family member’s wish and attitude [26] [27]. Research on family decision- making was initially directed to spouses, however, the role of children on decision making and negotiation strategies had become an important issue of study [17]. Previous researchers have identified that as children mature from childhood to adolescence, their knowledge on consumer behavior, values and skills increases [28]. McNeal [7] cited that the number of parents asking for children’s opinion for family purchase has increased over the years.

For almost all product categories, children have an important role [29]. Whether the product is for child's own use like toys, snacks, clothes, etc. or the product is for family use like family vacation or the product is for joint consumption of household like rice, food, tea / coffee, child is having very strong influencing power [10]. But a child's influence in the family buying process differs by product category [30]. Davis and Rigaux [31] were the first authors to differentiate stages within the decision-making process as problem recognition, search for internal and external information and final decision. The studies of Moschis and Mitchell [32] and Beatty and Talpade [33] showed that children dominated influence in the first two stages i.e. problem recognition and information search, but this influence decreases at the last stage (choice) of the purchase decision stages. Older children have significantly more influence on the family decision making process than younger children [29] [34]. Later-born / only children have more influence on certain purchases than firstborns [35]. Similarly gender, social class, number of siblings and family income also impact the children's influence on the family buying process. Children's influence has also been largely moderated by the role of media [36] [37].

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Past five decades have witnessed a number of studies and researches in the area of family decision making and its dimensions and is still open to lot of research. With this motivation, an attempt has been in the present study to achieve the following objectives religiously:

1. To identify and analyze the dimensions of child's consumer socialization affecting child's influence in family buying process.
2. To identify and analyze the different influence strategies children use to persuade their parents.
3. To identify and analyze the different product categories on the basis of child's influence.
4. To examine children's influence in the three stages of family buying process for the different product categories.
5. To investigate and propose a model identifying relationships between socialization agents, influence strategies, buying stages and product categories using structural equation modeling.

5. CONCEPTUAL RESEARCH MODEL

This research aims to explore the dimensions of children's role in family buying process and produces a model for understanding the factors influencing a child's role. For this, a model of research (Figure 1.1) has been proposed. The model studies how a child is socialized and how this level consumer socialization impacts the use of various influence strategies by child. Then the model progresses by finding out the relationship of influence strategies with the buying stages and with the different categories. And lastly, the model explains the relationship between buying stages and different product. The detailed literature review helped in converting the research questions into different hypotheses.

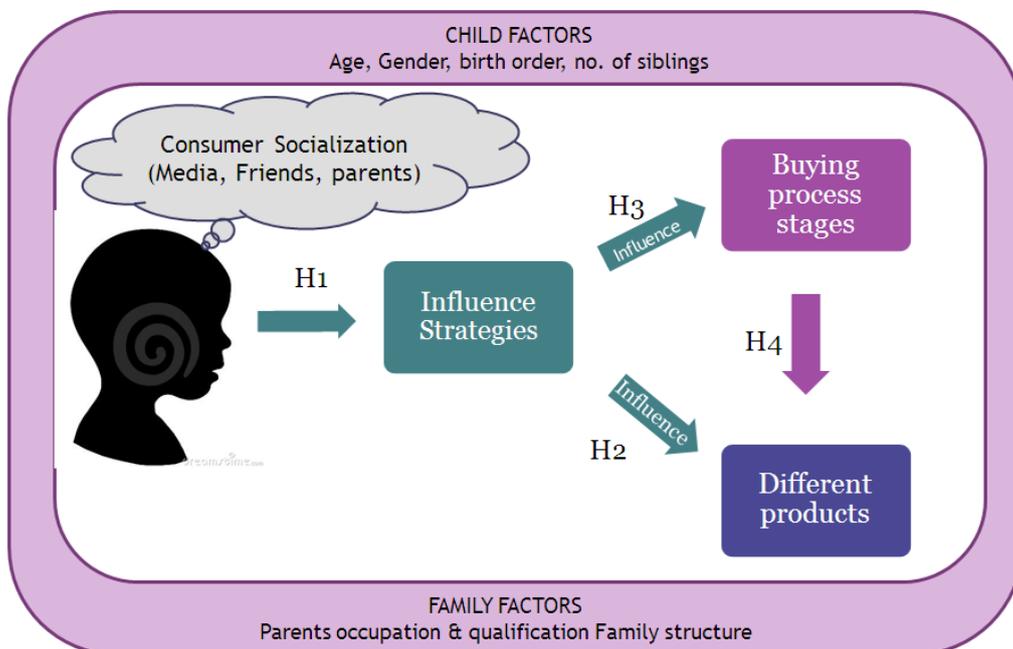


Figure 1.1: Research Model

6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

6.1 Research Design & Instrument

A systematic and organized methodology was obtained for the research study. The research design was descriptive. Based on an in-depth discussion and exhaustive literature review, the objectives of study were chalked out. Then various constructs for measuring children's influence level were conceptualized. Focus group discussions were then conducted with the children and their parents separately to gain insight into Indian family's buying process and children's role. Two questionnaires (one for child and one for parents) were intricately

designed to tap not only the demographic variables but also about the family buying process stages for different products.

