

## Children influence on parents buying decisions in Delhi (India)

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### Abstract

The existing literature has confessed that children have an influence on parent's buying decisions for a wide range of products. This study is based on survey approach and aims to examine the impact of children on parent's buying decisions regarding children and family related product groups. A sample of mother's along with their children aged between 6-14 years was studied in Delhi (India). Results of the study mostly supported the findings of previous researchers with certain exceptions. Moreover the influence of child on parents buying decisions is found to be dependent on some demographic characteristics of children, mothers and families.

Key words: Children, Influence, Parents buying decision, Product groups, Delhi.

### 1. Introduction

There is no doubt that children establish a significant marketing zone and today they have a more important place in the society than their parents ever had. They are not only consumers but have emotional involvement direct or indirect on parents buying decisions. The nagging effect which they exhibit over their parents is increasing day by day with the increase in small family system in which child remain the centre of importance. The amount of influence exerted by children differs from product type, decision stage, family, children and parental demographic characteristics etc. Cultural background also has an important role to play on child's participation. Although India has preserved its values but still its culture has undergone through the process of metamorphosis resulting in to some changes in family structure, increase in number of working couples, delegation of authority etc. This type of research has not been conducted in Delhi (India) and hence children influence upon parents during their inclination to choose the same local/domestic and imported/foreign products has not been examined so far. Hence this study is undertaken to evaluate all the factors that have got influence on it and the findings of this study would be helpful to marketers who would be interested to reach rapidly to this children's market. The main objectives of this paper are:

- To study the differences in the amount of influence exerted by children in the purchase of same local domestic and imported / foreign products.
- To study the role of children in family purchase decisions with regard to children and family related products.
- To study the impact of children, mother and family characteristics on children's influence on parents buying decisions.

### 2. Literature review

Today children are not only passive observers but they have taken a considerable place in the families and have a significant influence on parental buying decisions. According to Wimalasiry (2004) the increase of the children influence on parents buying decisions in most of the developed countries can be attributed to various reasons. First; increase in number of working couple resulting in to cash rich and time poor society and hence increasing the influence of children on parents; second, the shift in the family setup from joint families to nuclear families, allowing the influence of children on parents buying decisions; third, lesser number of children per family, resulting in increase in the buying power of each; fourth, the repeated exposure to media resulting in socialization of children which in turn result in to children influence on parents buying decisions etc.

Children influence on parents buying decision making varies by product type, child, parent and family characteristics etc. Most of the studies have shown that children yield more influence in purchase decisions for children related products like toys (Burns & Harrison 1985, as cited by Kaur & Singh 2006); cereals (Belch et al. 1985, as cited by Kaur & Singh 2006); snacks (Ahuja & Stinson 1993) and children's wear (Foxman and

Tansuhaj 1988). Children have also been pragmatic to yield their influence for family related products like vacations (Ahuja & Stinson 1993; Belch et al. 1985, as cited by Kaur & Singh 2006); Family eating out decisions (Filiatrault & Ritchie 1980, as cited by Kaur & Singh 2006) and movies (Darley and Lim 1986). A few researchers have studied the role of children in both family and children specific product (Foxman & Tansuhaj 1988; Mc Neal & Yeh 1997). Children were found to have less authority and less influence on family related products which involved more financial resources and more influence for their personal usage products (Manglerburg 1990). In a similar type of study Nancarrow (2007) revealed that children have more impact on the purchase of book/comic, shoes for school, PC games etc. and less impact on the purchase of financial products like life insurance, car for family, family holiday trip. Wilson and Wood (2004) revealed in his study that parents ranked cereals the most influenced product category followed by frozen foods, juice and vegetables in their study. Dhobal (1999) stated that in new urban rural families in India, children were influencers for their personal care products, financial products and educational products while as they were buyer for the family toiletries and initiators or gatekeepers for the purchase decision of household products. Various researchers have revealed that a number of factors play a substantial role on children's influence on parents buying decisions across different product categories. Berey & Pollay (1968, as cited by Kaur & Singh 2006) studied mother-child dyads in purchase of break- fast cereals and found that in most of the products parents are intermediary purchasing agents for children. In such situations children's influence on parent's purchase decisions is governed by two factors as children's assertiveness and parent's child centeredness. The study showed that more assertive the child or more children cantered the mother is, more probable the mother will buy the child desired brands. The research also revealed that mother's act as gatekeepers and bought products that weighed high in nutrition. The findings were further strengthened by the studies of Chan & McNeal (2003) which revealed in China that child assertiveness can increase the like-hood of children's having his or her brand being bought. In general children exert more influence on products for which they are primary consumers (Lee and Beauty 2002).

