

CHILDREN IN FAMILY PURCHASE DECISION MAKING IN INDIA AND THE WEST: A REVIEW

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Children constitute an important target market segment and merit attention from a marketing perspective. The role that children play in making decisions concerning the entire family unit has prompted researchers to direct attention to the study of influence of children. The amount of influence exerted by children varies by product category and stage of the decision making process. For some products, they are active initiators, information seekers, and buyers; whereas for other product categories, they influence purchases made by the parents. The purchasing act is governed by how they have been socialized to act as consumers. Family, peers, and media are key socializing agents for children wherein family-specific characteristics such as parental style, family's Sex Role Orientation (SRO), and patterns of communication play key roles. More so, changes taking place in the socio-cultural environment in India (such as emergence of dual-career, single parent families) entail that dimensions of children's influence in family purchase decision making be investigated in a specific context. Indian society vastly differs from the West in terms of family composition and structure, values, norms, and behavior, which affect the role that children play in purchase decision making in families. Hence, the aim of this paper is not only to explore the dimensions already investigated by previous researchers in India and Western countries but also to identify directions for future research.

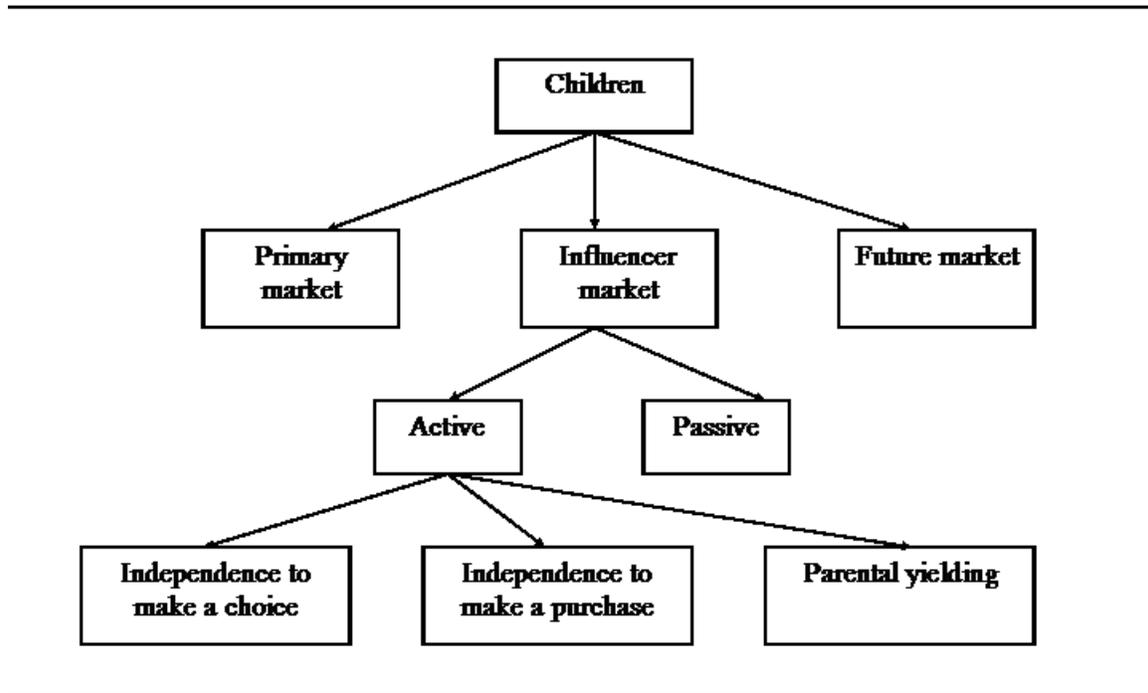
CHILDREN IN FAMILY PURCHASE DECISION MAKING IN INDIA AND THE WEST: A REVIEW

Research on family decision making has been largely confined to spouses, who have been considered as the relevant decision making unit in a family. However, the role of third party influences, such as children, on decision making strategies and negotiations is essential to taking a broader view of the relevant unit of analysis. Traditionally, women were seen to be the purchasing agents for the family. Nonetheless, increasing participation of women in the workforce has prompted a shift in this role as children are increasingly the “buyers” for the entire family. Even in families where women do not work, children are observed to share this role with their mothers. Children enjoy greater discretion not only in making routine consumption decisions for the family but also in pestering their parents to buy other products desired by them. Contemporary researchers express that children constitute a major consumer market, with direct purchasing power for snacks and sweets, and indirect purchase influence while shopping for big-ticket items (Halan, 2002; Singh, 1998). Indian children have recently attracted considerable attention from marketers because the market for children’s products offers tremendous potential (pegged at Rs. 5000 crore/\$1110mn) and is rapidly growing. According to available industry data, the chocolate and confectionary market is estimated at Rs. 1300 crore/\$290mn, the apparel market at Rs. 480 crore/\$110mn and kids footwear at Rs. 1000 crore/\$220mn (Bhushan, 2002). In addition to this, 54% of India is estimated to be under the age of 25 (Bansal, 2004).

Children constitute three different markets: the primary, the influencer, and the future market (Figure 1). Certain products are simply children’s products for which they are the primary users/buyers. They sometimes either purchase a product themselves or select the product before it is purchased by the parents. For other products, such as ones which are used by the entire family unit, they may influence purchases made by the parents. There are some products where children wield direct influence or pester power by overtly specifying their preferences and voicing them aloud. For other products, parents’ buying patterns are affected by prior knowledge of the tastes and preferences of their children. This ‘passive dictation’ of choice is prevalent for a wide variety of daily consumed product items as well as products for household consumption. Also, decision making in households is seen to change with the mere presence of children. The nature of joint decisions in couple decision making units and family decision making units is seen to be different (Filiatrault and Ritchie, 1980). It is also observed that children are socialized by their parents to act as rational consumers. After years of direct or indirect observation of parental behaviour in the marketplace, they gradually acquire relevant consumer skills from their parents.

The amount of influence exerted by children varies by product category and stage of the decision making process. For certain products they are instrumental in initiating a purchase, while for others, they make the final selections themselves. The purchasing act is governed by how they have been socialized to act as consumers. Family, peers and media are key socializing agents for children wherein family-specific characteristics such as parental style, family’s Sex Role Orientation (SRO), and patterns of communication play key roles. The structure of Indian families has been previously characterized as joint families with traditional SRO (that is, the husband predominated in all family affairs). However, owing to influences from the West, the structure of Indian families has changed to nuclear or extended families (nuclear families plus grandparents). The Indian families have become more modern in SRO, such that the decision making has become more egalitarian (Chadha, 1995; Dhobal, 1999). Compared to this, the West is experiencing an increase in the number of single parent or female-headed households (Ahuja and Stinson, 1993; Mangleburg et al., 1999). Such a shift in family composition and structure has a bearing on the strength in the role that children are expected to play as buyers in the family.

Figure 1
Children as Influencers



In India, the literature on family decision making is scant and researchers have only partially investigated the role of children along with other members in family purchase decision making. Family structures are undergoing a metamorphosis and the Indian society is also witnessing an increase in the number of single parent and dual career families. Though an impressive body of research exists in this field in the West, these parameters also merit investigation in different cultural settings. Studies specific to Indian marketing environment are necessary, as pointed by Webster (2000), "India is an interesting culture in which to explore the antecedents of marital power because its social and intellectual grains operate in ways vastly different from those the West takes for granted. For instance, unlike western culture, where the nuclear and neo local families are both the ideological and factual norm, the joint family has been and continues to be an important element of Indian culture" (p. 1037). Hence, the objective of this paper is to examine and critically evaluate the avenues already explored by previous researchers in India and abroad, and identify opportunities for future research. A brief summary of research on influence of children in family purchase decision making in the West and in India has been summarized in Table 1 and Table 2 respectively.

