

## THE DEADLY WEAPON WITH CHILDREN: PESTER POWER: A CASE STUDY OF NCR REGION

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### **Abstract:**

Nagging ability of the children to purchase the desired products is called Pester power. Due to the influence of advertisements, peer, easy access to information has lead to increase their potential in influencing their parents decision about products. The marketers have now realized that how important these kids are as consumers. The primary objective of the paper is to understand the products kids purchase by exercising pester power. The paper also studies the extent to which kids influence their parents. It also throw light on shopping behaviour of kids is influenced by what factors.

**Keywords:** Pester power, kids, purchase decision, Products.

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## INTRODUCTION

“I want this Mommy “. Daddy “can I take this, my friend has got one. These are the usual statements which we come across while shopping in mall and stores. These statements are the logical or illogical demands fuelled by the tactics played by the marketers to pull out money from adult’s pockets. The adults are now bitten by the pester power bug.

Pester power is the power children have by repeated nagging to influence their parents for purchasing something. According to Cambridge dictionary, Pester power means “the ability of children to make their parents buy something, by asking for it many times until they get it.

Now marketers have planned to rely on kids to pester their moms to buy a product rather than going straight to the mom.

This effect of pester is growing day by day as the system of nuclear families has led it. The working couples have usually lesser time to spend with their kids. The kids who spend time in TV do more nagging and exercise pester power at their parents. The kids start their day with Doremon, Chota Bheem, Shin Chan and end with Barbie, Tom and Jerry, Oggy the Cockroach etc. Besides this the kids stuff has to be like entire collections of Macdonald Happy meal toys. Kids have now started demanding more of everything like, Barbie School bags, Angry bird water bottle and sippers etc.

The notion of nuclear family in present time has given leverages to children to have persuasion in family decision making. (Gupta & Verma, 2000) in their study has revealed that kids of modern day has more autonomy and discretion in exercising their decision making power rather than previous generation. Kids are more vocal in telling their parents about what they should and what they should not buy. According to studies of (Mangle burg, 1990; McNeal & Ji, 1996; Williams & Veeck, 1998; Kaur & Singh, 2006) have made out from their studies that the kids have influential role in their parents buying of their products which makes kids empowered and by this virtue they become customers, buyers, spenders, shoppers, consumers.

This exemplifies that directly or indirectly the kids have emerged as an indispensable segment. Due to this increasing importance they are now considered as a primary market, an influencing market, and a future market (Mangleburg, 1990). This has been treated as a residual of

westernization. (Sinha, 2005). an opinion that for few products, kids are sometimes active initiators, information seekers and buyers; but for few product categories they influence the purchase made by the parents.

## OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The present study has made an attempt to explore the influencing role of children in consumer buying decisions in NCR Region. The research has followed a Survey and exploratory method. The input was the primary data collected through structured questionnaire. The population taken was the families in Delhi having kids in the category of age group of 6-12 years. The data collected was majorly focused on the study of behavioral traits of parents as well as kids to understand the degree of influence exercised by the kids to acquire their items of interest.

The research study consisted of questionnaire to understand the variable degree of influence kids create on their parents while making a purchase. 50 families with kids of age category 6-12 years were identified for administering the questionnaire.

The design of the questionnaire was made in such a manner that includes structural questions which specifies the alternatives of response as well as format of response. In order to know the level of pester power which is exercised by the children on their parents? The age group which was chosen for research because it was felt that children of this age group were most suitable for the survey. The 100% percent response rate was administered by the surveyor. The sampling used in the method is judgment sampling which is a non probability technique. The sample size was 50 including both children and parents.

## RESEARCH PROBLEM IN DETAIL / LITERATURE REVIEW

(Mangleburg, 1990; McNeal & Ji, 1996; Williams & Veeck, 1998; Kaur & Singh, 2006) have opined that pester power is due to westernization, which gives militant power to the children to get the things done from their parents. These studies were done around the world but the region wise study was missing.

It was brought into light that children were not only the decision maker in terms of chocolates, ice creams or toys, but companies also think them to be apt for selling insurance policies, cars and air conditioners. In Urban China, the study conducted by Williams and Veeck (1998) the role of child as an influence in purchase decision was studied. Children are mostly influenced by the advertisements they watch on TV. Children have now asserting greater force in decision making for their family.

