

A Conceptual Model of Children's Influence in Family Purchase Decisions

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ABSTRACT

Due to digitalisation, children are more informed, aware, and have better access to information than earlier generations. The days of pester power is gone and nowadays children has more purchasing power ability and thus higher influence in family matters. The influence of children in family purchase decision making is still an unexplored topic in India. Therefore, the purpose of the paper is to explore the influence of children on family purchase decisions by investigating the role of demographics variables of children and parents along with national culture and Family communication patterns. Extensive literature review was done to arrive at the conceptual model of children influence in family related purchase decisions. The conceptual model incorporates the influence of demographic variables and national culture on family communication patterns, and their subsequent influence on children influence in family purchase decisions across product categories and buying process stages.

1. Introduction

The concept of customer as a king is still applicable and very important in today's digitalised world. To shape the fortune of an organisation, it is very essential to take care of the changing tastes and preferences of consumers. These changes are due to various number of factors which includes shift in family structures from joint to nuclear, Digitisation, social media ,hectic schedules, dual working parents ,single parents and so on. The major segment which affected the most because of these changes is of children. Parents have very less time to spend with their children and to interact with them on different issues. In this fast forward world, everyone in the family is busy in their own hectic schedules. Therefore, children spend most of their time in watching TV, playing videogames, playing games online, playing advergmes etc. These all things made the children more accessible to the marketers. Marketers are using various promotional tactics to woo the children. McKinsey Global Institute (2007) has predicted that India will become the World's 5th largest Consumer Market by 2025. Marketers considered Children as an important target market segment. Children have been classified into three segments: active consumers, future consumers and influential consumers (McNeal, 2003). They have their own pocket money to spend and hence has own purchasing power. Children nowadays are not limited to the pestering but they have the ability to influence the decision of their parents. Children nowadays are more free to participate in purchase related matters of family as compared to earlier generations. In a study done by The Family Room ,nearly six out of ten mothers consider child as their best friends clearly explains the difference between earlier and today's generation .Also it was found that only 21% of mothers and 35% of fathers are final decision makers in purchase decisions(Newton,2013)

Children's ability to influence family purchase decisions varies according to the product categories, stages of decision

making, and characteristics of parents, children and family. Children now act as influencers rather than initiators in the buying process. Their purchasing behaviour is revolved around how they are socialised to act as consumers in the marketplace. Different factors such as family,peers, school ,media are the reasons which helps them to learn consumption related knowledge and skills..This study intends to investigate how the Indian child influences the purchase decision making of the family and its relation specifically to family communication and family demographics.

The structure of paper is as follows: First we discuss the theoretical background of our topic, then we explain influence of parents and child demographics and family communication patterns on children influence in family purchase decisions. Effect of national culture on family communication patterns are also an important part of research work. Next to it , children influence in family purchase decisions across product categories and buying decisions and sub decisions will be discussed. Finally, practical implications of the proposed model and future scope of the research will be discussed. We think that this research has very important implications for marketers which help them to know about the upbringing and family purchasing behaviour and the influential role of children .This study helps marketers in value creation and value delivery.

2. Consumer Socialization

(Ward, 1980) Socialization is defined as "processes by which young people acquire skills, knowledge and attitudes relevant to their functioning as consumers in the marketplace" (McNeal & Yeh, 1997) Grandparents are one of the important socialising agent in the Family which helps the children to socialise in the marketplace. They offer more money to girls than boys ,so that they can putcan purchased their required things such as books,toys and food. (Cowell, 2001) studied the different factors such as peer,media,school and parents which

are responsible for the development of consumption related skills and abilities. Children learn how to take purchase decision during developmental process. They found the relationship between brand awareness and factor influencing it. (Bao, Fern, & Sheng, 2007) used consumer socialisation theory and power relational theory to make an integrated model. This model explains the indirect relationship between parental style and children influence in family decisions. This model explains the indirect relationship between parental style & children influence the family decisions.

(Kaur & Medury, 2011) research on high tech products and vacation planning in urban households and vacation planning in urban households. They concluded that internet has significant impact on Indian adolescents on above said products and services. Due to more accessibility and availability, children gather consumption related information which subsequently affects the purchase decision making. They also concluded that early consumer socialisation, dual working and single parents, increased influence of media, peer pressure etc influence the child's buying behaviour. (Kaur & Medury, 2013) also revealed the significant influence of peers, shopping and internet on family purchase decisions. They proved it by using Structured Equation Modelling and reported the positive influence of on family purchase decisions.