ROLE OF CHILDREN IN FAMILY PURCHASE DECISION MAKING

Influence of children varies by product, product sub-decision, stage of the decision-making process, nature of socializing of children, families' gender role orientation, demographic features such as age and gender, and also by respondent selected for investigation of relative

influence (Belch et al., 1985). The following sections contain a brief review of research carried out in this context.

INFLUENCE OF CHILDREN BY PRODUCT CATEGORY

In Western literature, children have been reported to wield a lot of influence in purchase decisions for children products such as snacks (Ahuja and Stinson, 1993); toys (Burns and Harrison, 1985; Jensen, 1995; Williams and Veeck, 1998); children's wear (Converse and Crawford, 1949; Foxman and Tansuhaj, 1988; Holdert and Antonides, 1997; Van Syckle, 1951); and cereals (Belch et al., 1985; Bery and Pollay, 1968). Children have been observed to influence decisions for family products also, such as holiday/vacations (Ahuja and Stinson, 1993; Belch et al., 1985; Dunne, 1999; Holdert and Antonides, 1997; Jenkins, 1979); movies (Darley and Lim, 1986); and eating at particular restaurants or even decision making for the family to eat out (Filiatrault and Ritchie, 1980; Williams and Veeck, 1998). Some researchers investigated the role children play in purchase of children and family products together (Foxman and Tansuhaj, 1988; Geuens et al., 2002; Hall et al., 1995; Mangleburg et al., 1999; McNeal and Yeh, 1997). Jensen (1995) studied three categories of products—those that are primarily for children (e.g., toys, candy), products for family consumption (food, shampoo, toothpaste), and parents' products (gasoline, coffee, rice). Similarly, Johnson (1995) selected products as categorized by Sheth (1974)—products for individual use, those for family use, and finally products for the household.

The influence of children across product categories and parental responses has been studied with respect to various factors and some studies in this context have been reviewed here. Bery and Pollay (1968) studied mother and child dyads making purchases of ready-to-eat breakfast cereals. They noted that most products are not directly available to a child and the parents generally act as intermediary purchasing agents for the child. In such cases, the extent of influence a child may have on a parent's purchase decision depends on at least two factors: the child's assertiveness and the parent's child-centeredness. They hypothesized that the more assertive the child, or the more child-centered the mother, the more likely the mother will purchase child's favorite brands. However, they found that the mother played a "gatekeeper" role and bought cereals that weighed strongly on nutrition. In cases of disagreement with the child over brand decisions, the mother tried to superimpose her preferences over those of the child. They reasoned such outcomes stem from the mother's perception of the quality of information possessed by the child. Yet, they found that assertiveness by a child could increase the likelihood of the child having his/her favorite brands purchased. Chan and McNeal (2003), in a study of Chinese parents, also reported that parents indulged in considerable gate keeping for children's products. They exhibited strict control over the kinds of products that children can or cannot buy while at the same time allowing children some freedom in choosing brands of permissible products. Atkin (1978) pointed out that children tend to rely on pre-established preferences based more often on premium incentives offered on a purchase than the nutritional features of a cereal at the time of influencing cereal purchases.

Mehrotra and Torges (1977) and Williams and Veeck (1998) further noted that no particular attitude or set of attitudes uniquely determines for all products whether a mother would be influenced by her child or not. Child-centered mothers were more likely to be influenced by their children and family-oriented mothers or women with close knit families were more susceptible to children's influence. Mothers co-viewing TV programs along with their children were more likely to yield to children's influencing attempts for products advertised on those shows.

Table 1
Summary of Research in the West on Influence of
Children in Family Purchase Decision Making

Author(s)	Objective of the study	Respondents for the study
Relative Influence of Children in Purchase Decision Making		
Berey and Pollay (1968)	Examined the influencing role of child in family decision making for purchase of cereals	mother and child
Ward and Wackman (1972)	Investigated children's purchase influence attempts and parental yielding	mothers
Mehrotra, and Torges (1977)	Explored the factors determining children's influence on mothers' buying behavior	mothers only
Atkin (1978)	Observed parent-child interaction in the supermarket for purchase of cereals and snacks	mothers only
Foxman and Tansuhaj (1988)	Investigated adolescents and mothers perceptions of relative influence of each other in family decisions	mother and child
Foxman, Tansuhaj, and Ekstrom (1989)	Explored family members' perception of adolescents influence in family decision-making	mother, father and the child triad
Ahuja and Stinson (1993)	Explored children's influence in family decision making in female-headed single-parent families	Mothers in mother-headed household
Jensen (1995)	Studied purchase influence attempts by children in Denmark; the location and cause of requests and parental responses to the same. The relationship between parents' consumer teaching orientation and family demographics has also been investigated	self-reports from children
Holdert and Antonides (1997)	Investigated effect of family type (distribution of power and cohesion) on stages of decision making process and conflict resolution strategies employed by families	mother, father and the child triad
Williams and Burns (2000)	Explored the dimensionality of children's direct influence attempts	Mother and child
Geuens, Mast, and Pelsmacker (2002)	Researched on the role of family structure (one versus two parent families, two income families and number of working hours and number of children per family) on children's influence	Child and either parent
Lee and Beatty (2002)	Investigated the role of family structure on influence of children in family decision making	Parents and children
Media effects on Children		
Goldberg, Gorn, and Gibson (1978)	Contrasted the effects of TV messages for high and low nutritional foods on children's snack and breakfast food choices	children
Lindquist (1979)	Investigated attitudes of elementary school children towards advertising on TV, Radio, children's magazines and comic books	children
Moschis and Churchill (1979)	Analyzed the adolescent consumer for attitude towards advertising, stores, prices etc.	Self-reports from children
Gorn and Florsheim (1985)	Examined the effects of commercials for adult products on children	children
Moschis and Mitchell (1986)	Investigated effect of TV advertising and interpersonal influences (family and peers) and social structural variables on teenagers' participation in family consumption decisions	either parent
Boush, Friestad, and Rose (1994)	Examined adolescent skepticism toward TV advertising and knowledge of advertiser tactics	children
Mizerski (1995)	Explored the relationship between cartoon trade character recognition and attitude toward product category in young children	children
Kraak, and Pelletier (1998)	Investigated the influence of commercialism on the food purchasing behavior of children and teenage youth	Secondary data used
Moore and Lutz (2000)	Studied the effect of advertising and product experiences on children	multi-method approach
Chan (2001)	Studied children's attitude and perceived truthfulness of TV advertising and parental influence in Hong Kong	children
Kunkel, Wilcox, Cantor, Palmer, Linn, and Dowrick (2004)	Conceptualized the psychological issues in the increasing commercialization of childhood	-----
Socialization of Children		
Moschis and Moore (1979)	Examined decision making patterns among teenage consumers	children
Ekstrom, Tansuhaj, and Foxman (1987)	Conceptualized on children's influence in family decisions and consumer socialization taking a reciprocal view	-----
Carlson and Grossbart (1988)	Investigated parental styles and consumer socialization of children	mothers

