



Title: Pester Power Strategies Used by Children: A Literature Review

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Abstract

The family is one of the most significant decision-making and consumption units for marketers. Children are considered to have a significant influence on family purchasing decisions, making them a desirable market segment for advertisers. When children's demands are denied by parents, children resort to pester power. Between a child's purchasing decision and a parent's purchase decision, pester power also plays a moderating influence. This paper attempts to review the literature to understand children as consumers and various pester power strategies employed by them to get their demands fulfilled

Keywords: Consumers, Children, Purchasing, Pester power

INTRODUCTION

Over time, children's influence on family decision-making has grown. Children have emerged as a crucial consumer segment that has a variety of influences on how families decide which things to buy (Caruana & Vassallo, 2003). In most cases, children emotionally sway their parents' choices. Out of love, many parents frequently have a tendency to grant their kids' requests. Sometimes parents refuse to give in to their kids' demands for a variety of reasons, including the item's excessive cost, its unsuitability for kids, or the kid getting too distracted by it. When this happens, kids turn to another tactic to persuade their parents. Children have the ability—or capacity—to pester their parents into purchasing goods that they might not otherwise purchase. In an article titled "Kids Advertising Hearings to Open" in the Washington Post from 1979, Larry Kramer introduced the concept of pester power. The phrase was used in reference to kids using all of their influence over their parents to get them to buy the thing they want.

Pester Power as Defined in Research

There is no formal or common definition for pester power in academia. Based on research done earlier, the term *pester power* has been defined by different researchers in different ways. The most simplest definition has been given by Quinn, who says pester power is “repetitive asking/requesting for a specific item and/or service” (Quinn, 2002, p. 7). Martino explains that pester power is “the children’s ability to nag their parents into purchasing items they may not otherwise buy” (Martino, 2004, p. 1). According to Nicholls and Cullen, pester power is “a child’s attempt to exert influence over parental purchases in a repetitive and sometimes confrontational way” (Nicholls & Cullen, 2004, p. 78). McDermott and others interpret pester power as “the children’s unprecedented power as consumers and their ability to deploy a variety of tactics to exert influence over purchasing by others” (McDermott, O’Sullivan, Stead, & Hastings, 2006, p. 513). The Director General of Advertising Association describes pester power as a pejorative term for children making requests to their parents. Galst and White (1976) uses the term purchase influence attempts (PIA) for pester power. Seth et al. (2004) explains that pester power is “the nagging ability of children to purchase the product they desire due to some reason.” Another less aggressively used term for pester power is “purchase request behaviour” (Young et al., 1996, p. 57).

Pester power commonly refers to the nagging ability of the child. Children resort to using this power to get their demands fulfilled even for the items that they don’t really need or their parents cannot afford. Spungin points out that (2004, p. 37) “by advertising to children, companies are encouraging the child to nag their parents into buying something that is not good for them, they don’t need or the parent cannot afford.”

Pester Power Strategies

Children employ a number of pester power tactics or strategies to get their demands fulfilled. They could be classified as direct and indirect influence strategies. Direct influence strategies are evident strategies used by the children to influence their parents’ decisions and is a purposeful attempt to influence the decision outcome of the parents. When the children influence the decision outcome of the parents unintentionally, they are said to be using the indirect influence strategy (Wells, 1965).

Past studies have placed the pester power strategies used by children under various categories. Idell (1998) describes two types of nagging:

1. *Persistent nagging*: Children grow restless when their demand is not fulfilled and their actions at those times exhaust their parents so much that their parents just give into their demands. Throwing tantrums, raising volume, and persistent requests are commonly employed pester strategies by children, especially toddlers and kids.

2. *Importance nagging*: Children who are grown up, say older than 7 years, don't behave like tantrum-throwing toddlers. They reason it out with their parents by persuading them to agree to their demand. They list the reasons for why they want to buy the product to justify their demand.

Palan and Laczniak (2001) identifies four different strategies used by children:

1. Informing strategies (asking or telling parents about products)
2. Negative strategies (pestering)
3. Persuasion strategies
4. Reasoning strategies (value for money).

