

# Examining the Children's Influence in Family Decision making in Delhi (India)

Akhter Ali\*, Zuhaib Mustafa, D.K Batra, N Ravichandran and Shoiab Ur Rehman

**Abstract**—The existing literature has confessed that children have a tremendous influence in family purchase decisions which varies with respect to different factors. This study is based on survey approach and aims to examine the impact of demographic factors/variables like gender and age of children and parental profession on children in Delhi (India). A sample of 60 parents and 60 children between the age group 6-16 years were studied by two different close ended questionnaires. Analysis of the data showed that children especially boys in the age group of 14-16 years have more influence than the girls in the same age group. Moreover this influence increases when parents are professionally more involved than otherwise. This study will help in understanding the purchase behavior of children in Delhi and it can also serve as guideline for marketers in targeting a particular children segment.

**Key words**—Demographic variables, Parental profession, purchase decision, Delhi, children segment

---

## 1 INTRODUCTION

CHILDREN constitute a significant marketing zone as the world fits to children and this has led to consideration from marketing point of view and companies are using this segment as trump card for profit maximization. Children today have a more important place in the society than their parents ever had. They not only are consumers but have a considerable influence may be direct or indirect influence in the family purchase decisions. The influencer role does children exhibit over purchase decisions in family along with the nagging effect that they have on their parents is increasing day by day. This quotation "Kids today are customers, buyers, spenders, shoppers, consumers" illustrates that children constitute a very profitable segment to marketers because they have their own purchasing power, they influence their parents buying decisions and they're the adult consumers of the future [1,2]. Nowadays children have more autonomy and power within the families than in previous generations, so it follows that children are vocal about what they want their parents to buy [3]. The role that children play in family decision-making has directed the researchers to study the influence of children. Most of the studies talking about impact of demographic variables on children's family decision making are based on the western context and there are very few studies focusing

*Shoiab Ur Rehman is Research Scholar at ICAFI University, Hyderabad, India on Asia, particularly Delhi (India) due to which this research was undertaken. In India, literature on children's influence in family shopping decision making is scant and researchers have partially investigated the influence of children. Most of the studies talking about impact of demographic variables on children's influence in family decision making are based on the western context [4]. Since Indian society vastly differs from the west in terms of family composition, family type and structure, norms, values, traditions and behavior, it is important to understand the impact of gender, age and parental profession on children in the purchase decision making in families in the Indian context. The buying power of children in India is different compared to the western countries, but still they play the key role in Indian families [2]. Hence the main objective of current study is to strengthen the understanding of children's influence in family purchase decision process and to critically evaluate the impact of demographic factors (like age and sex of children and parental profession) on children in family purchase decision making in Delhi (India).*

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Demographic factors have an important role to play on children's influence in family purchase decision making which can be studied under following headings:

### 2.1 AGE OF CHILD

Age is considered to be very important variable that determine the extent of influence children have in family decision making. McNeal and Yeh [5] discovered that there exists positive relationship between age and the children

---

\*Akhter Ali is the corresponding author of this paper. He is currently pursuing Ph.D. in Marketing with specialization in Consumer Behavior from Hamdard University N. Delhi, India 110062

E-mail: akhterali15@gmail.com

Zuhaib Mustafa is an MBA Graduate Student, Hamdard University, New Delhi, 110062

Dr. D.K Batra is Professor FORE School of Management, N. Delhi, India

Dr. N Ravichandran is associate Professor, Hamdard University, New Delhi, 110062

influence in family purchase decision. Studies of Atkin[6], Darley & Lim[7] revealed that with the increase of age of child, cognitive abilities of the child develop resulting in the influence in family purchase decision process. Moschis & Moore [3] 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. Studies of Ward et al. [8] 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.

## 2.2 GENDER OF CHILD

Gender of the child has also a substantial influence in family purchase decisions. Boys were seen to be more influential for products like video games and CD's were as girls influence was seen to be high in household items like cloths, bakery items and writing [5, 6, 9]. Gender differences were also studied by Cowan & Avants[10], Maccoby[11] which indicated that boys and girls do not vary in their number of influence efforts, but do vary in their influence style. Kaur & Singh[2] 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 [9] studied parent- child shopping behavior and discovered that fathers were more inclined towards sons and felt more comfortable with sons during shopping than daughters. Daughters support their mothers in purchase decisions as mothers felt comfortable discussing several purchases with their daughters. Sundberg et al. [12] as quoted by kaur & Singh [2] revealed that in India, girls perceived their families more cohesive than does Indian boys, though the total difference was no that much. Kaur & Singh[2] reported that in India, sex difference has more roles to play in family decision making than in America. Dhobal [13] 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.