Shim, Snyder, and Gehrt (1995)	Studied the relationship of parental socialization variables with parents' perception regarding children's use of clothing evaluative criteria	Parents
Mangleburg and Bristol (1998)	Provided a socialization explanation for adolescents' skepticism towards advertising	children
John (1999)	Provided an exhaustive review of previous research on consumer socialization of children	-----
Communication		
Moschis (1985)	Presented a conceptual framework of the role of family communication in consumer socialization of children and adolescents	-----
Moschis, Prahasto, and Mitchell (1986)	Examined family communication influences on consumer socialization of children	self-reports from children
Carlson, Grossbart, and Tripp (1990)	Investigated mothers' communication orientations and patterns	mothers
Carlson, Grossbart, and Walsh (1990)	Explored mothers' communication orientation and consumer socialization tendencies	mothers
Carlson, Grossbart, and Stuenkel (1992)	Examined the role of parental socialization types on differential family communication patterns regarding consumption	mothers
Palan (1998)	Researched on the relationships between family communication and consumer activities of adolescents	mother, father and the child triad
Chan and McNeal (2003)	Investigated parent-child communication about consumption and parental mediation of TV advertising in China	either parent
Management of Parent-Children Conflict over Purchase Decisions		
Belch, Belch, and Sciglimpaglia (1980)	Explored conflict in family decision making	mother, father and the child triad
Johnson (1995)	Considered the impact of product and situational factors on the choice of conflict resolution strategies by children in family purchase decision making	mother, father and the child triad
Lee and Collins (1999)	Proposed some of the decision making strategies used during conflict resolution and discussed how the formation of coalitions influences decisions. The paper also presented the role of gender and gender composition of families in family decision making	observations and self-reports
Williams and Burns (2000)	Investigated the ways in which children make direct influence attempts	children and mothers
Sex role Orientation and Cross-Cultural Research		
Hempel (1974)	Compared roles of family members while deciding to buy a house in Connecticut and North England	husband and/or wife
Buss and Schaninger (1983)	Presented a general model of family decision making and stated the influence of sex roles on family decision processes and outcomes	-----
Ward, Robertson, Klees, and Gatignon (1986)	Investigated children's purchase requests and parental yielding in US, Japan and Britain	mothers
Talpade, Talpade, and Prabhu (1997)	Explored the effects of Hispanic ethnic identification on teenager influence in purchase decisions	children
Bush, Rachel, and Craig (1999)	Contrasted the effect of consumer socialization variables on attitude towards advertising of African-Americans and Caucasians	children
Rose, Bush, and Kahle (1998)	Investigated the influence of family communication patterns on parental reactions towards advertising in US and Japan	mothers
Rose (1999)	Examined consumer socialization, parental age expectations and parental styles in US and Japan	mothers
Gaumer and Shah (2004)	Compared the TV viewing habits of children in Japan and USA	-----

Children's influence is also seen to vary by who is the user and the perceived importance of the product to the user (Beatty and Talpade, 1994; Foxman and Tansuhaj, 1988). Jensen (1995) proposed that parents' involvement is a function of financial risk, their role as users, and their perception of product differentiation whereas children are mostly involved in the purchase due to their role as users. She explored the influence of children in making purchases and concluded that besides products for direct consumption, children display influence in purchasing products for family consumption where parents are less involved and perceive little or no product differentiation (for food products). Geuens et al. (2002) observed that the relative influence of children varies by the extent to which the parents are busy. Foxman et al. (1989) concluded that children tend to have more "say" in the purchase of products that are less expensive and for their own use. Several factors were found to significantly affect agreement among family members regarding adolescent purchase decision influence: families witnessing greater influence had older fathers, a concept-oriented communication style, fewer children, and a mother who worked fewer hours outside the house.

Table 2
Summary of Research in India on Influence of
Children in Family Purchase Decision Making

Authors	Previous research
Verma (1982)	Partially investigated the role of family members for purchase of a refrigerator
Singh (1992)	Empirically investigated family buying behavior for TV
Chadha (1995)	Partially explored the influence of children while studying the profile of Indian housewives
Kapoor (2001)	Investigated influence of children in family purchase decisions for consumer durables
Hundal (2001)	Examined the role of children while studying the consumer behavior in rural market
Singh and Kaur (2003)	Researched on the role of family members in purchase decision making in urban and rural settings
Media effects on Children	
Kapoor and Verma (2005)	Investigated children's understanding of TV ads and the role of parent-child interaction on socialization of children
Mukherji (2005)	Investigated family communication patterns, advertising attitudes, and mediation behavior with urban middle-class mothers
Communication	
Singh (1998)	Investigated the role of children as buyers
Sinha (2005)	Examined gender difference among adolescents as influencers and impact of communication in the family purchase decision

Palan and Wilkes (1997) observed adolescent-parent interaction in decision making and reported that besides direct requests, adolescents are likely to use bargaining (money deals, other deals, and reasoning) and persuasion (opinions, begging) as strategies to influence decision outcomes.

In India, Singh (1992) studied the role played by family members while purchasing a television across five occupational categories: teachers, doctors, businesspeople, lawyers, and engineers. Children of engineers and doctors were found to have remarkable influence in the purchase decision. Hundal (2001) in a study of rural buying behavior in the Amritsar district of Punjab investigated the role of family members in making purchase decisions for durables including refrigerators, televisions, air coolers, and washing machines. His findings projected that product selection decisions in rural families were mostly made by spouses together but they were highly influenced by children. Halan (2002) opines that "marketing to kids is no longer kid stuff" (p.46). In a focus group study by Kids-Link, the market research group of Kid Stuff Promos and Events, with boys and girls in the age group of 13-15 years in Delhi, girls estimated that they were able to influence 50 percent of the decisions. The study highlighted that kids have a lot of information because of exposure to television, other media, and friends. They reflected that parents sought their opinion even in making purchase of products not directly related to the children, such as cars, because of their higher knowledge of brands, models, and the latest trends. Also, children stated that parents bought products that made the kids happy.

Implications

Studies reporting children's influence across product categories have especially focused on products directly consumed by children. In the Western literature, a host of studies have dealt with breakfast cereals. Since ready-to-eat breakfast cereals are less popular than preferred freshly cooked food in India, influence for this product purchase has not been dealt with. The market for branded snacks, toys, and confectionery is growing in India, making a need for future research. While Western authors have categorized products for direct consumption by the child, or parents, or for the household, Indian researchers have not followed this typology. Researchers in India have generally focused on durable purchases (such as computers or TVs). They have not specifically questioned whether this product is for use by the child or for the family (since ownership affects involvement in decision making). Moreover, purchase influence should be examined after categorizing products as minor and major products (as proposed by Kim and Lee

(1997)). Western researchers have also noticed discrepancies in reports of children's influence in family purchase decision making. This can be attributed to the fact that most researchers have not differentiated between active versus passive influence and knowingly or unknowingly neglected the study of passive influence by children. The study of both active and passive influence is important (Commuri and Gentry, 2000) and, though the study of passive dictation by children is more challenging, it is an important facet deeming further research by Indian as well as Western researchers.

CHILDREN'S INFLUENCE ACROSS STAGES OF DECISION MAKING PROCESS

Since family decisions are dynamic and interrelated, Douglas (1983) and Mangleburg (1990) suggested that the decision making process should be studied across decisions rather than in relation to a given decision independently.

Szybillo and Sosanie (1977), while examining family decision making processes, observed that all members of the family (husband, wife, and children) were greatly involved in all three decision stages (problem recognition, search for information and final selection), when considering a fast food restaurant and a family trip (that is, for products that affect the entire family). The wife/child dyad was very important in initiating a purchase and providing information. Other researchers have also observed that children exert considerable influence during the problem recognition and search stages and the least influence in the final decision stage (Belch et al, 1985; Filiatrault and Ritchie, 1980; Hempel, 1974) for family activities such as choice of vacations and restaurants and consumer durables. However, Holdert and Antonides (1997) reported that children's influence was higher in the later stages of the decision making process; that is, at the time of alternative evaluation, choice, and purchase for four purchases (holidays, adult and child clothing, and sandwich filling). Recently, Belch et al. (2005) proposed that since teenagers are high users of the Internet, they have greater access to market information which could impact their influence in family decision making. They found that teens who perceive themselves to be 'Internet mavens' (individuals who are relied upon more for providing information from the virtual marketplace), as well as their parents, believed that teens were more influential in all stages—initiation and information search, and alternative evaluation and final decision stages. However, their influence was higher in the initiation and information search stages as compared to alternative evaluation and final decision stages.