Marquis (2004) lists three influence strategies employed by children for influencing parental decisions on food purchase. Palan and Wilkes (1997) explain each of these strategies: bargaining (offer deals), persuasion (express opinions on foods, begging, whining, stating that the product is preferred), and emotional appeal (asking repetitively, expressing anger, sulking, and being unnaturally nice to parents). Calderon (2017) included eight influence strategies used by the child to get their demands fulfilled. These include attempts like asking parents, placing things in cart, responding to the parents when parents initiate the request interaction, using nonverbal attempts such as pointing toward the object, begging and pleading, negotiating with the parents, asking them nicely, and displaying anger verbally (yelling) or nonverbally (kicking).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Literature was widely referenced for this study and various journals, conference proceedings, and reports formed our sources of data on the topics of interest to this study. Due attention was also paid to the latest research done in the field.

Children as Consumers

Children have attracted the interest of marketers for a long time. They act as the channel to reach out to parents and the family, but they are also consumers in their own right. Children are being targeted at a younger age (Buckingham, 2007) by marketers. Dotson and Hyatt (2005) rightly pointed that “children are obviously an important group for marketers to study because their attitudes regarding products and brands are still in their formative stages, and their current experiences affect their future brand preferences and marketplace behavior” (p. 40). Schor (2014) explained how the marketers and advertisers have played an influential role in transforming children into independent and empowered customers. The products that were once targeted at parents, especially

mothers, are now being directly targeted at children. Parents and children shop together now and collect enough shopping experiences to share.

McNeal (2007) describes the way the relationship between kids and parents evolves during the shopping experience. The newborns continuously observe their parents' behavior up to the age of 6 months. Child requirements begin to form from 6 to 24 months of age. Even when they are not able to speak, they place demand by making noise or by making use of their hands. They start pleading for products from parents between 24 and 48 months of age and also start grabbing products and putting them in shopping carts. Between 48 and 72 months, they gain an awareness of the purchasing process. Between 72 and 100 months, they start making independent purchases using their pocket money. It is therefore clear that children are attracted toward products that they want to play with or own from a very young age.

Children not only start observing and understanding the market but also start recognizing and remembering the brand names. Ross and Harradine (2004) conducted a study to determine the level of brand awareness among different age groups. The children selected were in the age group of 5–11 years. They found that children were aware of the brand names at a very early age. Though they recognized the brand name, most of them were not able to pronounce the brand name correctly. Children consider branded products as trendy. Most of the children are able to recognize brand names of product categories like fast food and snacks. McDonald's is one brand that is most commonly recognized by children followed by other brands of fast food, beverages, and toys. The knowledge of brands helps them to place a demand from their parents to buy a specific product for them. It also helps them when engaging in conversations with peer groups (McAlister & Cornwell, 2010). Apart from food items and toys, there are some other categories where brand plays an important role. Ross and Harradine (2010) analyzed the perception and attitude of young consumers toward supermarket value-branded clothing. The brand is known to play a very important role in the fashion market. When it comes to clothes, children are concerned about the brands of the clothes and this is especially true of children who want to impress their peers.

Children are considered as a unique and potential market. They are thought to possess a massive purchasing power even though they do not spend their own money. Children can form a potential market because of their share in the population and the amount of money they spend on purchasing (Yusuf, 2007). A study comparing Indian children with Western children found that even if the Indian children are not very financially independent, they are still able to persuade their parents to buy the desired product (Kaur & Singh, 2006). For Indian parents, children hold the center of attention and their lives revolve around the children. Sheoliha (2007) was of the opinion that the Indian market is becoming complex day by day and advertising to children is becoming important. Children are known to influence family purchase decisions to a great extent and also make decisions for themselves. The corporates have realized the power of children and take into account the category of children while promoting their products. Companies like McDonalds, Pizza Hut, and many other brands can be quoted as examples here. Thomson, Laing, and McKee (2007) observed in their study that the children play an important role in the family purchase decision

by directly and indirectly influencing the purchase decision. Palan and Wilkes (1997) acknowledged that the children these days have an important influence on parental purchase decisions. They are no longer passive bystanders. They are actively involved in all the activities of the family. Children are independently and actively involved in taking decisions with regards to products they use. The influencer role children exhibit over purchase decisions in family along with the nagging effect that they enforce on their parents is far higher than what he or she earns when their purchase influence is considered (Kaur & Singh, 2006).

Each family member plays a part in the purchase decision of the family. Singh (1992) conducted a study on Indian families and found that there is a difference in the role played by each member in purchase sub-decisions. The decision on “when to purchase” was taken jointly by husband and wife. The purchase decisions of parents were also influenced by the children. Another study done by Wilson (2004) found that most of the products parents purchase are their own personal choices and not based on the preference of the children. Bessouh, Iznasni, and Benhabib (2016) conducted a study to analyze the influence of various members of the family in the purchase decision. They reported that the father plays the central role and has monopoly over the decision-making process.

