

Boys Vs Girls: Pestering Strategies of Children in India

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Abstract

This paper attempts to bring sensitive issue of mounting consumerism in children in India whose outcome is Pester Power, which means the nagging ability of children to purchase the product they desire due to some motive. In today's techno savvy epoch, the urban children are relatively more coupled, conversant, and are more prospective to influence their parent's decision. As disposable income is expanding in many families, parents appear more eager to buy goods for their children as compared to past. Due to enlargement of Media, Internet and Television advertising, children are stuffed with supplementary information and entertainment options which lead to have a strong impact on their parents. As children's culture are dominated by technology oriented entertainment and advertising as a result Children's as influencer in decision-making is mushrooming worldwide. This paper accomplish the key drivers of pester power and effect on parent's decision. The effort is made through this paper to try and find out whether there are any differences in the pestering strategies with respect to the gender of the child. An extensive review of relevant literature is done for a clear understanding of the concept. Descriptive research design is used for the study and a non probability sampling techniques are used. A sample of 200 parents (100 parents of girl child and 100 parents of boy child) were interviewed with a close ended questionnaire.

Keywords: Pester Power, Consumerism, Buying Behavior, Decision making

Introduction

India has revolutionized a lot with the globalization and altering economic activities. As a result, due to nuclear family size and more dual income, parents are more willing to buy goods for their children if we compare with the past trends (Dotson & Hyatt, 2005). Children are becoming more aware, rational, clever and advanced to find their own approach. This growing awareness was developed during the 1990s that children had enormous market potential, not as one market but as three – a current market spending their own money in order to satisfy their own needs and wants, an influential market attracting a substantial amount of parental expenditure, and a future market that eventually will constitute all the customers for a

firm's services (McNeal and Yeh, 2003). This development of knowledge and skills enforce children to act as an active partner while deciding what to buy. Thus, Children are now extremely aware about the features of the product they are trying to buy. Children acquire such skills and knowledge by interacting with their parents, peers, accessing internet and media may prompt to 'pester power', which can lead to unhappiness or conflict (Palan, 2001).

According to Director General of the Advertising Association, Pester power has been defined as 'a sniping term for children making requests of their parents' (Brown 2004). The foundation of the concept of pester power is children unparalleled command because of their ability to set up variety of strategies that can exert pressure on their parents while purchasing. Traditionally, parents used to buy all needy things for their children but now if we analyze the working model of "Parents-Children's" shopping, child will act as an independent consumer. According to Mr Purnendu Bose, Chief Operating Officer, Hungama TV, the fact that Indian cable and satellite homes are largely single

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television homes explains the children's power on the buying decisions. The new generation of children has grown-up from being the power to key decision support system of the families (McDermott, 2006). Nowadays parents are unable to spend time with them, so in order to compensate they are giving expensive goods.

Child interaction with his/her parents play vital role in a commercial context. For example, in order to attract customers a marketer can craft such advertisement which can encourage child to nag their parents into buying something that is not healthy for them, or they don't need or their parents cannot afford'. Thus, Pester Powers can act as sales promotional tool. According to the American Centre for Science in the Public Interest, pestering strategies undermine parental authority. Parents are forced to choose between being 'the bad guy' by saying no to junk food or giving in to incessant demands.

Marketers are targeting children as they have influence on parents buying decisions. They perceive pester power in broader sense, targeting children as a form of the tactic. Marketers take Pester Power in a positive manner which seems contradictory. It is usually allied with manipulative marketing strategies that push children for nagging. Marketer can exert two kinds of influence; Kidfluence and Indirect influence. "Kidfluence" is the direct influence that kids have over family household purchases. Indirect influence means that the kids' preferences are given consideration when parents make a purchase decision. The major lashing force behind this extensive change is the advertising. Advertising has transformed the way kids learn, react and behave towards the environment.

In India the culture of pocket money has embarked the parents, especially the middle class people. According to The Indian Express Pocket money of Indian kids has shot up by over 200 per cent over the past decade. In a study, it was shown that in a year around Rs. 500 crore is the money given to children as pocket money. They are evolving as a group of informed customer and media is impacting their brand choice, buying behaviour and buying patterns. This segment of 'Children' is now evolving as a major demand creator for many market players. Thus, it is

always good from marketing perspective. They have a simple rule; they will buy whatever they will watch over the television. Today's parents overburden their children's life with heavy dose of academics and extracurricular activities. They compel to surpass both at school and extra activities, thus, in return children nag their parents to fulfill their demands. As a result, pester power creates mental distress and family tensions (McDermott, 2006). Somehow capability of a child to nag their parents depends upon parent-child interaction as his/her character gets molded by the activities of their parents and their occupation.