3. Conceptual model of influence of children on family purchase decisions

In today's world children has more purchasing power which determines the family purchase decisions of the family (Cowell, 1991). Their purchasing power varies from grocery to new cars (Neuborne & Kerwin, 1999), (Özgen, 2003) A study done on children in Turkey concluded that children are actively engaged in purchasing things for themselves. They compare the price of the products and services and also are brand conscious (Bharadwaj, Swaroop, & Vittal, 2005) in buying the products and services. Television advertising is the most preferred and reliable tool of information for them. (Ekstrom et al, 1987) revealed that children who actively participate in family related decisions are more satisfied with the results of their decisions. The focus of the proposed model is to know how children are influencing the purchase decisions of the family. The model also conceptualises the role of family communication patterns and national culture in influencing the purchase decisions of the family with special attention to demographic variables of both parents and children.

4. Demographic variables (Parent and child)

In this study, both parental demographics and child demographics are used to conduct the research. Parental demographics for this research are age of parent, Gender of parent, education, Working of parent and Type of family whereas child demographic variables includes Age of child, Gender of child and No. of siblings.

The consumption behaviour of children is a developmental process. This process involves different changes over the time such as change in consumption behaviour of children. This kind of change depends on their child related demographics such as age, gender etc. (Ward .et.al 1972) describe that age is an

important factor of children's influence in the family. He concluded that children's purchase influence has significant relationship with age and different product categories. (Moschis, 1987) found that as the child grows his/her power of influencing increases with the age. With this influential power, they start acting as negotiators or the ultimate decision makers in the purchase decision process. This influence varies with age, gender, socioeconomic, ethical, and cultural and sub cultural status.

(Ahuja & Stinson, 1993) This exploratory study examined the effect of specific single mother related characteristics on the influence children have in family decision making. Various demographic characteristics of mother such as age, education, employment, income, size of household, no. of years of separation, age and sex of oldest child etc had been used to predict the influence of children in single headed parent family. Mother's income and size of household had positive effects on children influence for cleaning products and snack products respectively. Age of oldest child shows direct relationship whereas mother's education had inverse relationship with the children's influence in family decision making.

(McNeal & F.Ji, 1999) conducted research on Chinese children and concluded Television as the most favourite channel of media or children for decision making unlike children of earlier times when family oriented system is more prevalent. Television is regarded as important source of information and its influence was examined with the help of demographics such as gender, age, and family occupation. (Halling, 2002) examined the gender differences among Danish children of 5-18 yrs old. He found there is a significant difference between boys and girls on the basis of purchasing power, media use, brand awareness and their attitude towards advertising. Boys are having access to more information via internet and Television, more pocket money, than girls which reflects their positive attitude towards commercials (Özgen, 2003) done study on consumer socialisation of children in Turkey. He examined the relationship between consumer socialisation of children and age, gender, socioeconomic status and family type. Demographic variables has significant relationship with the buying behaviour of children. Age is found to have significant relationship and is most influential factor for Turkish children. Gender is also found to have significant influence on the buying behaviour of children. Most of the products which are influenced mostly by girls are shampoo, hairstyling gel, and hand cream and facial cream. Boys are found to be less price sensitive than girls.

(Rahman, .et.al.2008) A study on consumption attitude and behaviour intentions of 9-14 yrs old children was done in Malaysia. Different age group of children has different tastes and preferences. Children who lie in the age group of 9-10 yrs are more inclined towards brand name, type of store, preference for food items and reading materials. Stationary is the favorite product group of this age group children. Children who lie in the age group of 11-12 yrs search and collect information for different types of products and services. Gender also has significant influence on purchase decisions. Brand name is more preferable by males than females who generally go for product choice.

(Martensen & Grønholdt, 2008) As per this study Gender has no significant influence on children influence in family purchase decision making. But this influence varies as per the buying subdecisions such as what to buy, where to buy etc. Age has significant influence on the buying decisions as elder child reported more influential than younger ones.

(Fiates, Amboni, & Teixeira, 2008) This research was conducted to examine consumer behaviour of children in Brazil. Boys and girls have different tastes and preferences. Boys prefer videogames and games whereas girls spend money on clothes, personal apparel and cell phone accessories etc. Children spend their own pocket money to purchase certain set of products and services such as food items, toys and games, clothes, stationary, movies, mobile phone accessories etc which clearly defines their independent buying behaviour.