Ogba and Johnson (2010) found that parents don't give in to the child's request and there is a nonsignificant relationship between children's attempt to influence parents' purchase and the product parents actually bought. On the contrary, Kuhn and Eischen (1997) argued that children have a more important role to play and in many of the cases children are the primary decision makers and not the parents. Sondhi and Basu (2014), in their study, divided the parents into three categories: time-pressed parents, child-centric parents, and socially influenced parents. Time-pressed parents were the ones who had nuclear families, did not have much time to spend with children, and earned a salary of more than INR 60,000 per month. The child-centric parents were concerned about the child's overall development. They spend time with children. These parents were anxious about the hygiene and safety of products for children. The socially influenced parents were the ones that were influenced by the peer groups and also by children while making the purchase decision.

The consumers pass through various stages of the buying process. The role of children in each of these stages varies. Chaudhary (2018) reported that the children were considered to be most influential at the final stage of the buying process followed by the search and evaluation stage and the start stage. Tinson, Nancarrow, and Brace (2008) conducted a study on 524 mothers and children to compare children's involvement across three stages of purchase: information search, discussion, and final decision in the context of a single-parent family, blended family, and intact family. The research was done using the questionnaire method. Their findings showed that children's involvement was the most in case of search for information and they had more say in the case of buying casual clothes as compared to family holidays. The three stages are not so identifiable in case of casual clothes, but there is clear distinctness in these stages in case of family holidays. Chaudhary and Gupta (2012) revealed in their study on 8-12-year-old children that they were found to have the highest influence in the purchase of noisy goods. Then the influence decreased to be lower for loud goods and lowest for quiet goods. The influence was highest in the final

stage of buying decision to purchase process followed by initiation stage and the choice stage. A study was conducted by Wut and Chou (2009) to investigate the influence of children on family purchase decisions. The study was conducted on 122 families having at least one child of 7 years of age or older. It was found that the children may have influence in the choice-making stage, but the final decision is taken by parents.

Chikweche, Stanton, and Fletcher (2012) analyzed the consumer at the bottom of the pyramid (BOP) to understand their characteristics. Semi structured personal interview was the mode of data collection in this study. It was found that there were some environmental constraints that shape the behavior of BOP consumers. Few of the factors include lack of income, unemployment, and hyperinflation. Since they have limited income, they consider every purchase as an important decision. For them, buying food was not a routine or habitual decision but a very important decision. The BOP consumers buy products when they need the product, when the products are available, or when they can afford to buy the product.

Parents act as intermediate purchasing agents for the child as most of the products are not directly available to the child. In these situations, the extent of child influence on parents depends on two factors: child's assertiveness and the parent's child-centeredness. The chances of a mother purchasing the child's favorite brand depend on the assertiveness of the child or how child-centered the mother is. The mother acted as "gatekeeper" for the child. She tries to impose her preferences over the child. Parents also learn consumer skills from their children (Berey & Pollay, 1968). In a study done by Holsten, Deatruck, Kumanyika, Pinto-Martin, and Compher (2012), they observed that children considered parents as gatekeepers. Sharma and Sonwaney (2014) proposed a model in which she stated that learning between children and parents is a two-way process. Not only children learn from their parents but children also teach their parents. Children learn the process of becoming a consumer from parents. They teach parents how to make or change their opinions about different products.

Behavior of Children and Parents While Shopping

Marketers and researchers exhibit a constant desire to understand the behavior of children and parents while shopping. Marketers need an insight into this process to know how exactly parents and children take their decision and what roles the parents play while shopping with their children. One of the studies done by Darian (1998) analyzed behavior of children and parents in stores while shopping for children's clothing. The method used for collection of data was unobtrusively observing parents and children while they were shopping in the retail outlets. The parents' main role was that of a helper. They suggested options to the children, helping them in finding the right product and size. Nash and Basini (2012) conducted a study to understand the perspective of consumers regarding the purchase request between the parent and the child. The method used for the study was an in-depth interview and focus group with the parents and the child to understand both the parents and the children's perspectives. The focus group for children was divided into two age groups to observe variations due to age. One group had children in the age group of 5–8 years and the other group had children in the age group of 9–11 years.