Children were not seen to have a large impact on instrumental decisions such as how much to spend (Belch et al., 1985; Jenkins, 1979; Szybillo and Sosanie, 1977), but do have on expressive decisions such as color, model, brand, shape and time of purchase (Belch et al., 1985; Darley and Lim, 1986). However, Williams and Veeck (1998) reported that in China, where most families have a single child, the child exerted considerable influence during all stages while buying products for family use. Beatty and Talpade (1994) suggested that teens' knowledge affects their perceived influence in the search for information in the decision process for some products such as the family stereo. The teens' financial clout seems to allow them greater say in initiating self-purchases, but not in family purchases. Parents' dual income status allows adolescents greater influence in some family durable purchases, but this does not affect self purchases where their influence is already substantial. These effects are pronounced for products that teens care for (e.g., stereo) and use often (e.g., telephone).

While studying Indian families, Singh (1992) noted that families differed with respect to their roles in making purchase sub decisions. The "when to purchase" decision was generally syncretic (decided by the husband and wife jointly) and also influenced by children. Hundal (2001) noted that brand selection decisions were also made jointly by the couple but were importantly

influenced by children in the family. The store where the durables were purchased as well as the making of the actual purchase decision was also decided jointly or by the husband individually (for three durables, but not for air coolers). However, children also “went to buy,” that is accompanied their parents at the time of buying televisions, washing machines, and refrigerators. Kapoor (2001) collected information from families in Delhi in regard to their roles across stages of purchase decision-making for six durables—televisions, refrigerators, washing machines, personal computers, audio systems, and cars. She found that individual members were associated with multiple roles. The initiator for purchase in a family was typically a young female member, who was likely to be the wife or one of the children. She illustrated that the need for an audio system, personal computer, and television was likely to be first expressed by the children in the family. As influencers, younger members, especially children, were found to affect purchase of a personal computer, audio system, and television. The final purchases were found to be decided upon after consultation with other family members, mainly the husband. Children have not been observed to have a large impact on instrumental decisions such as how much to spend (Kaur, 2003; Singh and Kaur, 2004; Verma, 1982), but rather play a role while making expressive decisions such as color, model, brand, shape, and time of purchase (Sen Gupta and Verma, 2000; Singh, 1992; Singh and Kaur, 2003; Synovate, 2004) as validated in the West as well. Kaur and Singh (2004) observed that children are individually active in initiating the idea to purchase a durable. In other stages of the decision making process, they exhibit joint influence along with other members of the family. This implies that they provide support to the member exerting influence to increase pressure but do not wield much influence individually. Chadha (1995) concluded that in the older age group household’s sons and daughters emerge as key persons to introduce new products in the house.

Implications

Research in this context actually describes the process of decision making undergone by the families at the time of making purchases. In India as well as in the West, there is consensus among researchers that besides the nature of the product, the influence of children varies by the stage of decision making process. While Western researchers have taken into account the effect of family type and composition, sex role orientation, parental style, pattern of communication, etc., to bring out a complete picture regarding the role of children, the Indian literature is more limited in this regard. Indian authors have gauged the influence of children only partially and have generally focused on spouses or all family members. Research centering on children especially is needed.

MEDIA EFFECTS ON CHILDREN

There is great concern about children as viewers of advertisements primarily because young children are exposed to thousands of commercials each year in India (George, 2003) as well as in the West (Kunkel et al., 2004). Marketers use television as a medium of communication since it affords access to children at much earlier ages than print media can accomplish, largely because textual literacy does not develop until many years after children have become regular television viewers. Approximately, 80% of all advertising targeted to children falls within four product categories: toys, cereals, candies, and fast-food restaurants (Kunkel and Gantz, 1992). Young children are able to differentiate between a TV program and a commercial but are unable to understand the intent of an advertisement until they are 8-10 years of age (Goldberg et al, 1978). According to Seiter (1993), advertising to children avoids any appeal to the rational, emphasizing instead that ads are for entertainment and “enjoyable for their own sake” as opposed to providing any real consumer information (p. 105). The most common persuasive strategy employed in advertising to children is to associate the product with fun and happiness, rather than to provide any factual product-related information. Hence, children in the age category 8-10 years have a

positive attitude towards advertisements. Knowledge of advertising tactics and appeals emerges only in early adolescence and develops thereafter (Boush, Friestad and Rose, 1994). John (1999) notes that “the ability to recognize bias and deception in ads, coupled with an understanding of advertising’s persuasive intent, results in less trust and less liking of commercials” (p. 190). With increasing age, children’s attitude towards ads changes from being positive to negative and further as children step into adolescence, they become skeptical of advertising. Boush et al. (1994) concluded that children in young adolescence even exhibited mistrustful predispositions towards advertising. In adolescents, knowledge about advertiser tactics increased with age. Higher levels of knowledge of advertiser tactics and certain personality variables were positively related to adolescents’ skepticism towards advertising. Moschis and Churchill (1979) and Moschis (1987) also found that older adolescents tended to—1) develop resistance to persuasive advertising, 2) understand better the marketing strategies related to the pricing of products, and 3) generally become more sophisticated as consumers.

Attention to commercials has also been found to be directly related to the perceived truthfulness of advertising. Children who perceive commercials to be mostly true pay more attention to them than those who suspect them (Chan, 2001). Mizerski (1995) found that adults-oriented product trade characters were also readily recognized by children as young as three years of age. Gorn and Florsheim (1985) examined the effect of commercials for adult products on children and found that such exposure does have an effect but that it is mainly a function of the product category advertised. In general, exposure to commercials led to only a small change in response. Mizerski (1995) concluded that recognition, or the ability to match a cartoon trade character and product, is positively related to age. Along with this, the level of recognition and a favorable attitude towards the product were also found to be positively associated with age. Jensen (1995) also found that purchase requests by children are strongly stimulated by commercials or by friends who have purchased the product. Mallalieu et al. (2005) reported that children born in the 1990s appear to have developed these cognitive abilities (for example, to differentiate between a programme and a commercial or to understand the purpose and intent of advertising) to a far greater extent than children reported in earlier studies (Goldberg et al., 1978; Boush et al., 1994).

The impact of television advertising on preschool and elementary school-aged children occurs at multiple levels, including the relatively immediate product-persuasion effects intended by the advertiser, as well as broader and/or more cumulative types of influences that accrue from exposure to large numbers of commercials over time. For example, a cereal ad may have the immediate effect of generating product-purchase requests and increasing product consumption, but it may also contribute to outcomes such as misperceptions about proper nutritional habits (Kunkel et al., 2004). Celebrities and cartoon characters are commonly used by marketers, as children’s views of advertising appeals are largely influenced by them. The practice is largely witnessed in restaurants giving small toys as a token of remembrance to children such as McDonalds (Williams and Veeck, 1998), or associating a cartoon character with a cereal.

Since ads are particularly effective in persuading children to like and request the product (Goldberg, Gorn, and Gibson, 1978), rejection of requests further enhances chances for arousal of conflicts between parents and children (Atkin, 1978; Kunkel et al., 2004). The concern here, of course, is due to commercials for candies, snacks, and sugared cereals far outnumbering commercials for more healthy or nutritious food (Kunkel and Gantz, 1992).