(Sharma & Dasgupta, 2009) gave a conceptual framework to describe the children influence in decision making by taking care of the level of interest and degree of influence of children on different products and services. The three zones which act as a planning framework for marketing to children known as PPP i.e. pester zone, preference zone and purchase zone. These zones basically help the marketers to build different strategies to tap target market of children and to decide which brand is applicable for which segment of children, while taking into consideration the zone in which they are lying.

(Dotson & Hyatt, 2010) Products which are not relevant for the children and in which participation of them is also very low are known as low involvement products. These kinds of products were taken into consideration to study the consumer socialisation process between parents and children. The findings of the study reported that children of age nine years are very much aware about different brands, products and services available in the marketplace. They can recall the advertisements and their slogans and recognise the products, services and brands associated with them. This study cleared that children has greater influence in family purchase decisions even for the products which are not relevant to them.

(Antonio & Brennan, 2011) A survey was done in the state of Victoria on Australian families on socialisation process of children for high technology and computer related products. They concluded that consumer socialisation process has significant relationship with Gender of child as well as of parent.

(Isin & Alkibay, 2011) The study was conducted on children participation in family decisions for low risk products in Turkey. Low risk products are the product which are known to the children and they have sufficient knowledge about these products. Basically these products are not big ticket items and involves low risk in monetary terms. The study confirms significant influence on the buying of low risk products. Therefore, it is concluded that awareness, knowledge and need of children to products and services affects the buying decision of family. Age, gender, number of children in family, type of product and mother employment status significant influence on family decision making.

(Valkenburg T & Buijzen, 2005) The study done on two- to eight-year-olds from day-care centres, combined kindergarten and elementary schools situated in urban districts in the Netherlands intended to establish the relationship between young children's brand awareness, and the relative influence of environmental factors (e.g., television, parents, and peers) on brand awareness. Research proved that exposure to television by young children has a considerable impact on their brand awareness. Family Income is related to both brand recognition and brand recall whereas Family education is only related to children's brand recognition. Hence, both brand recognition and recall are important for the child to take right purchase decisions.

(Ramzy et al., 2012) A comparative study was done between US and Egyptian families to examine the perceived influence of children on durable products and child related products. Age of child, gender of child and communication style found to have significant influence on family purchase decision making. Egyptian children are more involved in purchase related activities than US children even though they are more family oriented.

(Sharma & Sonwaney, 2014) Mother employment status also has a considerable influence on children consumption behaviour. As gender is concerned, as per this study it has no significant influence on children influence in purchasing decisions. This is due to the limitation of research as it was conducted in urban India where boys and girls are treated equally. Product type, decision stages resulted into the moderating effect on buying decisions.

(Thorson & Horstman, 2014) concluded that age had an effect on emerging adults participation in purchase decisions through credit cards.

5. Type of family

Family is playing an important role in socialising the children. It acts as an important socialisation agent. Parents discuss their purchase related ideas with the children when their spouses are not with them. (Watne, Lobo and Brennan, 2011) Parents who view the television with their children and educate them about pros and cons of TV viewing are able to maintain the balance between family and children buying behaviour. (Kapoor and Verma, 2005) on the other side parents who spend less time with their children are unable to control children buying behaviour. They have low rational social influence and more commercial and irrational influence in the consumer socialization process.

(Dotson and Hyatt, 2005) studied on the influence of family structure on consumer socialisation process. They concluded no ascertained effect of family structure on socialisation process. In India, joint families are decreasing and extended families are increasing. Joint families are those where all family members live together, whereas extended families are those where parents/Parents in live with the members of family.

(Jeevananda & Kumar, 2012) A study conducted in Bangalore explained the degree of influence of children in different family structures. The influence is found to be higher in

nuclear families than in joint families. In this study, word extended family is used instead of Joint families. In nuclear families children do different tactics and negotiation strategies to persuade their parents to purchase the product or services. Due to emergence dual working nuclear families, parents leave their children alone in some day care centres and other facilities. As a result to overcome the guilt of leaving alone, parents buy different things for them of children's choice. This results in development of consumption related skills and abilities in an earlier stages. Whereas in Joint families mutual decision making is more important than nuclear families.