Reference group and family influences the children in the family purchase process. Schiffman and Kanuk (2007) have stated that a reference group is any person or group that serves as a point of comparison for an individual in forming either general or a specific guide for behavior. Reference groups serve as frames of references for individuals in their purchase or consumption decisions. The frame could be normative and comparative based on the values or behavior derived from it. The degree of influence that a reference group exerts on an individual's behavior usually depends on the nature of the individual and the product and on specific social factors.

It is observed that children use their power in purchase decision of cereals, toothpastes, toys, school bags etc. They also have opinions and now started deciding about which movie to view, eating out options, holiday resorts or TV Channel Packages. Although there is variation in exercise of power for the different products and Services.

Talking about Indian Children they recently attracted the attention of Marketers since the potential is ample in and is constantly increasing. Kaur & Singh (2006) attempted to study the influence of children in the family purchase decision making in India and the West and came to know that how children evolved as influencers in purchase. Traditionally women were viewed to be as the purchasing agents of the family. Inclusion of women in the workforce has changed the position of theirs as a buying agent. This has prompted a shift in their role and has given power to children too.

The more power is in hands of children in terms of convincing for purchase is it routine products purchase or pestering the parents to purchase desired products. Increasing competition in the child product market has led to rise in the number of variants available to the child. The

influence of innovative product is tremendous on a child. The studies conducted in United States, Japan and Great Britain by David *et al.* (2002) explored the various patterns of child demands and paternal responses to them. The frequency and intensity of such requests has been reasons of family tension especially those in lower socioeconomic brackets. It is so because parents generally deny their requests.

It is observed that the kids get influenced by the advertising, friend's experiences, and behavior of their parents. The patterns of purchase requests of children are the result of their social interaction. There are various other factors like advertising, peers children's experiences, and parental behavior.

Parents who discuss with the children about their request encourage their children to develop a particular skill in selection and interpreting their product information very carefully. Contrary to that the parents who agree to buy most of the things their kids demand encourage the children to be attentive to advertising only. The point of discussion could be cultural difference. American and British Culture is considered to be as more independent rather than Indians and Chinese Greenspan (2002) conducted an analysis on the extent of child influence in buying Electronics products in United states of America. He came with a conclusion that head of the family or bread winners are no longer considered to be as decision maker for electronics in American Households.

The career starts their career as consumer at a very early age. It is observed that kids under 3 years of age make verbal requests to their parents. After the age of 5 they themselves select the products from the outlet shelves which shopping with their parents by growing from this age they begin assisted purchases. The children aged three to eleven influence family purchases by "simply asking" (Isler et al. 1987), The study conducted by America's Research Group in the year 1998, it was found that 5 to 14 year olds indirectly influenced the spending of \$117 billion by their parents and other adult relatives and spend \$27 billion of their own money on summer goods.

According to Chan (2005) that children of seven to eight years of age become aware of persuasive intention or the product over and above the informational intention. Belk Meyer and Driscoll (1984) reports that child of nine years and over had development of understanding of symbolic nature of Brand meaning even twenty years ago. Child age is very crucial in regard to his influence on family purchase decision making. As a child progresses in age, the frequency of Request reduces (Isler, et al., 1987). But on the contrary mother's yielding to child request increases considerably (Ward, Wackman & Wartella, 1977). Other researchers found that apart from direct requests, kids also influence the parents with the help of other strategies also, like wise bargaining, persuasion or emotional strategies. (Belch, et al., 1985; Swinyard & Sim, 1987) have the opinion If someone looks at the purchase decision stage, children tend to have the most likely influence at the problem recognition stage.

## FINDINGS

The major objective of the research was to identify the degree of influence which a child can exert on their parents while making a purchase decision. Keeping in view the objective of the research the data was collected in the manner that it study the behavioral traits as well as the degree of influence they can exert by the kids to have item of their choice.