There are many instances, wherein both the office going parents, who cannot really concern anything for their children, try to provide all the facilities and amenities that the children require. Due to paradigm shift in the behavior of the Indian parents, children are getting expensive goods to compensate not being able to spend time with them. Not only parents but it is broadly seen that because of emotional affiliation, grandparents bend forward to care more for their grandchildren and try to satisfy their desires which act as a catalyst for the increasing level of Pester Power.

Literature Review

In the past there have been copious studies exploring the concept and effect of Pester Power on parent's buying behavior. Pester Power is defined as the nagging ability of children to purchase the product they desire due to some motive. The concept of 'Pester Power' is debatably one of the most knocking, perceptive, and controversial facet in present marketing practice. According to Director General of the Advertising Association, Pester Power has been defined by the as 'a pejorative term for children making requests of their parents' (Brown 2004). Due to change in contemporary socio-cultural trends regarding working parents, lack of time, nuclear families it is glimpsed that many children are spending less time with their parents than their complement in the 1970s and 1980s. Therefore, it can be argued that parental influence preserve one of the major factor in transiting children into consumers, along with relative to say, peers and/or media (Dotson & Hyatt, 2005). In US, children are more inclined by the peer activities and most of characteristics get molded only with the peers, while

in contrast in India, children's behavior is influenced majorly by the activities done at home or the profession and occupation of the parents. Moschis and Churchill's (1978) gave a model which is the most widely used model of consumer socialization (Dotson & Hyatt, 2000). Consumer socialization is the process by which children attain skills, knowledge and attitudes pertinent to their functioning in the market place. In model they conferred five key variables, which influence how individuals develop as consumers. These five variables comprises of socialization agents, learning processes, social structural variables, age/life cycle stage, and learning properties. The literature has explored numerous ways in which children can fuel purchase requests to parents. As per a study conducted by Palan (2001), he identifies that there are four approaches: informing strategies in which children ask or tell parents regarding products, negative strategies which is Pester Power or nagging ability of children, persuasion strategies in which children rather than nagging try to persuade their parents to buy a particular product, and reasoning strategies in which children notify parents about value-for-money offers. Thomson (2003) scrutinize the process of decision-making for family purchases and found that children have different priorities from parents but that, in common with other family members, involvement in communication increased their influence on the final purchase. Essentially children learn the consumption purchasing pattern primarily from their parents. Children observe the parental behavior in purchase decisions over the years and gradually they acquire the relevant consumer skills from their parents (Filiatrault and Ritchie, 1980). The family is a tool in teaching young people coherent aspects of consumption, which also include basic consumer needs. Parents always try to teach their children to be more rational in their life. Panwar (2006) have done study in the Indian context he stated that for new age children in India, television act as influential as a parent or a teacher do. This fact is very well understood by the marketers today. It manifested that the growth of influence of media on children, has increasingly large number of advertisements are directed at this potential target audience due to which children are nagging or making requests to parents. In joint families in India, it was examined that children are civilized by their parents to behave as coherent

thinking consumers in society. Though, with the growing influence of the west culture, there is an increase in nuclear families, dual income families are on the mount and there has been a discrete shift in the family composition structure and the decision making has become more uncensored (Kaur and Singh, 2006). Thus, children enjoy greater judgment, not only in making routine consumption decisions for the family but also in pestering their parents to buy other products desired by them (Singh, 2006). A research by Wackman's (1972) explored that mothers of children aged between 5 and 12 years found that children who requested products more often were more likely to have their requests granted. The researcher also suggested that mothers were more likely to agree to purchase requests as the children grew older (i.e. aged 11 to 12 years). Thus, maternal perception about older children was more competent and informed consumers than younger children (five to seven years).

Purpose of the Research:

1. To get aware about Pester Power.
2. To know about the key drivers of Pester Power.
3. To identify whether there is any significant difference in the pestering strategies with respect to the gender of the child.