## 2.3 PARENT'S PROFESSION

McNeal [14] discovered that families enthusiastic about the progression of their careers were more likely to yield to

children influence. This may be because of the higher income or by professional involvement [1]. According to Jenkins [4] "[t]he amount of time spent away from home is a significant explanatory variable for both spouses' perceptions of children's influence". Beatty & Talpade[15] identified that guilt factor influenced more where both parents were working, principally for traditional mothers. This was further strengthened by the study of Lee & Beatty[16] who proposed that guilt may be experienced while leaving home for work, and therefore allowed their children's influence in family purchase decisions. Beatty & Talpade [15] stated that parents delegated authority when they were professionally involved which later was named by McNeal [14] as "household participation". Lee & Beatty[16] working with mothers studied the relationship between children's influence in family purchase decisions and the decision stages and concluded that children's influence was more pronounced in the final decision stage. Studies conducted by Jenkins [4] Atkin [6] confirmed that children influenced higher in high income families (professionally engaged parents). Moschis & Mitchell [17], Prahalad & Lieberthal [18] studied the development of low income market around the world and revealed price sensitivity in the consumers of such markets. Therefore the values get passed to children too, which makes the children of such low income markets price sensitive. Word [8], Moschis & Churchill [19] and Moore & Moschis [12] suggested that in high income families where parents were professionally engaged, more parent-child interactions took place related to purchase decisions, because they had more exposure to economic world than low income families. Beauty & Talpade [15] verified that children in highly professional households had more influence on family purchase decisions, what can be explained due to accessibility of funds. However the study of Atkin[6] did not found any impact of socioeconomic status on children's influence attempts. Veloso et al. [20] revealed in their study that parents in low income families took their children to several buying trips, because they had no one to take care of them, hence spent more time in shopping environment. Gunter & Fumham [21], Young [22] found that children in nonprofessional households made more purchase requests because they were more frequently exposed to advertising than children of high income families. Gom & Goldberg [23] studied that parents who were not professionally involved valued their children's purchase requests more as compared to parents who were professionally involved and hence children in such families influenced the family purchase decisions more. Although children from nonprofessional household 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.

## 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to understand the impact of children in family

purchase decision, primary type of research was conducted in a field study. The primary data was collected by interacting with the parents and children with the help of structured questionnaires. The research questions were framed by going through the available data and by examining the research regions. Also various types of research papers were reviewed and gaps were identified.

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 children motivation and concentration towards the questions [24]. The questionnaire contained questions in chronological order related to children influence in family purchases. 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 parents and children were allowed to fill their respective questionnaires. If the family contained more children, the child available at the point was given preference. The children were divided in to two groups based on the gender and thus 50% questionnaires were filled by boys and 50% questionnaires were filled by girls.

The parents were divided in to two groups (Fathers and Mothers). Hence out of 60 questionnaires, 50% questionnaires were filled by maternal side and 50% questionnaires were filled by paternal side just to maintain the homogeneity in the group. Further the parents were divided in to sub groups based on the professions like Executives/Managers, Professional (doctors/Lawyers), Academic/Educator, Retired and Unemployed. Thus 20% questionnaires were filled from each group and each group having 6 mothers and 6 fathers (50:50 ratios).

Before under taking the survey, pilot study was undertaken with parents and children separately. Their views were drawn in to two questionnaires meant for children and for parents. The survey was carried out in Delhi. Analysis was carried using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. (SPSS 16)

Sample size: A sample size of 60 parents and 60 children were chosen for the study. The responses were collected separately for parents and children at the same time from their homes.

Sampling technique: The study employed non-probabilistic quota sampling and was carried on a sample of 120; 60 children (50% girls and 50% boys) and 60 parents (50% males and 50% females) from Delhi during March -October 2011.

## 4 RESULTS OF THE STUDY

### 4.1 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF CHILDREN AND PARENTS

The overall profile of the sample population is given in table (1.1).