Other factors affecting children's influence include children characteristics like gender and age of the children. Studies on gender have shown that boys are more influential for products like video games and CD's whereas girls influence was seen to be high in household items like cloths, bakery items and writing papers (Atkin 1978; Lee & Collins 1999; McNeal & Yeh 2003). Their influence was also seen too high in entertainment and fun items (McNeal & Yeh 2003). Gender differences were also studied by Maccoby (1990) who indicated that boys and girls do not vary in their number of influence efforts, but do vary in their influence style. Kaur & Singh (2006) revealed that male adolescents showed greater tendency towards store choice, consumer knowledge, more materialistic values, while as female adolescents showed greater tendency towards information search and cognitive differentiation. Lee & Collins (2000) studied parent- child shopping behaviour and discovered that fathers are more inclined towards sons and feel more comfortable with sons during shopping than daughters. Daughters support their mothers in purchase decisions as mothers fell comfortable discussing several purchases with their daughters. Sundberg et al. (1969, as quoted by kaur & Singh 2006) revealed that in India, girls perceived their families are more cohesive than does Indian boys, though the total difference was no that much. Kaur & Singh (2006) reported that in India sex difference has more roles to play on parental buying decision that in America.

Children age was considered to be very important variable that determine the extent of influence children have on parents buying decisions. McNeal & Yeh (2003) in his study revealed that there exists positive relationship between age and the influence on parents buying decision. Older children were seen to influence more than younger children (Darley and Lim 1986). Studies of Atkin (1978); Moschis & Mitchell (1986) showed that with the increase of age of child, the influence in family purchase decision increases. This is due to the development in cognitive abilities of the child. Moschis & Moore (1979) in their study established a positive association between the adolescents' socio economic background and the degree of brand preferences for several products. Age was found to a very important determinant for preference of friends for as a source of information. The study also showed inverse relationship between age and parental advice. It was seen as the age of the children increases their dependency on parents for shopping decreases and they tend to become sophisticated consumers (Ward et al. 1986). Studies of Ward & Wackman (1972) showed that younger children between the ages of five to seven prefer to purchase products like toys and games where as children between the age of eleven to twelve influence in products like clothing and recorded albums. Marquis (2004) discovered in his study that children look at things from various angles and admit other's opinions. Further he noted that children requests become harder to refuse from parental side as they grow older, for example the parental tendency to refuse a ten years old child's request is less than a five years old child's.

Another group of factors having a substantial impact on children's influence on parents buying decisions include parental age and family income. Jenkins (1979) found a direct relation between parents married life and

children's influence and revealed that longer the couple has been married, more will be the impact of children on parents buying decisions. The results were further supported by the studies of Foxman, Tansuhaj and Ekstron (1989) who established that children influence will be more in families having older parents. McNeal (1992) discovered that families dedicated to their career postpone children in initial stage but have a great expectation for the arrival of new one at latter stage, hence give them more importance and had a great respect for their opinions (McNeal 2007).