(Flurry, 2007) The research done on American families concluded that family structure and product type are the significant factors responsible for the influencing role of children in family purchase decision making. This study emphasised on resource theory, which clearly explains that the more the comparative resources available to children, more is their influence on family buying decision. More the members of family working, more is the family income and more is the influence of children in family purchasing. Therefore, family income is also the biggest factor for higher influence of children. Children with more pocket money participates more in the family purchase related decisions.

6. Family Communication patterns

Mcleod & Chafee, 1972 conceptualised the family communication patterns and gave two dimensions: socio orientation and concept orientation. They had identified the role played by family communication patterns in consumer socialisation of children. They concluded their research with that the pluralistic parents (High concept orientation, low socio orientation) are more inclined towards consumption than laissez faire parents (low concept and low socio orientation).

Moschis (1985) used family communication pattern scale of socio orientation and concept orientation. He used socio oriented and concept oriented as two dimensions of family communication four types of families: Laissez faire (low socio orientation, low concept orientation), Protective (high socio orientation, low concept orientation), Pluralistic (high concept orientation, low socio orientation) and Consensual (high socio orientation, high concept orientation). He had confirmed the role family communication pattern plays in developing consumption related knowledge and attitude among the children. (Moschis et al, 1986) concluded that pluralistic parents emphasize on consumption related learning without any kind of control on children whereas Protective and Laissez faire parents rely less on consumer learning.

(Carlson et al, 1990) Parental communication is an important factor for socialising the children. Children also employ various strategies to influence the decision making. They use both positive and negative negotiation strategies to persuade their parents. (Williams and Burns, 2000; Marshall et al, 2007) explained that influence of children in family related decisions is highest for Pluralistic and Consensual families.

(Rose, Boush, & Shoham, 2002) conducted a cross cultural study on family communication processes of USA and Japan. The relationship of child's income and consumption

dependence was measured with family communication patterns: Socio-oriented consumption (degree to which children are taught to avoid social conflict, defer to their elders, to obey the rules) and concept oriented consumption (degree to which children are free to express their opinions). The results revealed that there is a significant relationship between child age and socio-oriented communication in United States whereas concept oriented communication has significant relationship with the purchasing power of children which has subsequent influence on family consumption issues.

(McNeal K. C., 2003) studied on family communication patterns of Chinese parents of 6-14 yrs old children. He used socio orientation and concept orientation dimensions of family communication which is further classified into four categories:— Laissez faire, protective, pluralistic and consensual. The findings showed that Chinese parents are consensual type of parents. Effect of demographics on family communication patterns concluded that highly educated and high income parents follow concept oriented communication.

(Bakir, Rose, & Shoham, 2006) used family communication matrix to find influence of children on family purchase decisions. Concept oriented parents encourage their children to express their ideas freely and value their opinions. This is the reason for higher influence of children of concept oriented parents than the children of socio oriented parents.

(Hsieh, Chiu, & Lin, 2006) studied on the family communication structures of parents and children of Taiwan. They explained that the parents influence brand attitudes of children and this influence varies as per the family communication structures. Mothers who follow concept orientation influence brand attitude of children whereas father follows socio-oriented communication by setting stringent rules and regulations at home.

(Al-Zu'bi, Crowther, & Worsdale, 2008) has found the significant influence of Jordanian children on family purchase decision making. Jordanian fathers follow concept orientation which encourages self development, development of consumption related knowledge and attitude, boosts self confidence of children. These kind of father believes in the opinions of their child and value their decisions in family purchase related matters.

(Thorson & Horstman, 2017) Family communication patterns has a significant relationship with parental perception of children influence related to consumption related skills, attitudes and preferences.

7. Influence of Culture on Children's role in family decision making

(Rose et al, 1998) The research conducted on children of age group 3-8 years on consumer socialisation methods of US children and Japanese children. He used consumer socialisation method to find family communication patterns and general attitudes toward television advertising. American mothers are more concept oriented due to their individualistic culture whereas Japanese have high socio orientation due to their collectivistic culture.

(Rose, Boushb, & Shoham, 2002) A cross national study was done on US and Japanese parents on family communication processes and considerable impact on child's age and consumption dependence. The findings indicate significant relationship of age with child's influence. American mothers has high concept orientation which resulted into high purchasing power of children.

(Dalakas, 2003) This research paper reported the influence of Israeli children in family decisions regarding various products and decision making stages. The whole study was conducted with the help of Hofstede dimensions of national culture. The findings indicates that teenagers exerts higher influence over family purchases particularly for the products relevant to them and at the initiation stage. A comparative study between USA teens and Israeli teens revealed that Israeli teens had greater influence than US teens in family decisions because of low power distance in Israel.