Table (1.1)

Variables	Categories	Percentage
Gender of child	Boy	50.00%
	Girl	50.00%
Age of children (in yrs.)	06-09	21.66%
	10-13	25.00%
	14-16	33.33%
	16 Above	20.00%
Gender of Parent	Male	50.00%
	Female	50.00%
Age of Parents (in yrs.)	18-28	21.66%
	29-39	25.00%
	40-50	21.66%
	50 -60	10.00%
	60 Above	21.66%
Profession of the parents	Executives/Manager	20.00%
	Professionals (Doctor/Lawyer)	20.00%
	Academic/Educator	20.00%
	Retired	20.00%
	Unemployed	20.00%

Out of total children surveyed 50% were male and 50% were female. The children belonged to four age groups- 21.66% belonged to age group 6-9 years, 25% belonged to age group of 10-13 years, 33.33% belonged to age group of 14-16 years and remaining 20% were above 16 years of age. Parents also belonged to four professions like: Executives/Manager, Professionals (Doctor/Lawyer, Academic/Educator, Retired and Unemployed (20%:20%:20%:20%).

### 4.2 IMPACT OF GENDER OF CHILDREN IN FAMILY PURCHASE DECISION

The findings for impact of gender of children in family purchase decision are shown in table (1.2).

Table (1.2)

Age group	Children participation in family purchase decision					Total
	Not at all	A bit	Can't say	Quite a lot	Very much	
Boy	3.33%	10%	3.33%	11.66%	21.66%	50%
Girl	3.33%	15%	3.33%	25.00%	3.33%	50%
Total	6.66%	25%	6.66%	36.00%	24.99%	100%

  

Mann-Whitney Test			
Q1	N	Mean Rank	Sum of ranks
Q3			
Boy	50%	35.15%	1054.50%
Girl	50%	25.85%	775.50%
Total	100%		

Q3: Influence on family purchase decision.  
Test Statistics\*

	Q3
Mann-Whitney U	310.500
Wilcoxon W	775.500
Z	-2.155
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.031

Grouping Variable: Q1  
Q1: Gender of the child.

Cross tabulation done by SPSS showed that out of (50%)

boys, 21.66% strongly agreed, 11.66% agreed that they have participation in family purchase decision. 3.33% strongly disagreed, 10% disagreed that they have a participation in family purchase decision and rest 3.33% were unanswerable about this fact.

Out of (50%) girls, 3.33% strongly agreed, 25% agreed that they have participation in family purchase decision. 3.33% strongly disagreed, 15% disagreed that they have a participation in family purchase decision and rest 3.33% were unanswerable about this fact. The findings of cross tabulation test were further confirmed by Mann Whitney test which showed the mean rank for boys found to be 35.15 and for girls it was found to be 25.85.

Mean Rank: (Boys > Girls): 35.15 > 25.85

Sig. was found to be .031

$P = .03$   $\alpha = .05$ ;  $P < \alpha$

Hence it was concluded that there is an impact of gender of children in family purchase decision.

### 4.3 IMPACT OF AGE OF CHILDREN IN FAMILY PURCHASE DECISION

The findings for impact of age of children in family purchase decision are shown in table (1.3).

Table (1.3)

Age group		Children participation in family purchase decision					Total
		Not at all	A bit	Can't say	Quite a lot	Very much	
Q2	06-09	05.00%	11.66%	00.00%	05.00%	00.00%	21.66%
	10-13	00.00%	05.00%	01.66%	10.00%	08.33%	25.00%
	14-16	01.66%	03.33%	01.66%	15.00%	11.67%	33.33%
	16 Above	00.00%	06.67%	01.66%	06.66%	05.00%	20.00%
Total		06.67%	26.67%	51.66%	36.67%	25.00%	100%

  

Kruskal-Wallis Test			
Q2	N	Mean Rank	
Q3	06-09	21.66%	15.27
	10-13	25.00%	35.43
	14-16	33.33%	36.55
	16 Above	20.00%	30.75
Total		100%	

Q3: Influence on family purchase decision.  
Test Statistics<sup>a,b</sup>

	Q3
Chi-Square	14.725
df	3
Asymp. Sig.	.002

Grouping Variable: Q2  
Q2: Age group of the children

Cross tabulation done by SPSS showed that out of 60 children 21.66% were in the age group of 6-9, 25% were in the age group of 10-13, 33.33% were in the age group of 14-16 and 20% were found to be above 16 years of age.

Out of 21.66% only 5% agreed that that they participate in family purchase decision. 5% strongly disagreed and 11.66% disagreed that they have a participation in family purchase decision.

Out of 25%, 8.33% strongly agreed and 10% agreed that they participate in family purchase decision. Only 5% disagreed

that they have a participation in family purchase decision and rest 1.66% were neutral about this opinion.