6.2 Sampling

After successful pretest of questionnaires, stage was prepared for the main study. For the main study, random sampling and cluster sampling were used. The cluster sample consisting of 10 schools from National Capital Region (NCR) of India (Delhi, Gurgaon, Noida and Ghaziabad) were taken. From each of these ten schools, four classes were randomly selected. From these classes, student clusters were randomly selected, each cluster containing around 10 students. A total of 400 sets of questionnaires were sent to these 10 schools. Out of the 374 responses received, only 350 questionnaires were found to be fully filled, the rest 24 were discarded due to incomplete information. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17.0 and Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) version 21.0 were religiously used for statistical analysis.

7. SIGNIFICANCE AND CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

Current research focused on the effect of a child in family buying process. This research helps to augment the current traditional buying models by providing scientific data taken from samples of families of various compositions.

The new investors have a little different thought of school than their old counterparts; while the older ones were more focused on the Enterprises as consumers, the newer Investors have understood that an individual is your consumer and looking for ways to woo their specific segments of consumer market. Disney, Apple Inc. and McDonald are some of the examples which have been following these thoughts. The study has been significant in categorizing goods into specific segments based on the involvement of the children in the buying process. It is an original attempt to allude that goods can be categorized into three segments only based on whether children are interested in getting them home or not.

The research is of paramount significance to academicians too because the study is to understand Indian families buying process which is different from Western and developed countries on a lot of pragmatic grounds. Families in developing countries have different buying power, they are culturally different and their family priorities differ from the Western

countries; hence it becomes important to understand child's influence in the purchase decision making in families in Indian context [25].

8. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

8.1 Personal profile of respondents

To begin with, personal profile of the respondents was tabulated. Descriptive Analysis showed that almost 53% of children were in the age group 8-10 years and rest in the age group of 11-12 years. Out of the total respondents, 66% were boys and 34% girls. Almost 80% of the children were having one or more siblings while the rest 20% were single child of their parents. Parent respondents were distributed in three age-groups: 26% were in younger age-group (30-35 years), 50% in middle age-group (36-40 years) and rest 24% were in older age-group (>40 years). Mean age of parent sample population was 38.54 years. Almost 30% of fathers were doing their own business, 19% were in government services and 51% was in private service. Almost 25% of mothers were working and rest 75% were not working. Out of the families surveyed, 41% were joint families and 59% were nuclear families.

8.2 Analyzing child's consumer socialization

Factor analysis resulted in four factors for child's consumer socialization. These were used for further analysis and have been referred as consumer socialization agents:

- **Friends and TV:** This agent contained two prominent items namely, friends and television. In child's shopping behavior, both friends and television's impact has been very strong and may be similar because kids try to imitate things which they see on TV or on any of their friends. Marketers use television as a medium of communication since it affords access to children at much earlier ages than print media can accomplish [17].
- **Internet:** This factor included three items about how much internet the child access in a day, whether child uses internet for school assignments and for finding information about products and services. The internet has formed a new learning culture, which allows children to share, discuss, influence and learn interactively from each other [38].

- **Parents:** Third factor identified was parents. Importance of parents as a socializing agent has been observed by many studies [39] [40] [41]. This factor included three items about how the parents are allowing and motivation children to participate in the buying process.
- **Shopping:** Shopping is the fourth socialization agent. This had just one item; how frequently children go out for shopping. With kids getting more buying and influencing power, they go out shopping with their parents and friends very frequently.

Comparison of child's consumer socialization across various personal characteristics

For comparing the four consumer socialization agents across the personal characteristics, t-tests and ANOVA were conducted. It is interesting to see that young children (8-10 years) were more socialized through friends and TV and older children (11-12 years) were more socialized through internet. Boys are more influenced by TV and internet than girls. The analysis shows that children in the joint family are more socialized through internet than in nuclear family. Surprisingly mother's qualification and occupation made no difference in the socialization agents of children. Since in India, female literacy and workability are still in nascent stage, this result is not in line with the western studies where mother has been identified as an important socialization agent [42] [43] [44].

8.3 Analyzing the various influence strategies children use

Factor analysis of the various influence tactics children use, resulted in five factors:

- **Aggressive Influence Strategies:** These strategies were those in which the child displayed some form of verbal or nonverbal aggression to parents. Tactics like not eating, showing anger and acting stubbornly belonged to Aggressive Strategies.
- **Persuasion Strategies:** These strategies were those in which a child attempt to move parents by argument or entreaty to a belief, position, or course of action. It includes tactics like child's expression of opinion on product, insisting that this is what he/she wants, begging by the child, nagging, whining and pretending illness to make parents sympathize.
- **Rational strategies:** Under rational strategies, child brings some logical explanation of his/her demand into conversation like offering deals (example: clean room in return of a

chocolate), bringing some external reason, propose fair competition (example: coin toss) and mischief like hiding things in the shopping trolley.

- **Knowledge strategies:** Knowledge strategies had tactics in which child displays his/her knowledge about the product or brand. Child persuades parents by telling about the TV ad he/she saw about product or the fact that this particular brand is famous.
- **Emotional Strategies:** Last were the Emotional Strategies in which the child acts affectionately in verbal expression or behavior. Children are unnaturally nice to parents or they emotionally blackmail that their all friends have it and so they also want it.