Family income was also found to have a positive relationship with children's influence. Studies conducted by Jenkins (1979) and Atkin (1978) confirmed that children influence higher in high income families or economically sound families. Prahalad & Lieberthal (2003) studied the development of low income market around the world and revealed price sensitivity in the consumers of such markets. Therefore the values can be passed to children too, which makes the children of such low income markets price sensitive. Word (1974), Moschis & Churchill (1978) and R.L. Moore & Moschis (1979) suggested that in high income families more parent-child interactions take place related to purchase decisions making, because they have more exposure to economic world than low income families. Beauty & Talpade (1994) verified that children in high income families will have more influence on family purchase decisions, what can be explained due to accessibility of funds. However the studies of Atkin (1978) and Ward & Wackman (1972) did not found any impact of socioeconomic status on children's influence attempts. Veloso et al. (2008) revealed in their study that parents in low income families take their children to several buying trips, because they don't have any one to take care of them, hence spend more time in shopping environment. Young (1999) found that children in low income families make more purchase requests because they are more frequently exposed to advertising than children of high income families. Gorn & Goldberg (1977) studied that parents in low income families valued the children's purchase requests more as compared to high income families and hence children in such families influenced the family purchase decisions more than high income families. Although children in low income families should have lower participation in family purchase decisions and these families can afford risking their constraint budget, but literature is not clear on this point. Sing (1992) studied in India a positive relationship between family income and children's influence. Children belonging to families who were economically sound exhibited more influence than those who were not. Hundal (2001) in a similar type of study in Amritsar district of Punjab revealed that family purchase decisions linked to purchase of durables is influenced by children even if the final purchase is made by parents alone.

Other factors should also be born in mind like role of socialization agents; media impact etc. that do have a considerable impact on children influence in family purchase decisions.

### **3. Research Methodology**

In order to understand the impact of children on parents (mothers) purchase decision to buy any type of product or brand, primary type of research was conducted in a field study. The primary data was collected by interacting with the parents (mothers) with the help of structured questionnaires. Each questionnaire was printed in both languages; English and regional language Hindi. Each questionnaire was inserted with some pictures among the questions. The reason for this was that visual facilities such as pictures stimulate motivation and concentration towards the questions (Melzer-Lena & Middelman-Motz 1998). The questions were personally administered and any clarifications on the research topic or difficulty in understanding the questions were attended on site that ensured 100% response rate. The research questions were framed by going through the available data and by examining the research regions. It is assumed that demographic characteristics of children play a vital role on parent's choice/selection of products. Hence we incorporated such characteristics like gender and age of children in the study. Also various types of research papers were reviewed and it was found that children impact depends on some demographic features of their parents. Hence we incorporated such features of parents as well; age of mother and monthly income.

Based on the literature review, we took two types of products – products purchased for children and other type exclusively for family use. The type of products purchased for children involved Lays, Shoes, chocolate Local and imported, juice local and imported. A different type of products purchased exclusively for family involved dining outside, vacations in India and abroad, musical instrument, car and home appliances. The answers to different questions were collected by using a ten point scale; in which 1 signified no impact and 10 signified strong impact. An average and t- test statistics were being calculated where average represented the strength of children's impact and t- test statistics represented the differences between the means. T test for independent samples was applied for calculation of differences of means between gender of children, different age groups, mother's age and income categories. T test for paired samples was applied for calculation of differences of

means between products of children and family use. The survey was carried out in Delhi & NCR and employed non-probabilistic convenience sampling. The analysis of data was done through Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 16).

### *3.1 Demographic profile*

Insert table (1.1) here

The overall profile of the sample population is given in the table (1.1). A sample of 200 mothers with their children was studied during March – October 2011. The proportion of questionnaires collected from mothers was almost in equal percentage between 25-35 years and 36-60 years. 13% of women sample was from families having income up to 5000 rupees, half was from families having monthly income from 5001 to 15000 rupees and rest portion was from the families having monthly income above 15000 rupees. The proportion between boys and girls was also equal. The children belonged to three age groups; 16% was from 3-6 years, 58% was from 7-10 years and rest was from 11-14 years.

