

Gender-wise Analysis of Children's Influence across Stages of Family Decision Making Process

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Abstract. Past studies have considered gender of children as an important variable (Lee and Collins, 2000) in explaining the influence of child on family decision making. The findings from prior research suggest that in family purchases, female children (probably due to the early learning of sex roles) have more influence than male children (Lee and Collins, 2000; Moschis and Mitchell, 1986). This study provides a gender-wise analysis of children's influence across stages of family decision making process in the purchase of child product and family product in Indian families. A cross-sectional survey method was carried out and the primary data for the study was collected through a "structured non-disguised" questionnaire. The sample population consisted of 488 male children and 278 female children in the age group 13 to 18 years. The collected data have been analyzed and interpreted with the help of statistical tools such as mean, standard deviation and repeated measures ANOVA. It was posited that children's influence in stages of decision making process for child product and family product varies across (i) gender of children (H1), (ii) place of residence, i.e., rural and urban families (H2). Both the hypotheses were not supported by the analysis results.

Key Words: Gender, Rural Families, Urban Families, Family Decision Making Process, repeated measures ANOVA.

INTRODUCTION

Family has long been identified as the most important decision making and consumption unit and widely researched (Webster, 1994) topic in the field of consumer behavior. The character, influence, and extent of interaction among the family members constitute an important dimension of family purchase decision making (Spiro, 1983). Past literature has also identified various characteristics related to children, viz., children's age, gender, siblings, birth order, type of school and internet usage having an impact on children's influence in family decision making. This study has been conducted to provide a gender-wise analysis of children's influence across stages of family decision making process in the purchase of child product and family product in Indian families.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Past studies have considered gender of children as an important variable (Lee and Collins, 2000) in explaining their influence in family purchase decisions. Different researchers have reported different findings on the basis of gender of children. Some have suggested female children to be more influential than male children (McNeal and Yeh, 2003; Lee and Collins, 2000) while others have indicated male children to be more influential than female children (Flurry, 2007; Chavda et al., 2005) especially for technological products (Fikry and Jamil, 2010). In India, effect of children's gender on their influence in family decisions is examined in various studies (Ali et al., 2012; Kaur and Singh, 2006) and it was found that boys have more influence in pestering than girls. The difference of the gender exists due to Indian culture (patriarchal society where the preference is given to male children), upbringing of children, and family type/structure, which affect the way the boys and girls influence the family purchase decisions (Ali et al., 2012). The potential for children on the basis of their gender to influence the family decision making process is of considerable interest and making it worthy of further examination. Based on above discussion, it seemed reasonable to hypothesize that:

- H 1:** Children's influence in stages of decision making process for child product and family product varies across gender of children.
- H 2:** Children's influence in stages of decision making process for child product and family product varies for gender of children across rural and urban families.

METHODOLOGY

Sample Profile

The sample used for the study consisted of 382 rural families and 384 urban families. While the children pertaining to the age group of 13-14 years old and 15-16 years old were almost in same proportion (40.7 percent and 40.5 percent, respectively), the remaining 18.8 percent belonged to the age group of 17-18 years old. Majority of the children (488) were male children (rural = 229 and urban = 259) and rest of the 278 children (rural = 153 and urban = 125) were female children. The data collection period lasted for eight months from March 2015 to October 2015. A profile of the sample used in the study is provided in Table 1. Collected data have been analyzed and interpreted with the help of statistical tools such as mean, standard deviation, two-way (within-

subjects) repeated measures ANOVA, mixed-factorial (between-within subjects) repeated measures ANOVA using SPSS (version 16).

Table 1: Sample Profile

Characteristics	Aggregate		Rural Families		Urban Families	
	Number (N = 766)	%	Number (N = 382)	%	Number (N=384)	%
Children's Age (years)						
13-14	312	40.7	143	37.4	169	44.0
15-16	310	40.5	182	47.6	128	33.3
17-18	144	18.8	57	15.0	87	22.7
Children's Gender						
Male	488	63.7	229	60.0	259	67.4
Female	278	36.3	153	40.0	125	32.6

RESULTS

Mean influence scores of male and female children across decision making stages (DMS) for child product and family product were obtained and are presented in Table 2. The mean influence scores in both the rural and urban families appear to be different from each other and are in the range of 3.63 to 2.78.

Table 2: Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for Children's Influence in Decision Making Stages in Rural and Urban Families: Gender - wise

Family residence	Variable Children's gender	<u>Child product</u>			<u>Family product</u>		
		Decision making stage (DMS) ^{1,2}			Decision making stage (DMS) ^{1,2}		
		PIS ³	ISS ⁴	FDS ⁵	PIS ³	ISS ⁴	FDS ⁵
Rural family	Male (N = 229)	3.50 (0.89)	3.60 (1.08)	3.15 (0.83)	3.56 (0.91)	3.52 (1.17)	3.03 (0.87)
	Female (N = 153)	3.57 (0.87)	3.32 (1.09)	3.09 (0.89)	3.63 (1.03)	3.36 (1.13)	2.96 (0.96)
Urban family	Male (N = 259)	3.42 (0.88)	3.49 (1.12)	3.05 (0.85)	3.37 (1.02)	3.27 (1.15)	2.78 (0.92)
	Female (N = 125)	3.51 (0.87)	3.43 (1.10)	3.12 (0.82)	3.36 (1.08)	3.26 (1.22)	2.86 (0.89)

Notes: 1. The responses were measured on a 5-point scale: 5 = very high, 4 = high, 3 = moderate, 2 = low, and 1 = nil.

2. Numbers in parentheses are standard deviations.

3. PIS = Purchase initiation stage; 4. ISS = Information search stage; 5. FDS = Final decision stage.

In order to ascertain statistical significance of differences in male and female children's mean influence scores, mixed-factorial (between-within subjects) repeated measures ANOVA was applied, with 'decision making stages' and 'product type' as within-subject factors, and 'family residence' and 'children's gender' as between-subject factors. The (between-within subjects) effects relating to the variable 'children's gender' are reported in Table 3. Both the effects are found to be insignificant. This implies that the variable 'children's gender' do not affect the influence exerted by them in family purchase decisions on aggregative basis as well as across rural and urban families (disagregative basis).

Table 3: Results Relating to Tests of Between-Subjects Effects: Gender – wise

Source	Sum of Squares	df1	df2	Mean Square	F-ratio ¹	Sig.
Gender of children	.082	1	762	.082	.159	.690
Gender of children * Family residence	.441	1	762	.441	.856	.355

Note: 1. Significant at $p < 0.05$

More specifically, the result reveals that if all other variables are ignored, influence exerted by children do not vary across male and female children, $F(1, 762) = 0.159$, $p = 0.690$. The results thus provide no support for H1. Similarly, the results reveal that the interaction of the variable 'children's gender' with 'family residence' is insignificant, i.e., if all other variables are ignored, influence exerted by male and female children do not vary across rural and urban families, $F(1, 762) = 0.856$, $p = 0.355$. Thus, the results do not provide support for H2.

The results are in line of past research by Shahrokh and Khosarvi (2013), Martensen and Gronholdt (2008), which have found children's influence in family purchase decisions as gender neutral.

CONCLUSION

It was posited that children's influence in stages of decision making process for child product and family product varies across (i) gender of children (H1), and (ii) rural and urban families (H2). This variable is found to be neutral as the analysis results provide no support in favour of these

hypotheses. This implies that children's gender do not moderate the influence exerted by them in family decision making process in general as well as across rural and urban families.

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