Out of 33.33%, 11.67% strongly agreed and 15% agreed that they participate in family purchase decision. 1.66% strongly disagreed and 3.33% disagreed that they have a participation in family purchase decision. Rest 1.66% was neutral about this opinion.

Out of 20%, 5% strongly agreed and 6.66% agreed that they participate in family purchase decision. 6.67% disagreed that they have a participation and rest 1.66% were neutral about this opinion.

Kruskal-Wallis Test in SPSS was applied to cross check the findings of cross tabulation. The findings of this test showed the same results as were shown by cross tabulation.

Mean Rank: Age group 6-9 < 10-13 < 14-16

Sig. was found to be .002

$P = .002$   $\alpha = .05$ ;  $P < \alpha$

Hence it was concluded that there is an impact of age of children in family purchase decision and more the age more will be involvement in family purchase decision but beyond a certain age this influence decreased. Above 16 years the children influence on family purchase was found to be declining because beyond this age the children no longer remain only influencers but become mature consumers.

Table (1.4)

### 4.4 IMPACT OF PARENTAL PROFESSION IN FAMILY PURCHASE DECISION

The findings for impact of parental profession on children in family purchase decision are shown in table (1.4).

Table (1.4)

Parental profession	Children participation in family purchase decision					Total
	Not at all	A bit	Can't say	Quite a lot	Very much	
Executive/Manager	00.00%	01.66%	00.00%	08.33%	10.00%	20.00%
Professional	00.00%	03.33%	00.00%	11.66%	05.00%	20.00%
Academic/Educator	01.66%	06.66%	01.66%	05.00%	05.00%	20.00%
Unemployed	01.66%	15.00%	00.00%	03.33%	00.00%	20.00%
Retired	00.00%	08.33%	00.00%	11.66%	00.00%	20.00%
Total	03.33%	35.00%	01.66%	40.00%	20.00%	100%

  

Kruskal-Wallis Test			
Q3	N	Mean Rank	
Q9	Executive/Manager	20.00%	43.54
	Professional	20.00%	37.08
	Academic/Educator	20.00%	29.21
	Unemployed	20.00%	15.96
	Retired	20.00%	26.71
Total	100%		

Test Statistics<sup>a,b</sup>

	Q9
Chi-Square	19.595
df	4
Asymp. Sig.	.001

Grouping Variable: Q9  
Q9: Parental profession

The analysis of the data was done both cross tabulation and Kruskal Wallis test, which showed similar results. It was

found that that there is a significant impact of parental profession on children's involvement in family purchase decision.

Mean Rank: Executive/Manager > Professional > Academic/Educator > Unemployed < Retired

The mean rank talks about the professional involvement. More the professional involvement, less the time for family purchase. Executives were found to be more professionally involved giving more room for children in family purchase decision making followed by Professionals, Academician's, Unemployed and Retired.

Sig. was found to be .001

$P = .001$ ;  $\alpha = .05$ ;  $P < \alpha$

Hence results were significant. Thus it was concluded that parental profession have a strong impact on children in family purchase decision. More the professional involvement of parent, less the time for family purchase and more the involvement of children in family purchase process (cross tabulation results).

## 5 DISCUSSION

The study was conducted in Delhi for the purpose of identifying the extent of influence exerted by children in family purchase decision making and the factors that have an impact on this influence. It has been identified that children do have a tremendous influence in family purchase decision. Age has an important role to play in family purchase decision. The most influential age group of children as per the study conducted has been identified as 14-16 years. Gender effect was also studied and it was found that boys have more influence in pestering than girls. The difference of the gender existed due to Indian culture and upbringing as well as the family type, which thereby brought changes or affected the way the boys and girls influence the family purchase decision. In addition to age and gender of children, impact of parental profession was also studied. The study clearly indicates that the increased pressure on parents to work for longer in office in order to attain more revenues for the company indirectly leads to creation of cash rich but time poor society. The study done in Delhi itself revealed that children will have more influence when parents are professionally more involved than otherwise. Executives were found to be more professionally involved than Professionals, Academicians, Retired and Unemployed. Thus the involvement of their children was also found to be more. Hence it can be concluded that more the parental professional involvement, less the time for family purchase and more the involvement of children in family purchase decision.

## 6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Only 60 children and 60 parents were undertaken for the study. Hence the results can't be generalized for the whole population in India. Moreover Language problem was also faced while getting the questionnaire filled from the

respondents. Children in the age group 6-9 and unemployed parents were not comfortable in English.