A vast number of children have been found to watch television in India and prefer it to reading (George, 2003). Singh (1998) in India, like Jensen (1995) in the U.S., also found that purchase requests by children are strongly stimulated by commercials or by a friend who has recently purchased a product. Retention of advertisements was high among children (for age group 5-15

years), but the percentage of final purchases prompted by exposure to advertisements was low at 30 percent. This was because the most reliable source for discussion, before buying products, was the family and the child also used his own intelligence and experience to solve the purchase problem. Kapoor and Verma (2005) investigated children's understanding of TV advertising in a comprehensive study in Delhi. Their findings revealed that children as young as six years could understand the purpose of TV ads and distinguish between a commercial and a TV program. With an increase in the age of the child, cognitive understanding of the ad increased and children above the age of eight years were able to respond to TV ads in a mature and informed manner. Heavy viewing was positively associated with favorable attitudes towards TV ads and, conversely, interest in ads declined with age. Children's exposure to TV ads was determined to a large extent by parents' control of their viewing. Parent-child interaction played an important role in the children's learning of positive consumer values and their parents perceiving the influence as positive on their children's buying response. Both parents and children noted the impact of TV ads on children's purchase requests.

Implications

The impact of media has been widely researched in the West. The attitude of children towards commercials for adult products has been dealt with, with the conjecture that children's involvement in commercials leads to (affects) their purchase behavior as adults. This interest in adult products could also be aroused since one or more members in the family may be buying and using the product/brand and the child (ren) is/are also involved in its purchase, either directly or subtly. Therefore, the cause for the attention and interest in commercials, such as humor or the use of a celebrity, should be investigated. The importance of media as a source of information and influence over children should be compared with other elements of the social group such as peers to know the type of information preferred from each source. Media are seen to serve as sources of socialization for children, but their exact impact needs further investigation to help marketers in framing and directing messages. In contrast to this, very few studies in India have focused on the impact of media as sources of information and as a socialisation agent, affecting family purchases. Given the exposure and influence of media (including internet) on children, it is imperative that future research should be planned to determine children's attitude towards advertising, and the impact of creative elements.

MANAGEMENT OF PARENT-CHILDREN CONFLICT OVER PURCHASE DECISIONS

Although serious conflicts in family purchase decisions are rare, some form of family conflict is highly probable, because forming joint preferences requires combining individual preferences of family members (Lee and Collins, 1999). When various alternatives are being considered, each member attempts to influence the other towards his/her preferred decision. A variety of influence techniques are used depending upon the nature of purchase, the characteristics of individuals participating in the purchase discussion, and its importance to the individual. These situations, during negotiation, may result in a preference agreement or a compromise. Nevertheless, differences in the desirability of a purchase outcome may lead to disagreement or conflict. Such situations mean that there will be attempts either to accommodate or resolve the conflict before a joint decision outcome occurs. Sheth (1974) suggests that family members' attempts to resolve conflict(s) are tactically different and varied in appropriateness, depending upon the cause of the conflict.

A repertoire of such strategies has been proposed and validated in the literature for spousal conflicts (Kim and Lee, 1996; Nelson, 1988; Sheth, 1974); some researchers have extended the

same to include children as well in the family. Belch et al. (1980) found little disagreement among family members, but there was some variation across product classes. The amount of disagreement is relatively low for decisions such as where to buy and when to buy, but it is higher for decisions concerning how much money to spend. Children perceived the existence of conflict more than their parents. Buss and Schaninger (1987) reported that conflict can be managed in two ways—by either using avoidance tactics or resolution tactics. Since product type has been seen to effect involvement and influence of children, the nature of the product can also be important in determining the choice of conflict resolution strategy. Johnson (1995) found that product type is an important variable in determining the way children will behave in family decision making. She observed that bargaining was the most common strategy adopted by children when trying to influence the purchase of products for personal use. Conflict avoidance was most commonly used for family use products. However, for products for home use, such as a personal computer, they resorted to problem solving tactics to resolve conflicts. The author also pointed out that while bargaining is most common in dyadic interactions (Qualls and Jaffe, 1992), problem solving is more frequent in triadic interactions between mother, father, and child. These results supported the results of Belch et al. (1980) and were further confirmed in a study conducted by Holdert and Antonides (1997). In the study by Belch et al. (1980), it was found that children see the problem solving strategies being used less often. It was felt that children were either not a part of the decision making process for those products or that discussions took place outside the presence of children. A significant relationship was also found to exist between the situation in which the family purchase decision making occurred (for example, presence/absence of a family member, decision taken in the retail shop) and the choice of a conflict resolution strategy.

Lee and Collins (1999) proposed that when more than two family members are in conflict during the purchase decision process, the third parties (children) may form alliances to aid one side against the other. They investigated patterns of influence and coalition patterns across three stages of the decision making process, namely Configuration (synonymous with problem recognition and search for information), Negotiation (synonymous with evaluation of alternatives), and Outcome (final decision) stage. It was found that children tend to use emotive strategies to gain influence. At the same time, the influence of family members varies in response to the gender mix of the children. Daughters were generally more influential than sons and the gender of elder children appeared to have more significance on the influence structure of the family than that of younger children. Interestingly, fathers and elder daughters and mothers and sons were found to work together to gain influence. The influence of a mother in the family was the strongest during the Negotiation and Outcome stage when both her children were male. Her influence was also strong if her first child was male and the second child was a female. The mother-son and father-daughter pattern changed when parents had two daughters. The father had less influence during the Configuration stage when they had a younger daughter and his influence increased in the Outcome stage if the couple had an elder daughter and a younger son. Moreover, mothers in two-girl families had greater decision power than when the family had an elder daughter and a younger son.

Williams and Burns (2000), using social power theory, investigated the ways in which children make direct influence attempts. They found that when children feel 'entitled' or 'privileged' to act in their own way, they resort to negative influence attempts such as deception, displaying anger, begging, or pleading to exert influence. If they find that their parents have the right or legitimate power to direct their actions, they utilize positive influence attempts such as asking nicely, showing affection, or bargaining. When they feel that they can manipulate their parents, they try to con/deceive the parents, display anger, or beg and plead. If the children expect to be punished as a result of non-compliance, they behave in ways as is perceived positive by the parents. This implies that when parents resort to coercive tactics, the children try to have their

own way by asking nicely, bargaining, or showing affection. Many times children also express compliance in exchange for a future gain; that is, they bargain for a future reward in exchange for a present one.

Implications

Conflicts have largely been investigated in the West using self-report methods wherein the results tend to get distorted by the tendency of family members to give out socially desirable responses. A study of actual behavior of family members, as proposed by Johnson (1995), can yield fruitful insights in this situation. However, in India, little or no attention has been paid to conflicts, their cause, and/or resolution in family purchase decision making. On one side, consumption levels have risen in India owing to a decrease in size of families and second, this has led to children's preferences being accorded greater importance by parents. In this light, children tend to exert more direct influence attempts, i.e. they are more active participants in family purchase decision making. In such cases, refusal to comply with children's preferences can most often lead to conflicts between children and parents. Hence, besides a stronger measurement approach, as required in the West, Indian researchers need to understand and investigate this facet to understand fully the process of family decision making.

SOCIALIZATION OF CHILDREN

The most widely used definition of consumer socialization is the one given by Ward (1974): "It is the process by which young people acquire skills, knowledge and attitude relevant to their functioning in the marketplace" (p.380). The process of consumer socialization begins with infants, who accompany their parents to stores, where they are initially exposed to marketing stimuli. Within the first two years, children begin to make requests for desired products. As kids learn to walk, they also tend to make their own selections when they are in stores. By around the age of five, most kids are making purchases with the help of parents and grandparents, and by eight most are making independent purchases and have become full fledged consumers (McNeal and Yeh, 1993, cited in Solomon, 2003).