The parent–child relationship was described as a game in which two sets of players, the parent and the child, took part. They consider parent–child interaction to result in requesting and not pestering. They assume that both the players understand the game well.

Williams and Veeck (1998) declared that no specific attitude or set of attitudes exclusively determines whether a mother would be influenced by her child or not for all products. The mothers who were child-centered were more likely to be influenced by children compared to mothers who were more family-oriented. Chan and McNeal (2003) conducted a study on 1,665 Chinese parents who had children in the age group of 6–14 years and found that parents control the type of product children can or cannot buy. Parents discussed with children about the product the latter use but they seldom consult children for the products bought for family use.

Influence of Children on Purchase Decisions

Children have come to influence purchase decisions in the family in recent generations. Gunther and Storey (2003) discussed two types of influences: direct influence and indirect influence. Direct influence refers to the impact of mass media on individuals. Indirect influence means the level of swaying power one individual has on another through communication. During the purchase process, children are able to influence the decision of the parents in one way or another. The level of influence of children on parents is dependent on many factors. It also varies according to the product category. Expensive products also matter in this regard. Parents take a call most often in case of high-value products and children have a say in case of low-value products (Kumar, 2013). Foxman and Tansuhaj (1989) interviewed 161 families and concluded children matter in the family purchase decision. Their preferences for products that are less expensive and products they use are usually agreed. But children overrated their say in purchase decisions compared to parents.

Children were able to influence parents' purchase decisions for products they use rather than products for family use. As stated, the influence was found to be more in case of the products that are related to them (Polya, 2012). Children were found to exert the most influence on fast-moving consumer goods and goods like sweets, chocolates, and crisps (O'Neill, Vigar, & Paterson, 2015). Children also chose products for their use such as lays, local chocolates, and shoes (Ali & Batra, 2011). In case of products relevant to them such as candies, toys, cereals, apparels, children's electronic goods, and family vacations, children's voice was heard (Mangleburg, 1990). Ronner, Hunt, and Mallalieu (2007) confirmed the observations of previous studies that the influence of children on parents was found to be more in case the purchase was related to the children rather than related to family use. However, Caruana and Vassallo (2003) believed that the children play a significant role in the consumer market by influencing their parents' purchase decisions either on products for personal use or for the products that the family uses. Surprisingly, in some cases, children's choice was considered in family decision making for buying property (predominantly houses; Levy & Kwai, 2004) and even they played an important role in the purchase of cars and in

planning a vacation (Kaur & Medury, 2011). On the contrary, children were also found to have no influence on products like cars and home appliances in some circumstances (Ali & Batra, 2011).

Children influence parents' purchase decisions by two methods. The first one is passive influence in which parents make decisions for children according to how they understand their children's preferences. Parents may sometimes ask children about their preference (Isler, Popper, & Ward, 1987; John, 1999). The second type of influence is when children use different methods to get their demands fulfilled, which is stated in the literature as "pester power" (Gunter & Furnham, 1998). Pestering is the common strategy children employ to influence their parents (Wilson & Wood, 2004).

Pester Power

The concept of pester power is considered to be highly influential in the process of selling the products to children (Quinn, 2002). "A child exercises influence on his/her parents to purchase products of choice. This strategy is called pester power" (Lenka & Vandana, 2015, p. 868). Pester power can also be described as the extraordinary power children use and the ability of children to use a variety of strategies to influence the purchase decision of others (McDermott, O'Sullivan, Stead, & Hastings, 2006). Nicholls and Cullen (2004) defined pester power as an attempt by the child to exert influence over the parents' purchase decision in a repetitive and sometimes confrontational manner. Martino (2004) has defined pester power as the children's ability to nag their parents so that they may buy the products they would otherwise not buy.

Pester Power Strategies

Children employ various kinds of pester power strategies in order to influence their parents' purchase decision and get their demands fulfilled. The pester power strategies as discussed by different authors are stated here. Palan and Wilkes (1997) propose an arrangement of influence tactics including (a) bargaining tactics—creating agreement between children and parents based on mutual benefit; (b) persuasion tactics—convincing parents to resolve decision conflict in the children's favor; (c) emotional tactics—using emotion directly or indirectly when attempting to influence others; and (d) requesting tactics—simply asking for a particular item to be purchased. Ali, Ravichandran, and Batra (2013) divided the strategies into four categories: pestering, reasoning, enticing and negotiating. Chaudhary (2015) divided the pester power strategies used by children into five categories: aggressive influence strategies, persuasion influence strategies, rational influence strategies, knowledge influence strategies, and emotional influence strategies. The aggressive influence strategies include strategies like expressing anger, not eating food, and acting stubbornly. The persuasion influence strategies include expressing opinion about the products, insisting on his/her demand, begging, nagging, whining, and pretending illness so that parents sympathize. The rational influence strategies broadly encompass offering deals, bringing some external reason, proposing fair competition, and hiding things in shopping trolleys. The knowledge influence strategies is one where the child

displays his/her knowledge about the product or brand. When employing emotional influence strategies, children behave unnaturally nice and polite or emotionally blackmail their parents.