## 7. REFERENCES

- [1] Mangleburg, T. "Children's Influence in Purchase Decision: A Review and Critiques", *Advances in Consumer Research*, vol. 17, pp. 813-825, 1990.
- [2] Kaur, P and Singh, R. "Children In Family Purchase Decision Making In India and the West: A Review", *Academy of Marketing Science Review*, vol. 2006 (8), pp. 1-30, 2006.
- [3] Gupta, S., & Verma, D. "We, Not Me. Who Will Buy", *Indian Management*, pp. 61-65, 2000
- [4] Jenkins, R. L. 1979. "The Influence of Children in Family Decision Making: Parents' Perceptions." In *Advances in Consumer Research*, vol. 6, ed. William L. Wilkie, Ann Arbor, MI: Association for Consumer Research, pp. 413-418.
- [5] McNeal, J.U., and Yeh, C. H. "Born to shop", *American Demographics*, vol. 15(6), pp. 34-39, 2003.
- [6] Atkin, C. "Observation of Parent-Child Interaction in Supermarket Decision-Making.", *Journal of Marketing*, vol. 42, pp. 41-45, 1978.
- [7] Darley, W. F., and Lim, J. "Family Decision Making in Leisure-Time Activities: An Exploratory Investigation of the Impact of Locus of Control, Child Age Influence Factor and Parental Type of Perceived Child Influence", *Advances in Consumer Research*, vol. 13, Richard J. Lutz (Ed.), Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research, pp. 370-374, 1986.
- [8] Ward, S., Robertson, T.S., D.M. Klees, and Gatignon, H. "Children's Purchase Requests and Parental Yielding: A Cross-National Study" *Advances in Consumer Research*, vol. 13 (01), pp. 629-32, 1986.
- [9] Lee, C.K.C. and B.A. Collins, "Family Decision Making and Coalition Patterns" Department of Marketing, University of Auckland, New Zealand, 2000.
- [10] Cowan, G., & Avants, S. K. "Children's influence strategies: Structure, sex differences, and bilateral mother-child influence", *Child Development*, vol. 59, pp. 1303-1313, 1988.
- [11] Maccoby, E. E. "Gender and relationships: A developmental account", *American Psychologist*, vol. 45, pp. 513-520, 1990.
- [12] Moschis, G. P., & Moore, R. L. "Family communication and consumer socialization", *Advances in Consumer Research*, vol. 6, pp. 359-363, 1979.
- [13] Dhobal, Shailesh., "NUFgen Marketing or Selling to the New Urban Family.", *Business Today*, vol. 22, pp. 66-81, 1999.
- [14] McNeal, J. U. "Children are as a market of influences" *Kids as customers-A hand book of marketing to children* pp. 63-87, New York: Lexington Books. The free press, 1992.
- [15] Beatty, S. E. and Talpade, S. "Adolescent Influence in Family Decision- Making: A Replication with Extension", *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 21, pp. 332-341, 1994.
- [16] Lee, C. K. C., and Beatty, S. E. (2002). *Family Structure and Influence in Family Decision Making*, *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, vol. 19 pp. 24-41.
- [17] Moschis, G. P., and Mitchell, L.G. (1986). *Television*

- Advertising and Interpersonal Influences on Teenagers Participation in Family Consumption Decisions: Advances in Consumer Research, vol. 13, pp.181-186.
- [18] Prahalad, C. K., and Lieberthal, K. "The End of Corporate Imperialism", Harvard Business Review, vol. 81 (08), pp. 109-117, 2003.
- [19] Moschis, G. P., and G.A. Churchill, Jr. "An Analysis of the Adolescent Consumer", Journal of Marketing, vol. 43 (3), pp. 40-48, 1979.
- [20] Veloso, A. R., Hildebrand, D, F, N., and Daré, P, R, C., Campomar, M. "Children in the low income retail market", RAE electronica, vol. 7 (2), 2008.
- [21] Gunter, B., & Furnham, A. "Children as consumers: A psychological analysis of the young people's market. London" Routledge, 1998.
- [22] Young, B. M. "Television advertising and children", Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990.
- [23] Gorn, G. J., and Goldberg, M. E. "The Impact of Television Advertising on Children from Low Income Families", Journal of Consumer Research, vol. 4 (09), pp. 86-8, 1977.
- [24] Melzer-Lena & Middelmann-Motz, "The ESOMAR Handbook of market and opinion research", pp.957- 973, 1998.