

Age-wise Analysis of Children's Influence in Family Purchase Decisions

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Abstract: Children's age is the most commonly researched variable involving purchase decision influence (Mangleburg, 1990). Previous studies found child's age to be a predominating factor with regard to child's influence across the decision making stages (Beatty and Talpade, 1994). These studies have also found positive correlation between the age of children and the quantum of influence exerted by them on family purchase decisions (Laczniak and Palan, 2004). This study has been undertaken with the specific objective to extend these findings in Indian context, more precisely, to examine the impact of age on Indian children's influence in family purchase decisions. A "structured non-disguised" pre-tested questionnaire was used to collect the primary data from the students of class eighth to twelfth from 766 families residing in rural and urban areas in Delhi, India. Statistical tools such as mean, standard deviation and repeated measures ANOVA have been used to analyze and interpret the collected data. As per the analysis results children's age do not moderate the influence exerted by them in family decision making process, in general, as well as across rural and urban Indian families.

Key Words: Influence, Family Decision Making Process, Rural Area, Urban Area, Repeated measures ANOVA.

INTRODUCTION

Consumption behavior of family as a whole has always been an area of great interest for research amongst consumer behaviour researchers. Initially the main focus of these studies was on the individual consumer but gradually with changing times this focus has been shifted towards the decision making processes involving group behaviour (Sheth and Cosmas, 1975). Initially, majority of the studies in this area remained confined to the assessment of relative influence of husbands and wives on purchase outcomes, however, from eighties onwards this focus has gradually been shifted to include children's influence also in the family purchase decisions (Mohanram, 2012). The specific research objective for this exploratory study is to examine the relationship between the age of children and the extent of influence exerted by them across

stages in family decision making process while making buying decisions for child and family product in Indian families.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Children's age is the most commonly researched variable involving purchase decision influence (Mangleburg and Bristol, 1998). Research on children's influence has analyzed different age groups. For example, Foxman et al. (1989a) in their study included 11 to 19 year-old children. Nancarrow et al. (2011) and Tinson et al. have (2008) focused on children in the age group of 10 to 16 years old. Fikry and Jamil (2010) analyzed teenagers in the age group of 13 to 17 years old.

Most of the previous studies have concluded that child's age is a predominating factor with regard to child's influence across the decision making stages (Beatty and Talpade, 1994). Furthermore, past studies also reveal that children's influence varies according to the type of product involved. These studies have also found that older children have significantly higher influence on family purchase decisions as compared to the younger ones.

In India also few of the past studies have focused on the impact of age on children's contribution in family buying decisions. For example, Ali et al. (2013) studied the impact of age (6-16 years) of children on the choice of influence strategy in family decision making. They found age to be related with enticing and negotiating. Similarly, Chaudhary and Gupta (2012) found significant differences in the use of influence tactics by children in the age group of 8-12 years. Ali et al. (2012) also found numerous differences while comparing the children's impact on parent's purchase decisions between different age groups. In the light of above findings, it was hypothesized that:

- H1:** Children's influence in stages of decision making process for child product and family product varies across age of children.
- H 2:** Children's influence in stages of decision making process for child product and family product varies for age of children across rural and urban families.

METHODOLOGY

Product Profile– To provide a comprehensive scope for the analysis, two durable products were chosen to measure children's influence in family purchase decisions: (i) one for the child's sole

consumption (child-product); and (ii) another for the joint consumption by the entire family (family-product).

Rural vs. Urban Families -In India, different economic agencies have defined rural areas differently. Out of all the available definitions, the definition provided by Census of India (2011) has been used. Accordingly, a family residing in a village is termed as rural family and a family residing in urban areas is termed as urban family for the purpose of this study

According to Census (2011), "rural sector" means any place which meets the following criteria,

- a population of less than 5,000
- density of population less than 400 per sq. km and
- more than "75 per cent of the male working population" is engaged in agricultural pursuits.

Survey Development and Sampling – Primary data for the study was collected from the students of class eighth to twelfth in the age group of 13-to-18 years from 766 families residing in rural (382) and urban areas (384) in Delhi. The tool used for this purpose was a “structured non-disguised” pre-tested, self-report type questionnaire. 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.

Table 1: Sample Profile

Characteristics	Aggregate		Rural Families		Urban Families	
	Number (N = 766)	Percent	Number (N = 382)	Percent	Number (N=384)	Percent
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 Influence Measures - A ten-item scale developed by Talpade and Talpade (1995) was used to measure children’s influence across three stages of decision making process on a 5-Point scale (5 = Very high and 1 = Nil). Cronbach alpha was calculated to assess the reliability of the scale items (Table 2). As the values of Cronbach alpha of the scale tapping children’s influence

across three stages of family decision making process are equal to or greater than 0.60, thus adequately meeting the standards for the present paper. Collected data have been analyzed and interpreted with the help of statistical tools such as mean, standard deviation, two-way and mixed-factorial repeated measures ANOVA using SPSS (version 16).