Comparison of child's use of influence strategies across various personal characteristics

For comparing the child's use of influence strategies across various personal characteristics, various t-tests were done to see whether demographic factors have an effect on the type of influence tactics used by children. Findings showed that older children can understand the complex human emotion system and had more knowledge about brands; hence they use emotional and knowledge strategy more often than their younger counterparts. Boys used knowledge strategies of influencing parents more often than girls. Emotional strategy was used more often by those children who are single child of their parents. Analysis also highlighted the difference in perception of child and his/her parent when asked about the use of various influence strategies.

Correlates and Determinants of child's use of Influence Strategies

Correlation and regression analysis was also done in order to find out the contribution of four socialization agents on the various influence strategies and hence the pester power of the child in influencing parents. All the correlations had positive coefficients and some were significant. Child's use of persuasive influence strategies can be determined by the significant factors namely friends & TV and shopping. R square was 0.080 which means that 8% of the variation in the persuasive strategies are explained by the child's socialization through friends & TV and shopping. For knowledge strategies, there is only one significant factor i.e. internet. R square was 0.080. Overall the socialization agents impact considerably well to the pester power of a child through different influence strategies. Figure 1.2 shows the relationship of

the four socialization agents with the pester power of a child. Almost 10% of the use of influence strategies is explained by the child's consumer socialization agents.

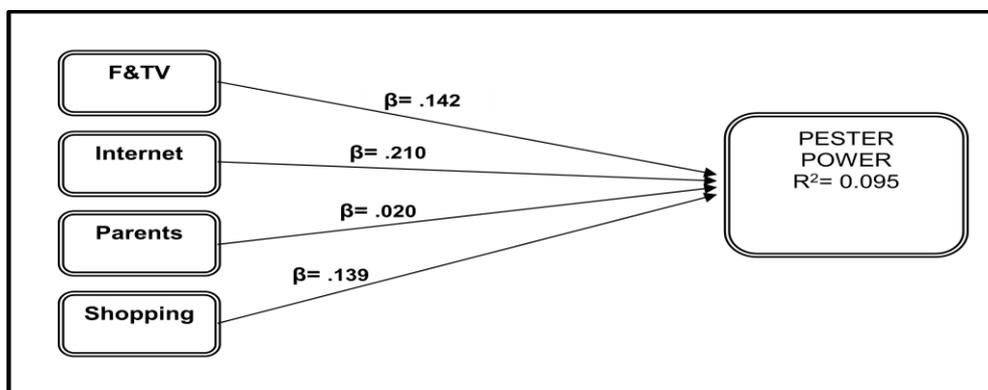


Figure 1.2: Relationship of Socialization agents with Influence Strategies

8.4 Analyzing the child's influence for different product categories

Factor analysis resulted in three distinct product clusters; loud goods, noisy goods and quiet goods. This is the first of its kind classification of consumer goods based on child's influence.

- Loud Goods:** Loud Goods are expensive products and high risk is associated in their purchase. The decision of buying them requires more time and effort of the family members and hence joint family decisions are more likely. For these products, buying frequency is very less. It contained six products namely: vacation, computer, mobile phone, car, television and washing machine.
- Noisy Goods:** Noisy Goods are not very expensive, and their buying frequency is moderate. But these are directly used by children and hence they have high involvement. For these products, children make the maximum effort and noise to influence their parents and hence have been given the name "Noisy Goods". It included six products: stationary, books, food & beverages, clothes, movie tickets, dining out and video games.
- Quiet Goods:** Quiet Goods are the regular household products in which a child has least interest. They are necessities and hence not very expensive. Their buying frequency is also very high. It included three products: shampoo, toothpaste and grocery items.

Comparison of child's influence for the three product categories across various personal characteristics of respondents

For comparing the child's influence in three product categories across various personal characteristics, various t-tests were done to see whether demographic factors have an effect. T-tests were conducted to compare across all the personal characteristics; few t values were significant (age, no. of siblings, family structure and parents qualification), whereas few are not (gender, birth order and parents occupation). Further t-tests also revealed significant difference in the opinion of child and parent for loud goods (Figure 1.3).

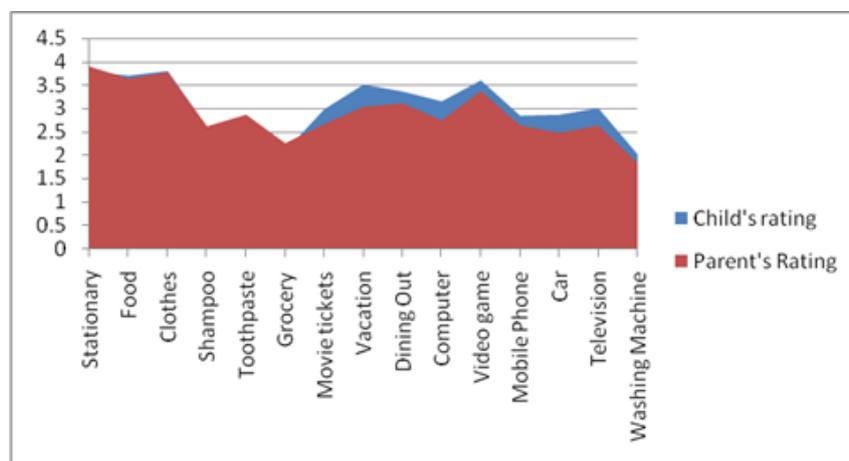


Figure 1.3: Graphical representation of difference in perception of Child & Parent for specific products and services

Correlates and Determinants of child's influence in three product categories

Regression analysis was also done in order to find out the contribution of various influence strategies in the buying of three product categories. 10% in loud goods and 18% in noisy goods was explained by the strategies viz., aggressive, persuasive, rational, knowledge and emotional. Figure 1.4 shows graphically the relationship between influence strategies and product categories.