Powell, Langlands, and Dodd (2011) had done a study on children to understand the influence of children on the purchase decision related to food products and found that the most commonly used pestering technique by 5-6-year-old children was expressing anger and telling parents that they have been good and so their demand should be accepted. On the other hand, children in the age group of 7–8 years do not cry or get angry. They use reasoning techniques to persuade parents to buy what they want. They give justification and reasoning to parents for the purchase of the product. Thomson, Laing, and McKee (2007) found that children influence the purchase decision of the family by giving justification for the purchase, forming coalitions, compromising, and remaining persistent about their demands. Parents encourage their children to use their product-related knowledge and information. This was viewed positively by parents. In a study done by Taghavi and Seyedsalehi (2015), children gently pushed parents into buying what they want. The strategies used by children include pointing verbally toward the product, touching the product, and putting the product in the shopping cart. Bertol, Broilo, Espartel, and Basso (2017) examined the influence of children in the age group of 7–11 years on family consumer behavior. It was observed that children agree that they are very demanding though they are not sure about the outcome. Their demands were not always accepted. Children use different kinds of strategies to influence parents and perceive using their knowledge has a better chance of getting their demand fulfilled. Marquis (2004) conducted a study on 10-year-old children to know their food choices and their influence on family's food buying behavior. The most commonly used strategies by children were expressing their opinion, pleading or stating their preferences, being nice and affectionate, and asking repetitively for a product. The children were found to be making use of a strategy of asking nicely most of the time in order to get their demands fulfilled (Jeevananda & Kumar, 2012). The strategies like telling parents that the brand is famous, bringing an external reason, and being unnaturally nice to parents were also found to be used by the children in the age group of 8–12 years (Chaudhary & Gupta, 2012). Whining and yelling or screaming was also a method of pestering used by children (Page, Sharp, Lockshin, & Sorensen, 2019).

Soni and Upadhyaya (2007) highlighted that the most common pester power strategies used by the children are asking their parents again and again till their demand is fulfilled, begging, doing extra chores, and offering to pay part of the cost. Wilson and Wood (2004) suggested in their study that the most common techniques used by the children in order to influence their parents were putting the items in that shopping cart and making use of pester power (nagging and whining). Children make use of emotional and pressure strategies in order to get their demands fulfilled and influence their parents. The most effective techniques used by the children were reasoning with parents, directly asking for the product, and offering deals. On the other hand, begging and anger were the least effective techniques (Palan & Wilkes, 1997). Therefore, children employ requesting, persuasion, and reasoning methods. They also use the mode of demanding methods and use tears and sulking to get their demands fulfilled (Darian,

1998). The most common method is using the requesting style of pestering, though most children believe that this style of pestering is not so effective (Wilson, 2004).

Oyewole, Peng, and Choudhury (2010) studied children aged 0–12 years to find out their pester power strategies. Pressure strategies were found to be the most frequently used by children followed by rational reasoning and persuasion. Chaudhary and Gupta (2012) conducted a study on 350 children in age of 8–12 years and their parents to understand the most commonly used influence strategy by the children to get their demands fulfilled and whether parents and children differ in their perception toward the use of different influence strategies. Persuasion strategy was found to be the most commonly used strategy followed by emotional and bargaining strategies. The study revealed that there is not much significant difference between the perception of parents and children with regard to use of different influence strategies. O'Neill, Vigar-Ellis, and Paterson (2015) found that children make use of crying, begging, or sulking as pestering techniques. Most of the children admitted that they make requests to the parent till the time the request is granted. The strategies as reported by Buijzen and Valkenburg (2008) were begging, expressing anger, demanding, crying, and requesting for products repeatedly. Freitas-da-Costa, Lima, and Dos Santos (2012), in their research on children up to 12 years in supermarkets, found that the children use low price of product as a reason to influence their parents. Bhattacharyya and Kohli (2007) believe that children change their pester power techniques from pleading to threatening the parent when parents don't accede to their demand. Children tend to ask again and again unless their demand gets fulfilled by the parents and parents are forced to yield to the request made by them (Lambert, Plunkett, & Wotowiec, 2002).