(Gaumer & Shah, 2004) A comparative study was done between Japanese and Americans children to learn about their consumer socialisation. Socio cultural and economic factors was studied to know about the influential power of children. US children persuade their parents more than Japanese because of the prevalent individualistic culture in US and collectivistic culture in Japan. Marketers are drafting different strategies on the basis of national culture and the concerned buying behaviour associated with it. As the culture demands, marketers use different emotional appeals to attract them.

(Shoham & Dalakas, 2005) Hofstede dimensions of national culture were used to examine the influence of national culture on children influence in family purchase decisions. US families are more individualistic, less uncertainty avoiding and more power distant than Israel. The results concluded that Israeli children are not eager to participate in family related decisions. They are independent to make their own decisions. But this behaviour of them also influences the buying decision of family. They exert more influence than US children. Both countries children are price insensitive and affect the purchase decision at an initiation stage.

(Xu et al., 2005) A comparison of Indian and Chinese children was done on the basis of their collectivistic values on giving importance to parental authority and family harmony. Indian and Chinese showed similar results in parent child communication.

(Laroche et al., 2007) examined the cultural differences between East and West. Due to the change in value systems, internet, media, influx of multinational corporations consumer orientation of child is changing, they started influencing family related matters also.

(Thakur & Khatri, 2008) A cross cultural study was conducted American and Indian parents on their parenting styles. This type of study used packaged food products to determine the influence of children related to packaged food was conducted between American and Indian children. Perception of American and Indian parents was measured to find children influence across buying process

stages. The results reported varied influence of children at different stages of buying process of family. There was insignificant difference present in two cultures on the basis of creating interest, desire and final decision of buying. Parental Indulgence is more in case of Indian culture, therefore influence of American children was low.

(Kim, Yang, & Lee, 2009) compared children from two Canadian subcultures. Chinese-Canadian children were more utilitarian and felt more overwhelmed by brand and store choices, as evidence by their increased use of utilitarian- and confused-by-over-choice-decision-making styles than their Caucasian-Canadian counterparts. (Batra, 2011) Differences in TV viewing and advertisements are found showing Japanese spend less time in watching TV and are attentive towards advertisements than Americans (Dallazen & Fiates, 2013) A content analysis of Brazilian parents was done to find out their perceived influence of children on energy-dense nutrient-poor food purchases nutrients and culture school in shaping children's consumer behaviour. (Rivers & Uboegbulam, 2015) Studied the influence on family purchase decisions in Nigeria on husband-wife of three ethnic groups and discuss the role of children in purchase decisions of durable products

8. Children influence in family purchase decision making

When one person acts in such a way as to change the behaviour of another person in some intended manner, influence has occurred (Cartwright 1959). Children's influence refers to the degree to which children engage in activities that contribute to the decision-making process, relative to the contributions of their parents, in family consumption decisions (Beatty and Talpade, 1994).

Swimyard & Sim (1987) Influence of children at stages of buying process was measured with the use of twenty five different products. The findings reported high influence for both child centred products and child useable products. Child centred products includes toys, clothing's etc and for child useable products and services included entertainment, restaurant etc. McNeal (1992) child exerts both direct and indirect influence on parental purchase decision making. (Foxman & Tanushaj, 1988) (Martinez & Polo, 1999) found that the influence of children is different at three stages of buying process namely problem recognition, information search and choice for the products such as child records, pc, toothpaste, clothes etc.