Socialization of children is a function of parental style. Parental style is a "constellation of attitudes toward the child that are communicated to the child and that, taken together, create an emotional climate in which the parent's behaviors are expressed" (Darling and Steinberg, 1993, p. 488). Differences in parental styles account for differences as regards to the way parents attempt to control children's behavior through use of emotions, use of authority, etc. at the time of socializing them. Becker (1964) took a dimensional approach in which parental style was assumed to consist of different dimensions that are orthogonal to each other. He suggested that parental discipline behavior could be reflected by a three-dimensional model to conceptualize family socialization—warmth vs. hostility, restrictiveness vs. permissiveness, and calm detachment vs. anxious emotional involvement. On those dimensions, parents were categorized as Rigid Controlling, Authoritarian, Organized Effective, Overprotective, Democratic, Indulgent, Anxious Neurotic, and Neglecting (c f. Carlson and Grossbart, 1988). Baumrind (1971) further developed a three-fold typology of parental styles and classified parents as—Authoritarian, Authoritative, and Permissive. These two approaches were merged further by Macoby and Martin (1983) so that the parenting classification could be generalized to most families. They defined parental style as a function of two dimensions—'responsiveness' and 'demandingness.' The parents were then classified as Indulgent, Authoritative, Authoritarian, and Neglecting. Carlson, Grossbart, and Stuenkel (1992) showed that parental style provides a theoretical basis for explaining differences among parents regarding how they communicate consumer skills and knowledge to their children.

John (1999) classified consumer socialization stages of children as being the perceptual stage (3-7 years), the analytical stage (7-11 years), and the reflective stage (11-16 years). On the basis of an exhaustive review, she contended that children in the perceptual stage focus on perceptually salient features of products, use direct requests and emotional appeals to influence purchases, and possess limited ability to adapt strategy to a person or a situation. They are expedient in making decisions, are egocentric (as validated by Johnson, 1995), and have the emerging ability to adapt to cost-benefit trade-offs. However, children in the analytical stage are more thoughtful, focus on important attribute information to generate an expanded repertoire of strategies (especially non-compensatory ones), and are capable of adapting strategies to tasks. In the reflective stage, children have substantial brand awareness for adult-oriented as well as child-oriented product categories, possess ability to gather information on functional, perceptual, and social aspects, and are capable of adapting strategies to tasks in adult-like manner.

Paxton and John (1995), in their study of age differences in information search behavior of children, found that older children gather more information for favorable product profiles and less information when the cost-versus-benefit of acquiring information is high. Other studies indicate that younger kids use few dimensions to compare and evaluate brands (Bahn, 1986; Capon and Kuhn, 1980). They reported that children tend to rely on dominant perceptual features (vs. functional features) of products in gathering information and making choices. They also suggested that children increase the amount of information gathered in response to choice situations that are irreversible, recognize the need to spend more time in gathering information for decisions that are important to their perception, and voice the need to examine more brands before making a choice (Davidson and Hudson, 1988). As the number of alternatives increases, children restrict their search on more promising alternatives (Paxton and John, 1997). Young children are apparently unstable about product preferences as they lack or do not utilize an internal frame of reference for comparing products on a consistent basis. The choice process/cue set used by younger children is different and simpler from the categorisation schemes used by older children who use more structured cues to categorise products (John and Lakshmi-Ratan, 1992).

In order to identify the extent to which shopping competence is developed in teenage girls, Mallalieu and Palan (2006) developed a model of adolescent shopping competence in a shopping mall context. They investigated whether teenage girls were competent shoppers or whether they indulged in compulsive shopping behaviours. Shopping competence was defined as a multi-faceted construct composed of effectively utilizing environmental resources, having and using knowledge related to shopping, and possessing the degree of self-confidence and self-control necessary to utilize environmental and individual-based resources fully. The teenage girls described their mothers as being competent shoppers. The results of discussions with teenage girls indicated that they exhibited competence in using environmental and knowledge-based resources 'partially.' This implies that if they revealed competency in some aspect of shopping, they came up short in other aspects they themselves perceived as being associated with shopping competence. The girls' responses also indicated that they were lacking in self-confidence and self-control, and this also moderated the degree to which the teenage girls utilized environmental and individual knowledge resources in achieving positive shopping outcomes.

Moschis and Moore (1979) found that adolescents preferred to consult with their parents and/or rely on information they receive from them. In spite of this, parents are not as instrumental in the child's decision regarding which product to buy as compared to brand name and reduced prices. The amount of parent-adolescent communication about consumption was not related to the adolescent's propensity to use price in evaluating the desirability of various products. Palan and Wilkes (1997) asserted that children are also primed to assume a more active role in purchase

discussions after years of listening to their parents explain why certain requests can/cannot be honored. It was projected that influence attempts by adolescents are likely to be effective when they match their influence attempts to their parents' decision making style.

Ekstrom, Tansuhaj, and Foxman (1987) took a reciprocal view of consumer socialization of children and proposed that children contribute to decision outcome through two routes—one by influencing their parents by direct expression of preferences and secondly by communicating new knowledge to the parents and influencing purchases. They proposed that children whose family communication pattern is characterized by a high concept-orientation will influence (socialize) their parents more than children whose family communication pattern is characterized by a high socio-orientation. A child in a single-parent family, higher socio-economic status, and higher personal resources and in a sex-role egalitarian family will have more influence. A child will have greater influence for product purchase decisions that he/she considers important or for which he/she has high product knowledge. His/her participation in family decision making will tend to increase his/her satisfaction with family purchase decisions.

Inter-generational influences in the formation of consumer attitudes have also been investigated by Moore-Shay and Lutz (1988). Cotte and Wood (2004) also advanced this stream by investigating inter- and intra-generational effects of family on consumer socialization. They noted that parents and elder siblings' perceived innovativeness has a significant influence on the younger child's innovativeness. The adult child's innovativeness was influenced by perceptions of their parent's innovativeness. Further, the later one is born (in terms of birth order), the more innovative one tends to be.

Besides family, mass media also serve as an important factor in the consumer socialisation of children. Through mass media, children may learn about new brands and products (Goldberg, Gorn and Gibson, 1978), how to use products and who uses them, realities and beliefs about them (Gorn and Florsheim, 1985), and preferences for them (Gorn and Goldberg, 1977). Nonetheless, as children grow they develop sensitivities towards interpersonal influences, especially peers. The nature of the product affects the level of peer group influence. Public luxuries and private necessities form the ends of the conspicuousness continuum, with public luxuries being subject to significantly more influence than private necessities. In addition to this, there is a tendency for public products of all types, regardless of whether they are luxuries or necessities, to be subject to more reference group influence than private products for all types (Childers and Rao, 1992).

Implications

Much has been learned in the field of consumer socialization of children in the West. Still, more has to be learned in this field as the parameters investigated undergo a change, such as the socialization of children in single- parent/step- parent families. As compared to the West, Indian society is witnessing a tremendous increase in the number of dual career families and nuclear and extended families. Some single-parent families are also emerging. Such changes in family composition have a bearing on parental styles, communication frequency and quality, and other relationships among family members. Indian society is still characterized by a large rural population (nearly 75% of India's total) with joint families. A comparison of socialization patterns between these two sets of families (i.e. rural versus urban and joint versus nuclear) can yield fruitful insights. Nonetheless, changes in family structure bring about changes in the effects of other sources of socialization, such as peers and media. In addition to this, parental styles are expected to differ by gender, gender composition, age, and other socio-economic variables. It is suggested that Indian research should, therefore, recognize such a variety of factors and that future research be guided in this direction.

ROLE OF COMMUNICATION IN SOCIALIZATION AND DECISION MAKING

Family communication is expected to affect children's influence in family decision making. McLeod and Chaffee (1972) developed a typology that characterizes parent-child communication structure. The typology, used for more than two decades, classifies families as having socio-oriented communication (emphasizing parental control) or concept-oriented communication (in which children are encouraged to develop their own ideas and express their views more openly). On the basis of the presence or absence of these two communication patterns, they classify families into four types: laissez-faire, protective, pluralistic, and consensual families. Laissez-faire families emphasize neither of the two dimensions and there is little or no communication between parents and children. Protective families emphasize the socio-orientation dimension, stressing obedience and social harmony, and are not concerned with conceptual matters. Conversely, pluralistic families tend to stress the concept-orientation dimension, with an emphasis being placed on mutuality of respect and interests. Finally, consensual families stress both the socio- and concept orientation dimensions, with the result that children are encouraged to explore the world about them, but to do so without disrupting the family's established social harmony (Moschis et al., 1986).