Research Methodology:

This study is restricted to the area of Delhi region only. The study being undertaken is descriptive and exploratory in nature. It describes in detail the state of affairs of pester power in India. The present study has concern the children between the age of 8-16 years. The convenience sampling technique has been adopted in order to draw analysis of difference in pestering strategies with respect to gender. The study was undertaken by considering few product categories like games, toys, chocolates, mobile phone and sweets that explore the discretionary preference to nag their parents to purchase them.

SPSS (version 17) software has been used for econometric analysis of data. In order to investigate differences in pestering strategies of children with respect to gender in Delhi, certain hypotheses have been formulated. In order to know different pestering strategies with respect to gender, it is very

important to know difference in the pestering power of girls and boys across a range of products which influences the family decision making. A sample of 200 parents (100 parents of Girl child and 100 Parents of Boys) were interviewed with a close ended questionnaire.

Pester Power in India

Due to augmentation of media and growing nuclear family, children have become more independent, logical and confident than their ancestors and are becoming more knowledgeable and mature in their own right much earlier than before. Thus, Children now act as an important target market. They not only act just as purchasers but also act as influencers to change decision.

In India, kid power get big drive because of the arrival of niche channels like the Cartoon Network, Hungama and Toonami. As a result child request for various play items, snack food or even clothing often influence the final decision making at home. Pester Power has been incorporated in the marketing campaigns to reach the target audience. The amount of influence exerted by the children varies with different product categories and also with the different stages in the decision making process.

With the increase in disposable income and media growth, rural India has become an emerging up-and-coming market. According to some estimates, in 2005, there were more than 120 million tween (children between 8-12 years of age). Among them around 45 million live in urban areas who have the power of determining or influencing the whopping Rs. 20,000 crore worth purchasing decisions on food, mobile phones, apparel, cars and FMCGs.

Drivers of Pester Power

1. Greater exposure to kids

Nowadays, Children are surviving in techno savvy environment as a result they are getting lot of exposure of internet, media etc, through which continuously keep on learning various notion. Effects of the mass media have been found to be extensive and potentially harmful. They try to act in similar fashion that they learnt from various exposures. This exhibits a specific aggressive behavior in them.

2. More working women

Evolution of education for women in India has changed their life. Majority of the educated women are working to support their family and grounds consequently more dual income families. Working women attempts to increase standard of living and meeting desires on time. Children are smart enough today that by seeing more dual income, their demand also become twofold.

3. Rise in the number of single parent households

Indian society has undergone a extensive change in terms of the structure and environment of the family unit. There are many myths that single parents and their children have to face violence, disgrace and social problems. But the truth is they can be as healthy and emotionally secure as those from traditional families. Being a single parent can gear up to be financially autonomous, because there is no one to answer except yourself for the manner in which you spend your money. Children may feel stressed out and alone, to balance it they may nag to come out of the situation. Research proved that children in single parent households make their first purchases almost a year earlier than their two-parent household counterparts.

4. Grand parents' increasing role in bringing up children

With the tremendous increase in number of nuclear families where both partners are working, parents feel that grandparent's presence will be interference in rising of the kids. Grandparents often bridge the gap between parents and their children. Every time parents do not entertain every demand of their children but children are smart enough to take the advantage from grandparents. Grandparents' are the fastest growing income sources for the children. Thus, they shift their nagging tactics to grandparents for their own benefit.

5. Delayed parenthood

In this competitive era, it become first preference for couples to have more financial security, secure careers before focusing their energy on children so that they can buy needy and desire things for themselves and for future child.

The hypothesis formulated for the purpose of research is:

H1a: There is a significant difference in pestering strategy of girls and boys with respect to playing Game.

H1b: There is a significant difference in pestering strategies of girls and boys with respect to buy Chocolate.

H1c: There is a significant difference in pestering

strategies of girls and boys with respect to use Mobile Phone.

H1d: There is a significant difference in pestering strategies of girls and boys with respect to buy Fast Food.

H1e: There is a significant difference in pestering strategy of girls and boys with respect to buy Sweets.