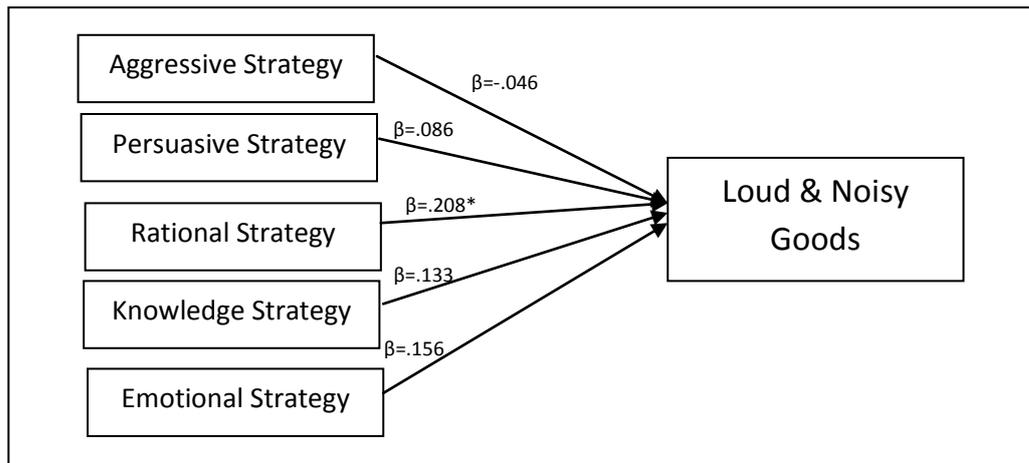


Figure 1.4: Relationship of Influence Strategies with different product categories

8.5 Analyzing the child's influence in the Buying Process Stages

The Child's influence also varies by the various buying process stages and sub-decisions. Figure 1.5 shows the child's influence in different stages for different products and services.

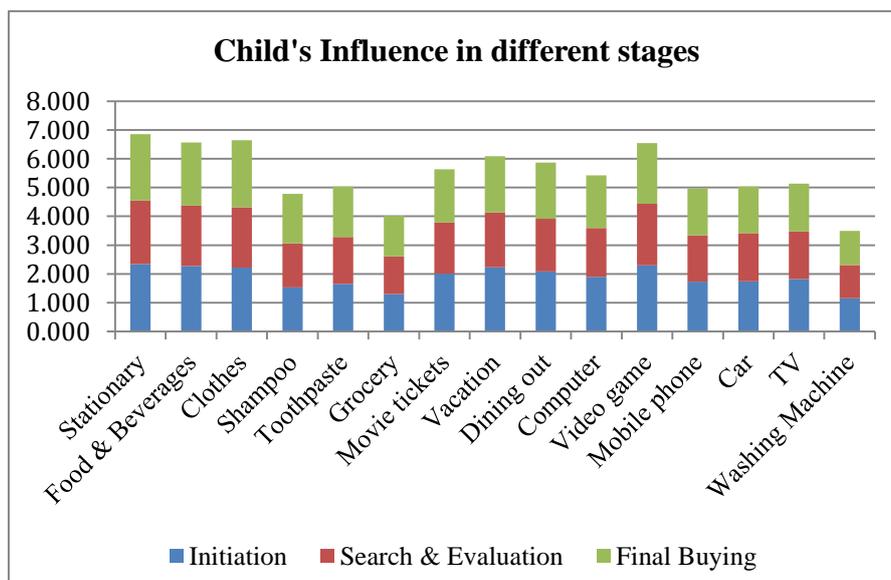


Figure 1.5: Child's Influences in three stages

Comparison of Child's Influence in three family buying stages and sub-decisions across various personal characteristics of respondents

T-tests were again conducted to compare across all the personal characteristics. Children between the age group of 11-12 years had more influence in decisions about where to buy, when to buy and how much to buy. Findings also highlighted that the children with one or more siblings had more influence than those children who were single child of their parents.

This may be because of the pacts and association forms among siblings to pester very strongly. Children in the joint family were more influential than those in the nuclear family in the initiation and the final stage of buying and sub-decisions. Indian joint families have strong influence over child's participation in the buying process. With grandparents, child is able to influence more as compared to those children who are in nuclear family set-up. Though not significant, parents perceived their children had more influence in the search & evaluation and final buying stage while child's mean score is greater than that of parents in case of first stage of buying process. Figure 1.6 shows the difference of perception for buying stages.