The study by Moschis et al. (1986) revealed that "pluralistic" adolescents were more likely to have a negative attitude towards the marketplace, have strong preferences for brands, exhibit greater purchasing independence, and hold egalitarian sex-role perceptions with syncratic family role structures. This implies that they are quite competent consumers for that age. "Protective" adolescents were similar to their "pluralistic" counterparts and differed only under conditions of a husband-dominant role structure. In laissez-faire families, adolescents were less likely to have preferences for brands and there was little interaction among family members when conflict occurred. Since consensual families stressed both types of orientations and presented conflicting alternatives and views to the child, these children had a greater positive attitude towards the marketplace and experienced greater dissatisfaction with products they bought/used.

Foxman, Tansuhaj, and Ekstrom (1989) investigated the perception of adolescents' decision influence, in general, and for specific products. The findings indicated that adolescents have more influence in a concept-oriented environment and corroborated the suggestions made by Moschis (1985) and Moschis et al. (1986). Adolescent involvement in consumer activity has been measured in two ways—one, by measuring the frequency of consumption specific communication between parents and children (Moschis, 1985) and another that measures the pattern or quality of communication/interaction between parents and adolescents (Moschis et al., 1986). Palan (1998) used both measures of frequency and quality, and noted the existence of a positive relationship between consumption quality and consumption interaction. Here, consumption interaction was defined as a parental process of purposefully teaching consumer skills to children. Further, both communication quality and consumption interaction were positively related to the consumer activity of adolescents.

Parent-child authoritarianism and parental coalition, taken together as family type, affect communication and hence influence of the role children in family decision making. Family communication patterns depend upon parental control of consumption and media usage (Carlson and Grossbart, 1988; Chan and McNeal, 2003), parental style (Carlson and Grossbart, 1988; Carlson et al., 1992), and advertising practices (Carlson et al., 1990). Chan and McNeal (2003), in a study of Chinese parents, reported a high level of socio-oriented communication and found that nearly forty percent of parents conformed to the consensual family type. Parents with varied family structures differed in communication patterns with respect to mediation of children's television viewing. Chinese parents mediated television viewing of children by co-viewing with

them. Parental control of television viewing was very high, though they seldom discussed the commercials they saw on television with their children. It was further found that the parents who did discuss the commercials they saw on television with their children exerted less influence over children's television viewing.

Implications

Communication between parents and children has tremendous impact on the consumer socialization of children. An impressive body of research exists in this field, yet it needs to be explored further if familial norms of behavior are superimposed and have a mediating effect when children are exposed to other social and reference group influences. Observational learning or indirect influences of communication among family members on consumption patterns of children are also grossly under-researched. The effect of communication is sometimes gauged by taking parenting style as a surrogate variable. However, the two should be treated individually while understanding children's behavior as consumers. Previous research has largely focused on the interaction between parent-child dyads but specific parent-child dyad relations (mother-daughter or father-son) merit further consideration in research in India and the West.

SEX ROLE ORIENTATION (SRO) AND INFLUENCE OF CHILDREN

As observed earlier, sex-role norms are those values and norms (both instrumental and terminal) which are related to the duties and responsibilities of each sex and hence affect participation of family members (Buss and Schaninger, 1983). More traditional SRO implies greater husband dominance in decision making, while in modern families, joint decision making by the family members is more common. Holdert and Antonides (1997) classified families on modernity and traditionalism on the basis of power and cohesion. They described traditional families as ones with strong traditional role differentiation and autonomous decision-making, which paves way for the formation of coalitions among members, while modern families are characterized by equal division of power between partners facilitating joint decision-making and shorter power distance between parents and children. Talpade et al. (1997) studied teenagers' influence in a family durable purchase and a teenager durable purchase. They found that teenagers with higher Hispanic ethnic identification were less likely to have an influence on durable items purchased for the family; females were more likely to have an influence on grocery purchases than males; and females were more likely than males to agree with their mothers on the amount of influence they had. There were no differences in high versus low ethnic identification in the influence on durable items purchased for personal use by teenagers.

SRO brings about differences in norms of behavior for family members. Some researchers have therefore compared role structures across cultures. Hempel (1974) studied family buying decisions for houses in Connecticut and North England. Though his findings revealed differences across cultures, his study was largely focused on spousal differences. He included children but his study reported little contribution by them. Ward et al. (1986), while examining patterns of children's purchase requests and parental responses to those requests across three cultures (United States, Japan, and Great Britain), noted that age differences hold across cultures and that culture itself is an important variable determining differences in parent-child interaction regarding consumption. Parents of older children were more likely to agree to buy requested products, and this held for all countries in their study. They also pointed out that American children were heavy consumers of ads while children in Japan and UK indulged in less consumption of advertising.

Gaumer and Shah (2004) also compared the TV viewing habits of children in Japan and USA. Owing to greater TV viewership, understanding of advertisement content was higher among American children. They concluded that American children are cynical and skeptical purveyors

of advertising and are more sophisticated when it comes to evaluating television advertisements. However, their Japanese counterparts are more vulnerable to TV ads in terms of not recognizing an embedded commercial. They compared patterns of consumer socialization of children and found that differences existed across cultures (as already established by Rose, 1999). Children in the United States are socialized to become distinct autonomous individuals whereas in Japan, parents are generally indulgent towards their children. Rose, Bush, and Kahle (1998) examined family communication patterns and general attitudes towards TV advertising among mothers in the US and Japan. They found that laissez-faire mothers had the most positive attitudes towards advertising, pluralistic and consensual mothers held negative attitudes towards advertising, and protective mothers were in between. Also, attitudes towards advertising were negatively related to mediation of children's exposure to TV advertising. American mothers were found to hold negative attitudes toward both advertising in general and children's advertising in particular, and kept close control of the children's viewing habits. To the contrary, Japanese mothers held a more optimistic view of advertising and placed fewer controls over their children's viewing habits. Similar results were obtained by Mukherji (2005) when investigating family communication patterns, advertising attitudes, and mediation behavior with urban middle-class mothers in India. She compared the means of Indian, American, and Japanese mothers (from Rose et al.'s (1998) study) and found that Indian mothers had the least negative attitudes toward television advertising and children's advertising. Further, the Indian mothers had least control over their children's television viewing of the three groups of mothers and had more discussions with their children than her Japanese counterparts. The positive attitudes of Indian mothers toward television advertising was attributed to the fact that ads were associated with fulfilling utilitarian roles in informing and educating the viewer about new product offerings, and that advertising in India is a relatively newer phenomenon since broadcasting started only in 1985. Rose (1999) also confirmed differences in developmental timetables of children in US and Japan. Japanese mothers held relatively late developmental timetables and allowed few opportunities for independent consumption. American mothers, in contrast, exhibited high levels of communication about consumption, held early developmental timetables, and allowed their children more consumption autonomy than Japanese mothers did. Bush et al. (1999) compared the influence of consumer socialization variables on attitude towards TV advertising for African-Americans and Caucasians. They found that African-Americans watch more TV and use TV more for guidance than did the Caucasians examined. As regards to gender differences, women were found to have more positive attitudes towards advertising than men.