Table 2: Reliability Analyses of Measures – Decision Making Stages

Scale Items	No. of Items	Child Product (α)	Family Product (α)
- Purchase initiation stage	3	0.69	0.72
- Information search stage	2	0.72	0.79
- Final decision making stage	5	0.73	0.71

For the purpose of analysis, children were divided into three age groups: 13-14 years old; 15-16 years old; and 17-18 years old. 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. Mean scores of children's influence across decision making stages (DMS) for both the child product and family product were computed and are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for Children's Influence in Decision making Stages in Rural and Urban Families: Age - wise

Family residence	Variable Age of children (years)	Child product			Family product		
		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	13-14 (N = 143)	3.52 (0.85)	3.57 (1.03)	3.14 (0.83)	3.59 (0.95)	3.48 (1.11)	2.97 (0.89)
	15-16 (N = 182)	3.52 (0.91)	3.44 (1.16)	3.07 (0.88)	3.54 (1.01)	3.45 (1.23)	3.00 (0.95)
	17-18 (N = 57)	3.56 (0.89)	3.41 (1.06)	3.26 (0.82)	3.76 (0.80)	3.43 (1.01)	3.11 (0.80)
Urban family	13-14 (N = 169)	3.33 (0.87)	3.40 (1.01)	2.92 (0.77)	3.24 (1.04)	3.21 (1.13)	2.71 (0.92)
	15-16 (N = 128)	3.46 (0.88)	3.39 (1.20)	3.07 (0.88)	3.52 (1.02)	3.30 (1.29)	2.85 (0.91)
	17-18 (N = 87)	3.66 (0.85)	3.73 (1.16)	3.37 (0.85)	3.40 (1.05)	3.36 (1.06)	2.93 (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.

Majority of the mean influence scores in Table 3 in both the rural and urban families appears to be different from each other and are in general above their theoretically expected mean score of 3.0 on a scale of 1 to 5, thus indicating that children’s influence varies across (i) children’s age groups, and (ii) decision making stages in respect of both the products.

In order to ascertain statistical significance of differences reported in the preceding paragraph, mixed-factorial (between-within subjects) repeated measures ANOVA was applied, with ‘decision making stages’ (3-levels, i.e., purchase initiation stage, information search stage, and final decision stage) and ‘product type’ (2-levels, i.e., child product and family product) as within-subject factors, and ‘family residence’ (2-levels, i.e., rural and urban family) and ‘children’s age’ (3-levels, i.e., 13-14 years old; 15-16 years old; and 17-18 years old) as between-subject factors. The (between-within subjects) effects relating to the variable ‘children’s age’ are reported in Table 4.

Table 4: Results Relating to Tests of Between-Subjects Effects: Age – wise

Source	Sum of Squares	df1	df2	Mean Square	F-ratio ¹	Sig.
Children’s age	14.156	2	760	7.078	2.309	.100
Children’s age * Family residence	10.094	2	760	5.047	1.646	.193

Note: 1. Significant at $p < 0.05$

As per the results in Table 4, both the effects are insignificant. Which implies that the variable ‘children’s age’ do not affect the influence exerted by children in family purchase decisions both on aggregative basis (for the sample as a whole) as well as across rural and urban families (disaggregative basis). More specifically, the result reveals that if all other variables are ignored, influence exerted by children do not vary across different age groups, $F(2, 760) = 2.309$, $p = 0.100$. Thus, the result does not support H1. Further, the results reveal that interaction of the variable ‘age of children’ with ‘family residence’ is insignificant, i.e., if all other variables are ignored, influence exerted by children of various age groups do not vary across rural and urban families, $F(2, 760) = 1.646$, $p = 0.193$. The results, thus, provide no support for H2.

CONCLUSION

It was hypothesized that children’s influence in stages of decision making process for child product and family product varies across age of children. However, the analysis results provide no support

in favour of this hypothesis on aggregative basis (H1) as well as across rural and urban families (H2). This implies that children's age do not moderate the influence exerted by them in family decision making process in general, as well as across rural and urban families. The results of this study can be extended to include children from other states.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The results of this study have obvious implications for marketers in India, and by extension in other similar developing countries. By understanding the decision framework and various factors affecting children's influence in family purchase decisions, marketers can more effectively predict, plan and execute the right marketing strategy to maximise market coverage for various household products in India and neighbouring countries.

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