Table 1: Summary of Results

Nagging in relation to	t-test	p-value	Boys	Girls	Grand Mean
Game	.471*	0.02	3.59	3.32	3.45
Chocolate	.433***	0.000	3.40	3.90	3.65
Mobile Phone	.251***	0.000	3.91	3.48	3.69
Fast Food	.426**	0.01	3.64	3.84	3.79
Sweets	.352***	0.000	3.37	3.89	3.63

Summary of Result

Above table shows that for pestering related to play games, t-value (.471) was found significant. The inspection of mean score revealed that Boys (mean = 3.59) nag more than girls (mean= 3.32). For pestering related to buy chocolates, t-value (.433) was found extremely significant as girls (mean = 3.90) are found to nag more than boys (mean = 3.40) whereas for using mobile phone, boys (mean = 3.91) nag more than girls (means = 3.48). For pestering related to buy fast food, t-value (.426) was found significant, the inspection of mean score revealed that girls (mean = 3.84) are found to nag more than boys (mean = 3.64) whereas for

buying sweets girls (mean=3.89) nag more than boys (means = 3.37). Thus, alternate hypothesis are accepted i.e. there is a significant difference between girls and boys pestering strategies vary in relation to variety of items.

Results reveal that gender of the child play significant role for different pestering strategies. Due to dynamic environment, children become more coupled, conversant, and are more prospective to influence their parent’s decision. As a result we can infer that children having different need for different products and different pestering appeal to their parents to influence their decision.

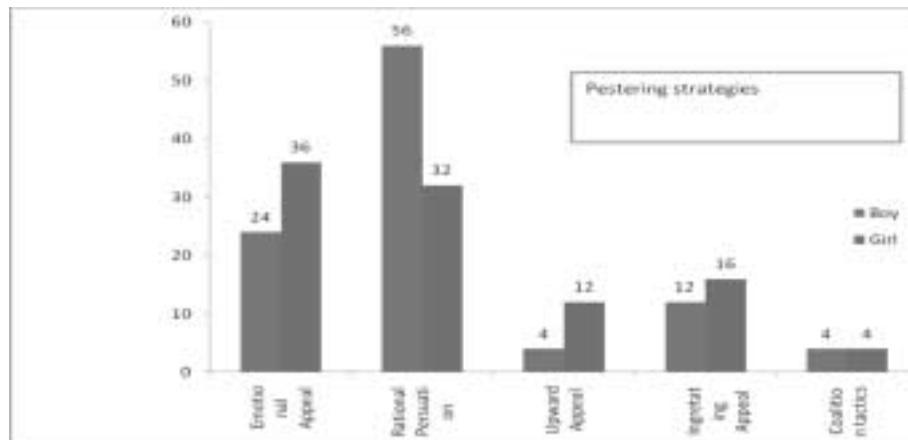


Fig. 1: Pestering Strategies Adopted by Children to Nag their Parents

Generally boys are more rational and girls are more emotional in their behavior to take decision. Above figure proved this fact, which shows majority of boys used rational persuasion followed by emotional appeal, integrating appeal, upward and coalition tactics whereas majority of girls use emotional appeal followed by rational persuasion, ingretating appeal, upward appeal and coalition tactics.

Conclusion

To conclude, this study diffuse parent-child conflict, which arise from children's purchase requests due to consumer socialization process in which children take interest to influence their parent's buying decisions. They come to know about the products from friends, family, and that are available in the marketplace. After analysis we come to know that almost all parents agree that their child nag them to fulfill their demands. In today's technology savvy dynamic environment, new ideas and innovations are emerging almost daily, technology is growing and children wants to learn and use them. As India is male dominated country, boys are having more leverage than girls to get desired

products. Parent's income slab decides their purchasing ability, which grounds children to nag them. This research have proved that with the increase in consumer income slab from lower income to middle class and from middle class to high class the pester power also increases. Research also proved that gender and pester power of the child are independent. Outside India we can see that children to get their desire product don't mind to work part time or use their pocket money but in India if parents refuse to entertain child demand then children seems not interested to work part time or use their pocket money. Instead of pocket money, children look for other pestering strategies like emotional appeal, promising good marks and nagging their grandparent. Survey also proved that in comparison to girls, boys try to get desire products from grandparents. Indian children culture is dominated by technology, entertainment and advertising as they have influence in parents decision-making, which is mushrooming worldwide. Thus, it would give a clearer understanding that why marketers are targeting children either as active purchasers or as passive influencers while selling consumer products.

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