Shoham and Dalakas (2006), in a study done on children in the age group of 10–18 years, found that rational tactics were used more by children as compared to emotional tactics. Wingert, Zachary, Fox, Gittelsohn, and Surkan (2014) found children to use a variety of influencing patterns to get the desired product. The strategy used includes crying, negotiating with caregivers, or putting items in the cart. Schor (2004) also reported that children use putting items in cart as strategy while shopping in the store. Shahrokh and Khosravi (2014) conducted a study on 385 families and found that children use both positive and negative strategies to influence their parents. Positive strategies include demonstrating their knowledge about the product, giving information to parents about the product, and showing affection toward parents. The negative strategies used by children were mostly resorting to cranky behavior. Flurry and Burns (2005) conducted a study on children in the age group of 8–11 years and found that the children use various kinds of social power to influence parents in the purchase of toys. The children use expert, referent, and reward power to influence their parents positively. These include strategies like showing affection, asking nicely, just asking, and bargaining. They also make use of coercive power to influence their parents negatively. These negatively used strategies include making use of anger, begging, and conning. Children's preference intensity also affects the choice of strategy they use. It was found that when the preference intensity is strong, that is, when the child desires to purchase a particular product is very strong, the children are more likely to use less socially acceptable behavior. Calderon (2017) used the observational technique to examine the entire

shopping trip by parent and child. The study found that both the parent and the child had an influence on the purchase decision. The method most commonly used by children was making a simple request to their parents about the product they want to buy. Other methods used by children include handing the product to the parent, putting it in the shopping cart, carrying the product to the cash counter, and also pointing toward the product. These all were the nonverbal methods used by the child. The request made by the children in the analytical age resulted in purchase by parents more often than the request made by the children in the perceptual age. Balcarova (2014) examined the influence of children on parent's buying behavior. The way the child requests for the product has an effect on parents' purchase transaction. There was found to be strong influence when the child requested for the product by the way of verbal request and pointing toward the product. The impact was found to be of medium level in case of reaching for the items. The impact was lowest in case of a child placing the product in the shopping cart. Haselhoff (2014) illustrated that children make use of persuasive strategies to get their demand fulfilled. They also start understanding why their request was rejected previously. They come up with new ways of placing purchase requests. Jeevananda and Kumar (2012) found that children use a method of asking nicely most of the time to get their demands fulfilled.

Marshall (2014) examined the behavior of children in the age group of 8–11 years for food shopping in supermarkets rather than local stores or markets. Parents agreed that nagging was a successful strategy used by the children, though it worked only sometimes. The various in-store strategies used by the children were repeated requests for sweets and treats. Children take into consideration many factors to decide their choice of pester strategy. They understand the family environment well and also know the easy target in the family. They will use all these knowledge and interactions to decide upon the purchase request strategy to be used. The choice also depends on the pre-influence strategy (Kerrane, Hogg, & Bettany, 2012). Children use various kinds of pester power strategies for getting their demands fulfilled. Age had an impact on the choice of strategy. At a younger age, they influence their parents by using love and affection and as they grow, they start using negotiating strategies (Ali, Ravichandran, & Batra, 2013). Godhani, Khant, and Jadeja (2012) also found age to play an important role in the choice of pester power strategies. Children at a lower age use pressure/begging and upward appeal to influence their parents, whereas children of higher age use rational, consultation, and ingratiating appeal. Chaudhary and Gupta (2012) conducted a study on 175 children in the age group of 8–12 years to understand their strategies to influence their parents. It was found that there is a significant difference between the age of the child and influence strategies like telling parents that the brand is famous, bringing an external reason, and being unnaturally nice to parents. Marquis (2004) reported that the younger children use enticing as an influence strategy whereas older children use negotiation strategy to influence their parents.

The pester power strategies were also found to vary by the gender of the child. Boys were seen to use pestering and negotiating as influence strategies. Girls enticed and negotiated more (Ali, Ravichandran, & Batra, 2013). Chaudhary and Gupta (2012) concluded that girls and boys differ in the influence strategies they use. Girls use

more emotional strategies like nagging and whining compared to boys. Boys, on other hand, use persuasion strategies more like telling parents about the television advertisement they have seen about the product. Shoham and Dalakas (2006) found that the influence strategies used by the child vary according to the gender of the child, but the impact was found to be minor.