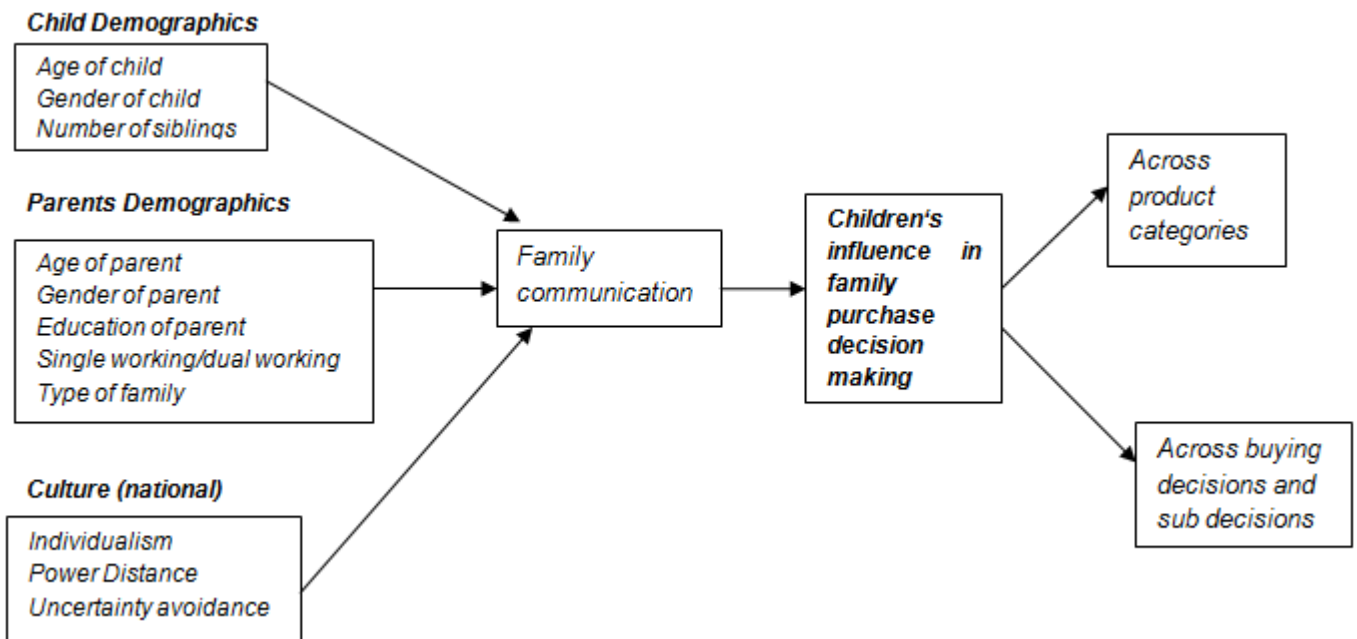
(McNeal, 1999) Emergence of nuclear and extended families is one of the major reason for the increase in involvement of children in family purchase related matters. The study concluded that children influence is more in case of product categories such as sneakers, clothes, fast food, snacks, toys, videogames, cereals, soft drinks and so on.

(Beatty & Lee, 2002). The study explained about the varied decisions at different stages of the decision process. (Shoham & Dalakas, 2003) The results revealed that teenage children exert influence over family purchases specifically for the products relevant to them and at the initiation stage. Also comparison between USA teens and Israeli teens found that Israeli teens had higher influence than US teens in family

decisions because of low power distance in Israel. (Wang .et.al. 2005) A study done on group package tours on 240 families. The results revealed the varying nature of children influence as per different buying stages of family buying process. The higher influence of children was at initiation stage than searching and final purchasing stage.

(Kaur &Singh, 2006) supported the above studies and compare Indian with the western society to reach at the result that sometimes child acts as an initiator and at other times as an influencer. (Norgard.et.al. 2007)found that children exerts more influence on all stages of decision making especially on initiation and choice for easy prepared meals, unhealthy foods(sweets) than healthy foods (Fruits& Vegetables) (Thakur &Khatri 2008) studied on packaged food and concluded different influence at different buying stages. (Wut &Chou 2009). A research was conducted in Hong Kong on 366

members of family to determine the children’s influence in family decision making in the Chinese context .They concluded that the influence is more at choice making stage and less at final stage. (Chaudary &Gupta, 2012) (Ramzy.et.al 2012). The results revealed that the child related products exerts more influence than non durables and durables. Children influence was higher at problem recognition and information searching stage and lesser in the last stage for different product clusters. (Sharma & Sonwaney, 2014) found the moderating effect of type of product and stage of purchase decision making in family decision making.(Aggarwal & Khurana, 2016)The findings reported the varied influence of children at different buying stages of family buying process across three product categories i.e. Durable, Non Durable and child related goods and services. Children’s influence was found to be higher in the case of Non durable goods followed by Durable and child related goods and services.



9. Practical Implications

This research is beneficial for Marketers and Policy makers. Marketers learn to strategise their promotional tactics from this study as it includes different product categories. The products which are heavily influenced by the children as per the study acts as an extra bonus for the marketers. This study helps

marketers in using cost effective method to lure children to get profit .The objective to measure Influence of national culture on children influence in family purchase decisions helps India to learn from different national culture s about framing the right policies for deceptive advertisements and puffery.

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