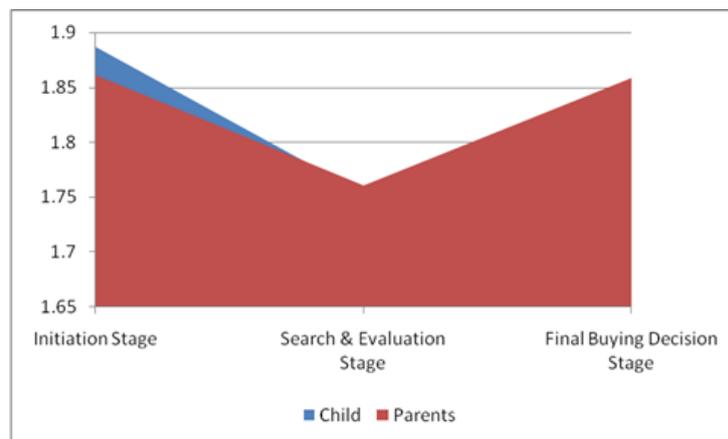


Figure 1.6: Graphical representation of difference in the perception of Child & Parent for three buying stages

Correlates and Determinants of child's influence on the family buying process stages

Relationships were found between the various influence strategies and influence at different buying stages. Most of the correlations were significant. Thus stating the fact that the child's use of varied influence strategies does determine the child's influence levels in different buying stages. Then regression analysis was done in order to find out the contribution of various influence strategies in the child's influence at different stages. Step-wise regression was resulted as: 46% for loud goods, 48% for noisy goods and 19% for quiet goods was explained by the influences at different buying stages. Overall the influence on buying stages impact considerably well to the child's influence for loud, noisy and quiet goods. The same was being calculated through regression, where the buying stages; initiation, search & evaluation and final buying stages were put as independent variables and child's influence on products (loud goods + noisy goods + quiet goods) as the dependent variable (Figure 1.7).

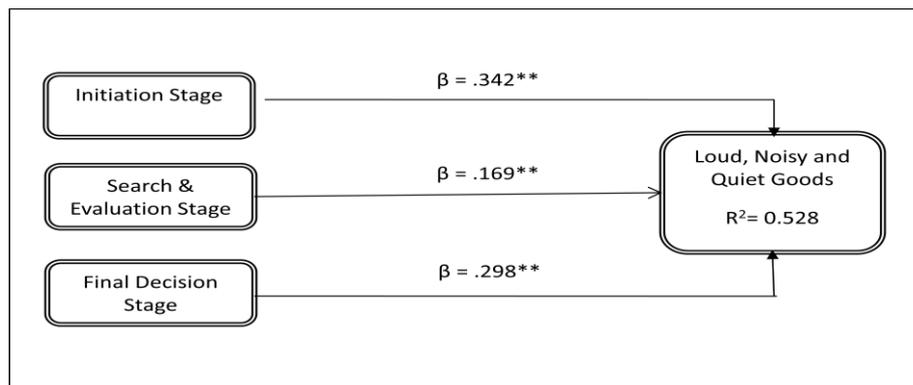


Figure 1.7: Relationship of Buying process stages with Loud, Noisy and Quiet Goods

8.6 Profiling based on product categories

It would be very insightful for the practitioners to understand children profiling on the basis of loud, noisy and quiet goods. With all the above analysis, findings can be summarized as three distinct profiles. Figure 1.8 captures these children profiles for these three product categories.

Loud goods: For loud goods, children were most socialized from their parents. These children were of higher age group (11-12 years). Most of the times they used knowledge strategy to influence parents for their choice of products i.e. knowledge from advertisements and brands. Children were most influential in the final buying stage during the purchase of loud goods.

Noisy goods: For noisy goods, children were most socialized from shopping & not parents as in the case of loud goods. Mostly, children used emotional strategy to influence parents for their choice of products. For noisy goods, children were most influential in the initiation stage.

Quiet goods: For quiet goods, children were most socialized from parents, friends & TV. Mostly emotional strategy was used to influence the parents. These are the children who were most influential in the final buying stage during the purchase of quiet goods.