Mothers spend more time with childrens as compared to fathers (Shah & Malik, 2017). The profession of parents also impacted the choice of influence strategy used by the child. The children of working parents use reasoning and negotiating strategy more compared to children of non working parents. This is attributed to higher disposable income of working parents. Children in families with higher income use pestering, reasoning, and enticing strategy to a greater extent (Ali, Ravichandran, & Batra, 2013). As far as the vulnerability of family members is concerned, the father is considered to be most vulnerable to the demands of the kids. Grandparents are also vulnerable to the nagging of the child (Godhani, Khant, & Jadeja, 2012). In order to make the product stay in the minds of children for long, marketers make use of strategies such as repetition, use of favorite icon in the advertisement, and giving a free prize or gift. By these tactics, marketers attract children, hoping it would lead them to influence their parents' choices (Ramzy, Ogden, Ogden, & Zakaria, 2012).

The age of the child also affects how the parents react. When dealing with younger children, they frequently use direct tactics; when dealing with older children, they frequently use softer tactics. Younger children were addressed in a variety of ways, such as by simply declining their request, reprimanding them, refusing to comply with their demands, telling them they may purchase the item later, and requesting that they purchase a suitable alternative. When older children made requests, the parents gently refused and provided them with a good reason why they shouldn't buy (Shah & Malik, 2023).

Discussion

Modern lifestyle, coupled with working couples, has increased the frequency of family outing. The boom in the retail sector in the country and availability of numerous options for dining to enjoy different varieties of food have meant that families now go out more often than before for shopping and eating out. Movies hold another attraction and malls prove to be an ideal outing destination not only for watching movies but also shopping and having food. Kids go out for either shopping, movies, eating out, or other activities at least once a month. Children are also fond of visiting malls and it is also a favorite destination of families. Malls are also a hub for meeting people, dining out, watching movies, enjoying ambience, and window shopping (Mohan & Tandon, 2015). There are play areas (fun and gaming zones) for kids that have made malls popular among children. During these outings, it is not uncommon for children to sight products in the mall and place a demand from their parents for buying them.

The children on an average spend one to two hours daily on screen; in some odd cases, children spend up to four or more hours as well. The screen time includes watching television, accessing the Internet on mobiles or laptops, and playing video games. The screen time increases on weekends as children are at home. Previous studies have

shown that children spend a lot of time on screen watching television and accessing the Internet (Arya, 2004; Ravikiran, Baliga, Jain & Kotian, 2014; Ray and Jat, 2010). Children's pestering was positively affected by TV commercial elements such as amusement, advertisement likability, content credibility, quality information, and celebrity endorsement (Lavuri & Aileni, 2022).

Childwise, a market research firm, reported that children aged 5–16 years on an average spend more than six hours daily on screen on the same technologies (TV, Internet, video games) mentioned earlier. There has been a tremendous increase in the time spent by the children watching television, when their exposure to TV advertising happens, when compared to children of, say, the 1990s. Now there are a number of TV channels, such as Disney, Cartoon Network, Pogo, Discovery Kids, Baby Tv, Nick, and Hungama, specifically for children, which make them glued to television even more. The 2016 Indian Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth reported that the majority of the Indian children spend most of the time in a sedentary mode and they do not achieve the recommended level for physical activity.

Children are generally dependent on parents for getting most of their demands fulfilled. However, some older children are given pocket money using which they make independent decisions to buy. An ASSOCHAM (Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India) study suggests that children in the age group of 7–10 years receive on an average Rs. 100 per week as pocket money. This study didn't focus on the total amount of pocket money received by children in the country. A Turner New Generation 2016 study also reported that the pocket money spent by Indian kids exceeds the GDP of 52 small countries.

The family is one of the most important consumption units for marketers. Over a period of time, they have shifted their attention to the role individual members in the family play while taking purchase-related decisions. Children as an influencer of purchase decisions hold a special attraction for marketers.

Theoretical Implications

Broadly, this study contributes to marketing literature in several ways. Importantly, the use of children's pester power has been elaborately studied, which adds to the knowledge about the behavior of Indian children in the wider literature. Our study would help marketers understand children as consumers, which is another theoretical addition.

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