### Demographic profile

The section covers three major variables namely gender of the respondent, age group of the respondent and the economic status of the family viz a viz single income or double income. The result which was displayed was that 40% were males and 60 % were females. Age category 6-9 and 9-12 had 56% and 44% respectively

S.no	Age Category	Percentage
1	6- 9 years	56%
2	9-12 years	44%

Source: Primary Data

Both parents were employed in 64% family's rest 36% have single income family where only father was working. Economic status of parents had a significant effect on the materializing of the child's demand.

S.no	Income source	Percentage
1	Single	36%
2	Double	64%

Source: Primary Data

### Shopping Behaviour

Family shopping behaviour is crucial determinants of application of pester power by the child. The family which shops regularly will provide the child with more chances of exercising pester power. Shopping frequency determine the number of chances a child is exposed to. Out of the total respondents 16% everyday purchase their necessities. 40% families go shopping every weekend... 24 % families go for shopping once or twice in the week. 20% families have no fixed schedule or pattern of shopping.

S.no	Frequency of Shopping	Percentage
1	Everyday	16%
2	Every weekend	40%
3	Once or twice in a week	24%
4	No fixed pattern	20%

Source: Primary Data

### Pester Power

Parents agreed that their kids exercise the nagging pester power during shopping spree. Only a meager 4% people agreed that kids do not exercise it. 44% people agreed that this is used always. 32% people agreed to majorly sometimes and only 10 people come out with that most of the times it is used.

S.no	Usage of pester power	Percentage
1	No use at all	4%
2	Sometimes	20%
3	Most of the times	32%
4	Always	44%

Source: Primary Data

### Strategies Adopted

Mutual gain and satisfaction are the strategies adopted by the kinds under the bargaining strategies. Falbo and Peplau (1980) have defined these strategies. Persuasive strategy includes convincing an opposing family member to resolve the conflict and be in the favor of persuader. (Davis, 1976). Emotional strategy includes crying, pouting, withdrawing or giving silent treatment. Respondents agreed that a major chunk of kids 66 % either use crying or remain silent to get the product of their choice. 10% people agreed that kids opt for bargain. Persuasion is also exercised by the kids but to a limited extent to 24 %.

S.no	Strategies being used	Percentage
1	Bargaining Strategies	10%
2	Persuasive Strategies	24%
3	Emotional Strategies	66%

Source: Primary Data

### Information source

Roughly half of the respondents agreed that TV advertisements have been the major source of information for the kids for purchasing goods. Out of total respondent more than half agreed to the same. Peers also affect their purchase by 20%. Store visits and seeing product at the store also affects their information. The result showed 28% peoples information source is visits.

S.no	Information Source	Percentage
1	TV advertisements	52%
2	Peer Group	20%
3	Store Visits	28%

Source: Primary Data

It was asked from the parents that do they allow their kids to shop alone. The response was negative. 8 categories were given to the kids for making their preferences. The choices included toys, games, eatables, accessories, stationary, personal products, books, clothing etc.



**Choice of Category**

S.no	Category	Ranking by Boys	Ranking by Girls
1.	Toys	***	IIIrd
2.	Games	I st	VI th
3.	Snacks /Eatables	***	IInd
4.	Stationary	IV th	VI th
5.	Accessories	II nd	I st
6.	Books	***	Vth
7.	Clothing	III rd	III rd
8.	Personal products	***	IVth

Source: Primary Data

It was evident from the survey that girls are more demanding than boys in this age. Under the various categories offered, Games and accessories were ranked first for boys and girls respectively. Second preference for boys was accessories like sippers, bags, wrist watches. Surprisingly eatables like chocolates and chips were second preference of girls. The preference was given to Clothing's both by girls and boys. Ben 10 and Chota Bheem are very popular characters in clothing for boy's .Barbie and Power puff girls for girls. Fourth position was given to stationary and personal products by boys and girls respectively. Books have gained fifth position for girls but boys were not having any interest in that.

**Conclusion**

The result of the present study shows that children exert their power on purchase of product.

1. Child has more freedom to demand in double income families.
2. Generally parents take them along for shopping. Weekends are popular slot for shopping for them.
3. 75 % kids use their pester power most of the times or always.
4. Emotional strategies are most commonly used strategies by kids to get the desired products.
5. Television advertisements are the major information source for kids to know products to purchase.
6. For boys the most popular thing to purchase are games and for girls accessories.

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