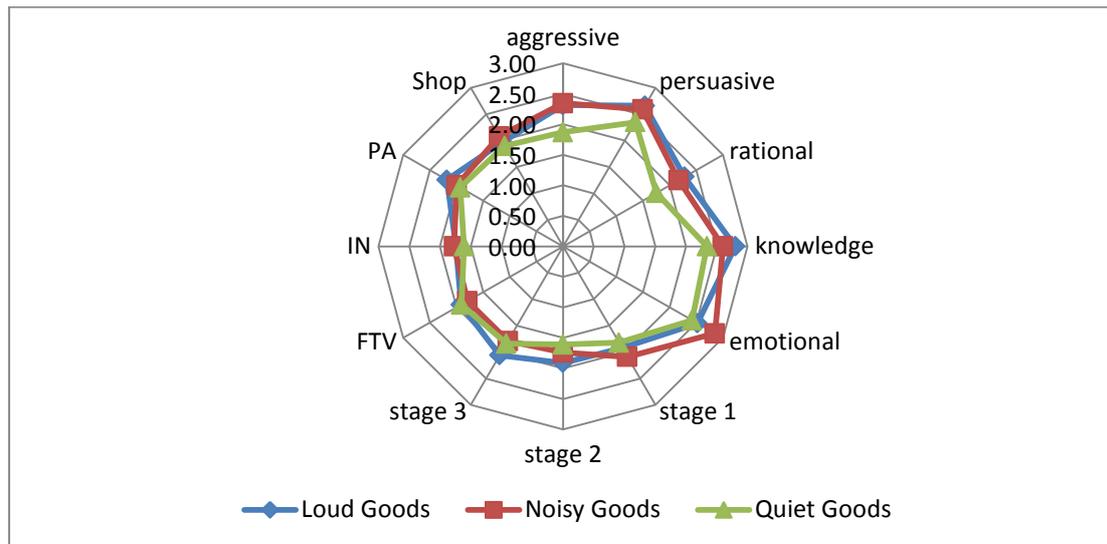


Figure 1.8: Profiling based on product categories

9. Structural Equation Modeling

To accomplish the last objective of study, a structure equation model was employed to incorporate child's consumer socialization agents, child's use of pester power through various influence strategies, the three stage family buying process and finally the child's influence in the buying of three selected product categories. Linear model was tested and adjusted for an adequate data-fitting and research framework. Overall fit of the model was assessed by chi-square (χ^2), goodness of fit index (GFI), adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI), comparative fit index (CFI) and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). GFI values over 0.9 and AGFI values over 0.8 indicates good data-fitting [45]. Brown and Cudeck [45] suggest that an RMSEA of 0.05-0.08 is acceptable. Fornell and Larcker [46] present a measure of composite reliability (CR), which measures the consistency of content construct indicators. The recommended value of CR is 0.5 or greater.

Table 1.1: Goodness of fit indices for CFA

	$\chi^2(df)$	P	GFI	AGFI	CFI	RMSEA	CR
Consumer Socialization	47.646	0.221	0.954	0.926	0.953	0.031	Friends and TV = 0.6 Parents = 0.5 Internet = 0.6
Pester Power	126.884	0.000	0.909	0.865	0.884	0.063	Aggressive = 0.6 Persuasive = 0.6 Rational = 0.63 Knowledge = 0.5
Product Categories	165.571	0.000	0.895	0.848	0.898	0.076	Loud goods = 0.83 Noisy goods = 0.73 Quiet goods = 0.70

Path analysis was then used to test for links between the latent variables as identified (Figure 1.9). Structural and measurement model using a correlation matrix with the maximum-likelihood were estimated simultaneously via AMOS. The measurement model assessed how the latent variables (consumer socialization, pester power, family buying stages and product categories) were measured. Cronbach's alpha established inter-item reliability between items. Structural model applied the causal relationships among these latent variables. Using standardized path coefficients, contribution of various factors on product categories were found. Contribution of socialization on pester power is 0.42 ($p < 0.05$); pester power on buying stages is 0.35 ($p < 0.05$), pester power on product categories is 0.18 ($p < 0.05$) and buying stages on product categories is 0.83 ($p < 0.05$). Other important statistics as seen in Table 1.2 are as follows: $\chi^2=1223.580$, $p=0.000$, GFI=0.8, AGFI= 0.75, CFI = 0.85 and RMSEA = 0.052. Figure 1.9 shows in detail the total impact on purchase of loud goods (0.83), noisy goods (0.91) and quiet goods (0.56). From Table 1.2, it can be seen that except GFI, all other indices χ^2 , CFI and RMSEA are with in the recommended range. But as Zikmund [82] argued that values of GFI lower than 0.9, do not necessarily mean that the model has a poor fit. It is also suggested that for data sets with a large number of indicators (more than 24) and smaller sample sizes, it beomes necessary to use more liberal cutoff values [83]. So here with 42 indicators, 11 constructs and sample size of 175, a lower GFI value = 0.80 could be acceptable.