## **4. Findings and Discussion**

### *4.1 Product selection*

Insert table (1.2) here

The findings for impact of children on product selection using 10 point scale are shown in the table (1.2). It is seen that children had different impact on purchase of selected products. Women perceived that their children had more impact on the selection of Lays. The impact on selection of local Chocolate was less (difference from Lays  $t = - 5.1$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Almost same impact children had on the selection of Cloths. The third group which mothers perceived was less influenced by their children included Vacations in India, Dining outside, Musical instrument and local Juice. A significant difference was observed between children's impact on selection of Vacations in India and branded Chocolate ( $t = 3.01$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Even though this group was less important but still the importance was more than the last group. This group included products namely branded Chocolates, branded Juice and Vacations abroad. The last group of products which mother's perceived was least influenced by their children included Car and Home Appliances. The impact on selection of Car was less (difference from Vacation abroad  $t = - 3.24$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Hence it can be stated that children have virtually no impact on adult's selection of Car and Home Appliances.

### *4.2 Impact of Gender of children on Product selection*

Insert table (1.3) here

The findings for impact of gender of children on product selection are shown in the table (1.2). It is understood that numerous differences were noted comparing the children's impact on adults purchase decisions between different genders of children. Girls were seen to have more impact on the selection of branded chocolates than boys ( $t = 5.12$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The similar type of impact was seen on the selection of branded juice ( $t = 3.37$ ,  $p < .05$ ). These differences clearly indicate that girls have significantly more impact on parent's decision making related to imported chocolates and branded juice.

### *4.3 Impact of Age of children on Product selection*

Insert table (1.4) here

The findings for impact of age of children on product selection are shown in the table (1.3). It is understood that numerous differences were noted comparing the children's impact on parent's purchase decisions between different age groups. It is seen that children's impact on selection of shoes increases with age (3-6 yrs. < 7-11 yrs. < 12-16 yrs.). Likewise significant differences were found on selection of musical instruments and home appliances. Children between 3-6 years were found to display less impact on parent's selection of musical instruments and home appliances than children between 7-11 years and 12-16 years. Thus it can be concluded that as the children grow older, their impact on parent's selection of various items increases.

### *4.4 Impact of Age of mother on Product selection*

[Insert table \(1.5\) here](#)

It is also believed that some parent's characteristics also have a significant impact on children's behaviour related to an influence on parent's product selection. Table (1.3) reveals the impact of parent's age on children product selection. It is seen that women between 25-35 years ranked their children's impact for selection of lays higher than women between 36-60 years ( $t= 1.95, p < 0.05$ ). Likewise the similar result were seen for local juice ( $t= 1.71, p < 0.10$ ) and branded juice ( $t= 1.57, p < 0.10$ ). On the other hand older women between 36-60 years perceived that their children had more impact on selection of musical instrument ( $t = - 4.08, p < 0.05$ ) and home appliances ( $t= - 2.33, p < 0.10$ ). Thus it can be concluded that young mothers involve their children only in the selection of their own products only, but as the mother grows older, they involve their children in the selection of home related products too.

#### 4.5 Impact of Income of family on product selection

[Insert table \(1.6\) here](#)

At last the effect of family's monthly income was seen to have a significant impact on children's influence on parent's product selection Table (1.3). It is seen that mother's belonging to family's having monthly income up to 5000 rupees regarded their children's impact on selection of branded juice less than the mother's having their families monthly income between 5001- 15000 rupees ( $t= - 1.80, p < 0.10$ ) and above 15000 rupees ( $t= - 3.67, p < 0.05$ ). Similar type of results were found in case of branded chocolates ( $t= - 3.39, p < 0.05$ ;  $t= - 3.56, p < 0.05$ ) and dining outside ( $t= - 3.35, p < 0.05$ ). Hence it can be concluded that mother's belonging to families with higher income pay a lesser extent of attention to the price of the products and involve the children on such type of product purchases. At the same time the families having monthly income up to 5000 rupees perceived a higher impact of children on selection of musical instruments than families having income between 5001- 15000 rupees ( $t= 1.93, p < 0.06$ ).