Table 1.2: Goodness of fit indices for SEM

$\chi^2(\text{df})$	P	GFI	AGFI	CFI	RMSEA
1223.580	0.000	0.8	0.75	0.85	0.052

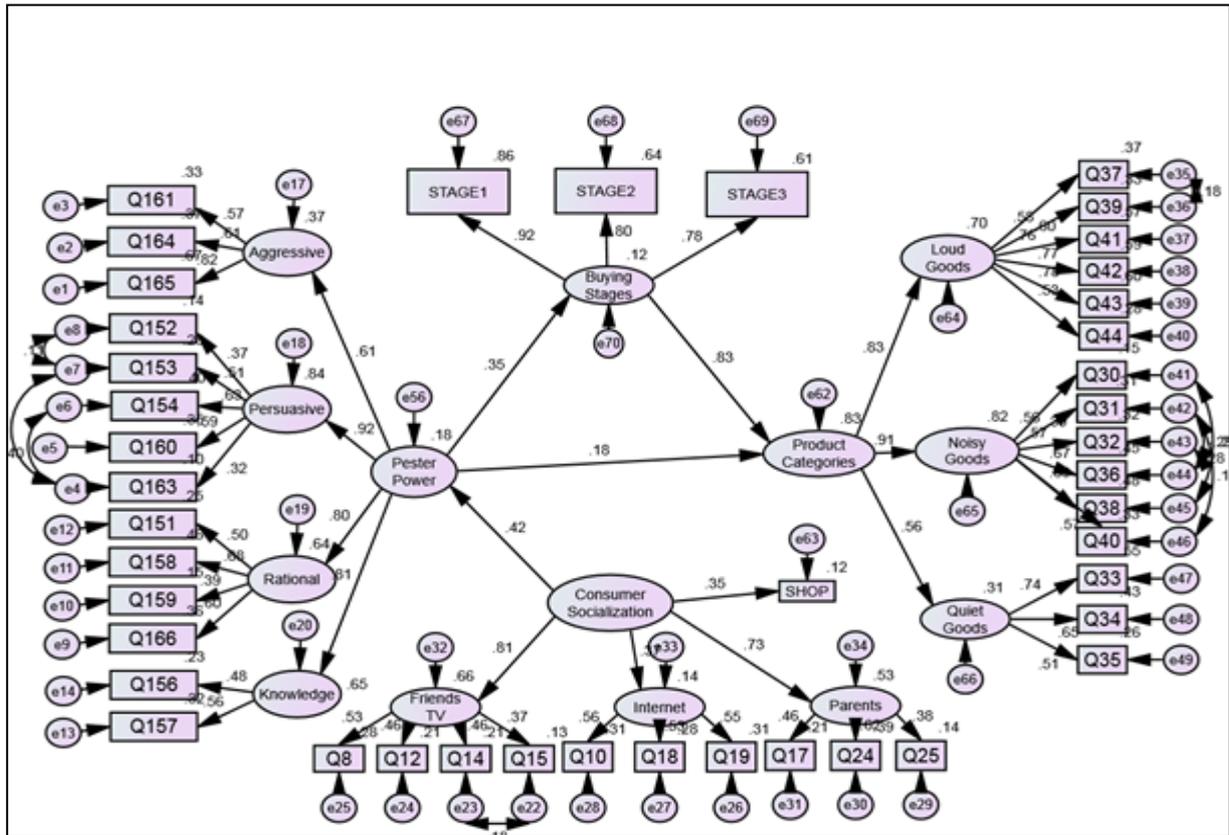


Figure 1.9: Detailed path analysis of SEM for the study

10. COMPARISON WITH PREVIOUS STUDIES

Identification of the consumer socialization agents can be compared with the agents from other similar studies. Exploratory factor analysis resulted in four distinct socialization agents; Friends & TV, Internet, Parents and Shopping. Except internet, all the agents are common among related studies also [39] [40] [41] [48] [49] [50] [51] [52] [53] [54] [55] [56] [57]. Internet became more popular and effective in 21st century and since then it became an interesting area to study. Recent studies have explored the child’s socialization through internet [38] [58] [59] [60]. Findings showed that young children are more socialized through friends and TV and older children are more socialized through internet. Boys are more influenced by TV. This is similar to other’s findings in the same area [61]. Mother’s qualification and occupation is one area where results are not in line with the western studies where mother has been identified as an important socialization agent [42] [43] [44]. Since in India, female literacy and workability are still in nascent stage, mothers are yet to show their real strength. In a traditional economy like India, the findings were similar to a study which

highlights that young children nominated their parents, particularly their mothers, than friends as people most important in their lives [62]. Parents have strong influence on child's consumer knowledge. This finding corresponds with other related studies [63] [64] findings, children are more dependent on their parents, which reflect parental power.

With regards to the five influence strategies namely, aggressive, persuasive, rational, knowledge and emotion strategies, we have confirmatory results. The past researches also studied similar strategies with different names and approach [36] [65] [66] [67] [68] [69].

Though one of the very important implications of the study is the creation of a new product categorization based on child's influence levels, we can still see somewhat overlapping results with other studies. In case of noisy goods, child is having the strongest influence on decisions. The results are in-line with previous studies [13] [28]. With regard to loud goods, there are mixed results. Quite a number of studies highlighted that children have least influence on durable and expensive products [10] [13] [41] [70] [71] [72]. But our study here contradicts the earlier studies and show that children not only influence the purchase of products that are directly consumed only by them, but a much wider range of products for use by the entire family. The studies supports our finding are the more recent ones [5] [13] [73] [74] [75].

According to the findings of study, children exert influence on the purchase different products and services, marketers must focus more on advertisements and promotions centered on children for these goods. Importance should be on associating the product with fun and joy, rather than on providing factual product-related information [76] [77] [78]. Findings are not in line with old notions that children are not much instrumental in purchase of loud goods due to financial constraints and but rather play a role while making expressive decisions such as color, model, brand, shape, and time of purchase [79].

11. IMPLICATIONS

Based on the conclusions derived after in-depth and comprehensive study, few implications can be made about child's role in the family buying process in India. The rapid growth of children's market [7] [80] that is characterized by complex and sophisticated consumers motivates the marketers to understand the child's roles in family buying. Below presented are the various implications for practitioners.

Aim at tweens: Marketers can gain by understanding the strategies that children use to make the parents' yield to their requests. Any tween-focused marketing campaign has to relate with the kids. Attitude branding is what they are seeking for. Tweens are very versatile; marketers can tap them by creating desire for their product and their brand and encourage consumption of their product.

Focus on categorization: Product classification is an important aspect of consumer behavior. Therefore, it is important for the marketers to know, to what extent the differences in child's behavior towards different product and services will lead to new categorization of products. According to the findings of study, as children exert maximum influence on the purchase of noisy goods, marketers must focus more on advertisements and promotions centered on children for these goods. Loud Goods like consumer durables are attractive for both parents as well as child; the outlets for loud goods should be attractively located in shopping malls and trendy commercial areas. This would allow both parties to actively participate in buying.