### 5. Conclusion and future Recommendation's

The research revealed that children had more impact on the selection of children specific products (lays, local chocolate and shoes) than the products for family use. Hence a vigorous study needs to be undertaken where an extensive range of such type of products can be taken in to study so as to finalize the results for this whole product category.

Gender and age of the children was also found to have an impact on parent's product selection. It is seen that children's impact on selection of cloths, musical instruments and home appliances increases with age of the children, hence supporting the research findings of other researchers in other countries.

Mother's age was also found to have an impact on parent's product selection. It is seen that young mothers involve their children only in the selection of children specific products only, but as the mother grows older, they involve their children in the selection of home related products too.

At last families monthly income was also seen to have an impact on parent's product selection. It was seen that mother's belonging to families with higher income pay a lesser extent of attention to the price of the products and involve the children on such type of product

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Gender (Children's)	No.	%	Age (Children's)	No.	%	Age (Mother's)	No.	%	Monthly Income (Family in Rs.)	No.	%
Girls	106	53	3-6 Yrs.	32	16	25-35 Yrs.	94	47	Up to 5000	26	13
Boys	94	47	7-10 Yrs.	116	58	36-60 Yrs.	106	53	5001 to15000	99	49.5
			11-14 Yrs.	52	26				>15000	75	37.5

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**Table (1.1) Demographic profile**

**Table (1.2) Product selection**

Category	Total
Lays <sup>1</sup>	8.33
Chocolate (Local) <sup>2</sup>	7.10
Shoes <sup>2</sup>	7.02
Vacations in India <sup>3</sup>	6.45
Dining outside <sup>3</sup>	6.25
Musical instrument <sup>3</sup>	6.24
Juice (Local) <sup>3</sup>	6.00
Chocolate (Branded) <sup>4</sup>	5.65
Juice (Branded) <sup>4</sup>	5.61
Vacations abroad <sup>4</sup>	5.37
Car <sup>5</sup>	4.56
Home appliances <sup>5</sup>	4.21

**Table (1.3) Impact of Gender of children on Product selection**

Gender (Children's)	Girls	Boys	t-test	Sig.
Lays	8.8	7.7	2.13	0.55
Chocolate (Local)	7.7	6.6	1.71	0.70
Shoes	7.5	6.2	2.33	0.198
Chocolate (Branded)	7.0	4.3	<b>5.12</b>	<b>0.000</b>
Vacations in India	6.9	6.0	1.73	0.388
Dining outside	6.7	5.9	1.31	0.731
Vacations abroad	5.9	5.2	1.22	0.866
Musical instrument	6.1	6.3	-0.38	0.190
Juice (Local)	5.8	6.1	-0.54	0.133
Juice (Branded)	6.2	4.4	<b>3.37</b>	<b>0.020</b>
Car	4.2	4.7	-0.97	0.202
Home appliances	4.0	4.3	-0.73	0.319

**Table (1.4) Impact of Age of children on Product selection**

Age (Children's)	3-6 Yrs.	7-11 Yrs.	12-16 Yrs.	t-test 3-6/7-11	Sig.	t-test 3-6/12-16	Sig.	t-test 7-11/12-16	Sig.
Lays	9.2	8.4	7.5	1.11	0.15	1.88	0.12	1.46	1.26
Chocolate (Local)	7.0	7.7	6.5	- 0.972	1.53	0.66	0.87	1.96	0.43
Shoes	5.5	6.7	8.2	- 1.66	0.37	<b>- 3.31</b>	<b>0.003</b>	<b>- 2.44</b>	<b>0.006</b>
Chocolate (Branded)	5.9	5.8	5.4	0.13	0.70	0.61	1.03	0.65	2.99
Vacations in India	7.1	6.1	6.9	1.38	.132	0.24	1.14	- 1.31	0.09
Dining outside	6.0	6.7	6.1	- 0.97	0.66	- 0.12	0.29	0.98	1.70
Vacations abroad	5.3	5.1	5.8	0.27	0.60	- 0.61	0.59	- 1.14	0.19
Musical instrument	4.1	6.4	7.4	<b>- 3.19</b>	<b>0.04</b>	<b>- 4.03</b>	<b>.001</b>	- 1.64	.075
Juice (Local)	5.6	6.5	5.1	-1.25	0.53	0.62	1.06	1.32	0.08
Juice (Branded)	5.8	5.6	5.1	0.26	3.73	0.85	1.07	0.81	0.66
Car	3.5	4.8	4.2	- 1.30	0.14	- 0.83	0.09	0.97	3.01
Home appliances	2.8	4.3	4.6	<b>- 2.08</b>	<b>0.02</b>	<b>- 2.21</b>	<b>0.042</b>	- 0.49	1.63



**Table (1.5) Impact of Age of mother on Product selection**

Age (Mother's)	25-35 Yrs.	36-60 Yrs.	t-test	Sig.
Juice (Local)	6.4	5.5	1.71	0.08
Juice (Branded)	5.9	5.1	1.57	0.09
Chocolate (Local)	7.3	7.1	0.38	0.30
Chocolate (Branded)	5.6	5.5	0.19	0.23
Lays	8.7	7.7	<b>1.95</b>	<b>0.02</b>
Shoes	6.4	7.3	- 1.75	0.46
Dining outside	5.7	6.8	- 2.13	0.13
Vacations in India	6.1	6.7	- 1.17	0.46
Vacations abroad	4.8	5.7	- 1.75	0.30
Car	4.1	4.7	- 1.16	0.71
Home appliances	3.6	4.8	- 2.33	0.08
Musical instrument	5.1	7.2	<b>- 4.08</b>	<b>0.002</b>

**Table (1.6) Impact of Income of family on product selection**

Family Income / Month (Rs.)	Up to 5000 (1)	5001-15000 (2)	Above 15000 (3)	t- test (1-2)	Sig.	t- test (1-3)	Sig.	t- test (2-3)	Sig.
Juice (Local)	7	5.6	6.8	1.5	0.18	0.21	0.13	- 1.95	0.53
Juice (Branded)	3.7	5.3	7.1	- 1.80	0.08	<b>- 3.67</b>	<b>0.01</b>	- 2.93	0.15
Chocolate (Local)	7.5	7.4	7.3	0.11	0.29	0.21	0.16	0.18	0.14
Chocolate (Branded)	3.1	6.1	6.4	<b>- 3.39</b>	<b>0.002</b>	<b>- 3.56</b>	<b>0.005</b>	- 0.47	0.76
Lays	7.3	8.2	10	- 1.01	0.96	- 2.91	0.38	- 2.93	0.34
sShoes	6.3	6.7	8.2	- 0.45	2.20	- 2.06	0.82	- 2.46	0.58
Dining outside	4.7	6.3	7.8	- 1.80	0.18	<b>- 3.35</b>	<b>0.02</b>	- 2.45	0.39
Vacations in India	5.7	6.2	7.6	- 0.57	1.61	- 2.05	0.63	- 2.28	0.61
Vacations abroad	5.2	4.8	6.3	0.47	0.53	- 1.18	0.25	- 2.45	0.36
Car	5.9	3.7	5.3	2.48	0.25	0.65	0.52	- 2.62	0.26
Home appliances	5.3	3.7	5.1	1.81	0.18	0.22	0.15	- 2.27	0.29
Musical instrument	7.5	5.8	6.7	1.93	0.06	0.86	0.78	- 1.47	0.26

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