Use cutting-edge marketing: With the easy access to internet and other media, young children in India are becoming more and more exposed to online marketing communication. Brand awareness can also be gained through children's clubs combined with competitions and discount promotions e.g. McDonald's happy price menu with a toy is a hit with the Indian children. Lastly, the fact that more and more marketing communications are targeting at children, companies are facing challenge to adopt an ethical approach when dealing with the children in the business world. However, this requires a much more succinct approach than has been adopted in the past.

Evangelize features & values to both: According to the findings of study, children often initiate a buying call; they have the least influence on search and evaluation stage but high influence on the final buying decision, making it clear that children and their parents both work together in family buying process. Therefore, marketers should target both children and parents keeping parents at their focal point. They should advertise products on different media, particularly on television between soap operas in afternoons, for Indian mothers. Further, focus should be on the facts e.g. the nutritional values of food items, the learning aspect of toys or video games, etc.

Informed decisions by parents: Another practical implication pertains to how parents can handle constant purchase requests by their children. Study will be highly useful to parents in

understanding different tactics that children use in order to persuade them. This is also crucial from a consumer welfare perspective, as many parents in developing countries cannot afford to yield to all the requests of the child [81].

Extrapolating the findings: The current study is interesting for academicians and marketers to understand that countries similar to India's cultural perspective may have similar implications. For example, according to Hofstede [82] study on cultural dimensions of different countries, "Power distance is the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions (like family) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally." Cultures that endorse low power distance expect and accept power relations that are more consultative or democratic. India's score on power distance is extremely high (77) as compared to USA (40), UK (35), Germany (35) and other European nations [86]. Parents treat their children as equals in low power-distance cultures (USA) but expect obedience in high power-distance cultures like India (77), Indonesia (78), Singapore (74), and Malaysia (104). Such differences affect child's influence, which should be higher in the former compared to the latter. India is also highly characterized by collectivism when compared to USA. In such a cultural setting, children are expected to be more obedient to their parents and highly praise their advice and directives as is evident from the findings that for all goods children have less influence in the search and the evaluation stage. Though further studies are needed, we can say that global marketers can use this information to plan and implement their marketing strategies.

12. CONCLUSION

Buying process is a complex process especially when children influences on family decision-making. The research findings suggest that young children are more socialized through friends and TV and older children are more socialized through internet. Boys are more influenced by TV and internet than girls. Older children understand the complex human emotion system and have more knowledge about brands; hence they use the emotional and knowledge strategy more often than their younger counterparts. Boys use knowledge strategies more often than girls. Emotional strategy is used more often by those children who are single child of their parents. The findings also show that child's influence is very high for loud (car, TV) and noisy goods (stationary, clothes). For family buying decision-making, children are very influential in the initiation and final stage of buying. They took interest in deciding the color,

brand of the consumer products. Older children have more influence when the family decides about where to buy, when to buy and how much to buy. Children in the joint family are more influential than those in the nuclear family in the initiation and the final stage of buying. Indian joint families have strong influence over child's participation in the buying process..

In the light of the study findings, the development of young child's consumer role relating to different products and services is a must for preparing young children to participate effectively in the marketplace activities. There are varied socialization agents that play a *developmental role* on promoting and imparting the consumer skills, knowledge, and attitudes to tweenage children that enhance them to function effectively. Consumer role of young children is clearly influenced by their demographic variables (age, gender, number of siblings, birth order, parents' qualification, parents' occupation and family structure). These influences urge children to exhibit varied influence level for different products and stages of buying.

To conclude, children do occupy the imperative role in the Indian family where they not only initiate the family buying process but they also influence the final buying decision for a varied products and services.

13. SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Although the study has been conducted with immense responsibility, proper planning has been done to analyze all aspects, precautions have also been taken to evolve a systematic study, but there could be some limitations. The study is limited to National capital region of India. Language problem was also faced while collecting data from young children especially with children below 10 years. They were not comfortable using the English language, hence the questions were explained to them in Hindi (Indian language). This study is definitely a pointer towards certain marketing trends which could be used as a basis for more extensive research efforts of a similar nature. The study can be replicated by taking into more mother centric variables affecting the Indian family buying. A comparative study on child's influences in different family type can also be conducted. Further research can also be conducted by measuring the success rate of various influence strategies of children. How parents are reacting to their kid's demand would be very insightful for academicians and marketer's point of view.

14. ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

Chapter 1 is an introduction to the thesis. It establishes the foreword about the factors affecting the child's role in the process of buying any product or service.

Chapter 2 is enriched with an exhaustive and comprehensive literature review of the subject. It illustrates about the research work globally with reference to the child's influence in the family's consumer decisions. The literature helped to explore the gaps in the research.

Chapter 3 deals with the overall methodology of the research work: details of the focus group discussions, pilot study, instrumentation adopted and the participants chosen for the study.

Chapter 4 deals with the detailed findings and analysis of objectives. It begins with the identification of various factors. Then correlates and determinants for each construct were found and analyzed. It also proposes a structural equation model of child's influence.

Chapter 5 is devoted to conclusions and implications. This chapter also discusses the limitations and scope for further research.

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