Sundberg et al. (1969) compared family cohesiveness and autonomy of adolescents in India and United States. In their study, they reported that Indian adolescents perceived their families as being more cohesive than American youngsters, and American adolescents perceived themselves as more autonomous and self-decisive than Indian youngsters. In both cultures, the mother was seen as having significantly more power with daughters than with sons. For the father, the converse was found to be true. The role of other family members and others outside the family was small in both cultures, though it was seen to be greater in India. Even those who did not live in large households showed inclinations for deep family ties to the extended family; for example, young members would rely on older family members for important decisions. They reported that Indians took close family relations for granted, whereas American youngsters were more overtly concerned. American family security could not be easily assured to a person because of individual responsibility in making major as well as minor decisions. For that reason, Americans were observed to see themselves as being the most important agents in decisions made about their own lives, whereas Indians saw their fathers as being more or equally involved for such decisions. Bansal (2004) pointed out that while in the West an 18-year-old is financially and emotionally independent, in India, this is still not the case. The western world has found its response to the parent-youth conflict by institutionalizing the culture of individualism. In India,

parenting is and always has been a lifelong occupation. Family and all it stands for is what the people venerate and celebrate. But, India has now received full frontal exposure to the global youth culture. This is a culture which puts 'me' before 'us,' which places the call of hedonism and hormones before 'values' and 'morality.' Indian youth are redefining what constitutes a 'boundary' and parents are wondering how to respond.

Implications

A family's SRO is the underlying force that ultimately affects role and power in the household decision making process. On the basis of SRO, Indian families (in varying proportions) follow modern, moderate, and traditional sex-role norms of behavior. And although India, particularly its urban areas, is witnessing some significant changes in the economic and social status of women and the nature of the household structure, the pull toward maintaining tradition is also quite strong (Webster, 2000). In metropolitan areas, extensive foreign media exposure and the Internet revolution have contributed to the emergence of a new social attitude which accepts Western values and culture. Mukherji (2005), in her study, expected Japanese mothers and Indian mothers to be more socio-oriented (since both cultures focus on collectivism), but the results contradicted this general belief. The Indian sample was found to be more concept-oriented, a characteristic of mothers who emphasize modernity. Studies like Sundberg et al. (1969) could be replicated to tap the changes which have occurred over a period of time. In addition to this, the Indian market offers tremendous potential and is rapidly growing. In spite of this, cross-cultural researchers have only recently paid attention to the Indian market, which should certainly be continued in the future.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Researchers found that children exert more influence in higher income and larger families (Foxman et al., 1989; Palan, 1998; Szybillo, Sosanie, and Tenenbein, 1977; Ward and Wackman, 1972). The influence of children increases with age (Atkin, 1978; Darley and Lim, 1986; Mehrotra and Torges, 1977; Moschis and Mitchell, 1986) and the ability to comprehend the content of advertising messages also increases with age (Lacznaik and Palan, 2004). Moschis and Moore (1979) found that a significant positive relationship exists between adolescents' socio-economic background and the extent of brand preferences for various products. Age was related to the number of information sources preferred, and there was also an increase with age in the propensity to prefer friends as a source of information. Similarly, the tendency to rely on parents for information and advice decreased with age. It was also found that as the ages of children increased, they preferred to shop without their parents. Moschis and Churchill (1979) found positive relationships between the consumption ability of adolescents and social class and age.

Gender differences were also observed as male adolescents displayed more favorable attitudes towards stores, greater consumer affairs knowledge, more materialistic values, and stronger social motivations for consumption. On the other hand, females showed more favorable attitudes towards advertising and scored significantly higher on information seeking and cognitive differentiation measures. In general, female children have stronger influence in family purchase decisions (Atkin, 1978; Lee and Collins, 1999; Moschis and Mitchell, 1986) and use influence strategies such as reasoning, asking, and persuading more frequently do boys (Lacznaik and Palan, 2004).

Mangleburg et al. (1999) proposed that in some families, children are treated more as equals by parents, whereas, in others, children are viewed as subordinate to parents' authority. These dimensions of family authority or parent-child authoritarianism are likely to be affected by family type, that is, single-parent, step-parent, or intact families. Parental coalition formation is seen as a

means to reinforce the decisions made by one spouse and limit children's influence. Family type is expected to be related to parental coalition formation and parent-child authoritarianism. These two dimensions are expected to affect children's influence in family- and child-related purchase decisions. The study revealed that adolescents in single-parent families had greater influence than their counterparts in step and intact families, probably due to differences in socialization with respect to family authority relations. Kourilsky and Murray (1981) examined the effect of economic reasoning on satisfaction within the family and found that single-parent families exhibited a higher level of economic reasoning and satisfaction as compared to two-parent families.

Sundberg et al. (1969) reported that Indian girls perceived their families as significantly more cohesive than Indian boys; however, the absolute difference was not great. Sex differences in decision making were also found to be stronger in India than in America. Dhoal (1999) noted that across stages of product adoption—awareness, knowledge, preference, conviction, and adoption—for durables, Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCGs), and services, children were previously inactive in all stages of adoption except for the actual adoption stage. However, today, children are active in all the five stages of adoption of durables as well as FMCGs. He reported that in the new urban Indian family, children were influencers/co-deciders at the time of purchase of personal products, consumables, financial products, vacations, educational products, and family automobiles while they were buyers of family toiletries and initiators or gatekeepers for purchases of household durables.

Bansal (2004) elaborated on the three stages of middle-class Indian youth— Early Youth (Ages 13-21), Middle Youth (Ages 22-28), and Late Youth (Ages 29 upwards). She pointed out that early youth are basically dependent on parents for funds; their spending power is between \$20-40 per month. They are generally influenced by parents and their peer group. The middle youth has an average spending power of \$140-800 per month, which is either purely disposable income or spent in shouldering some of the responsibility of the family. The primary influencers for this category of youth are peers and workmates. With Business Process Outsourcing jobs coming in, the number of 'middle youth' has shot up. For the late youth, the key decisions include career advancement and children. Given household expenses, the spending power remains equal to or sometimes less than what it was at the middle youth stage. Also, many would be taking up home and car loans, and paying for children's education. The key influencers for them include peer group, workmates, spouse and kids. The consumption areas contain household, kid products, personal clothing and accessories, food, and entertainment.

Implications

The family life-cycle has been seen to be a summary variable to gauge the effect of demographics. However, it has not been used to study the changes occurring in the pattern of influence exerted by children as the family progresses through the life cycle stages. The pattern of decision making in families also varies with presence/absence of children. An attempt can be made in this direction to strengthen the body of research. Indian families are also witnessing a rise in the number of nuclear families, yet a vast majority of the country's population resides in the hinterland where joint/extended families are the norm. Hence, any investigation of the role of children has to be undertaken keeping this reality under consideration.

MEASUREMENT IN CHILDREN'S STUDIES

Earlier studies generally relied on survey instruments for measuring the relative influence of family members in household decision making (for example, Bery and Pollay, 1968; Moschis and Mitchell, 1986). However, more recently researchers have used observational/experimental

methods to gauge family members' influence (for example, Lee and Collins, 1999; Macklin, 1996; Palan and Wilkie, 1997). Some researchers have also incorporated a multi-method approach to measure influence (Kim and Lee, 1997; Moore-Shay and Lutz, 2000).

When self-reported perceptions of relative influence were sought from parents and children together, research revealed that the individuals differed when reporting the influence of family members. Belch et al. (1985) concluded that children tend to attribute more influence to themselves than do both parents, and they also attribute more influence to the father than the father or the mother themselves do. Foxman and Tansuhaj (1988) tried to identify patterns of agreement and disagreement in mothers' perceptions of the relative influence of adolescents in purchase decisions. The study brought forth that adolescents consistently tend to overestimate their influence and more children perceive purchase decisions to be made jointly as compared to the mothers. Foxman et al. (1989) found that mothers and children perceived the child's role similarly, but that fathers felt that the children had less influence than the children thought they had. In the purchase of a family car, the mothers overestimated while the fathers underestimated the influence of the child as compared to the child's self-perceived influence.

In order to remove such discrepancies, Foxman et al. (1989) pointed out that triad data help in obtaining a more accurate picture of familial influences in decision processes. Gentry et al. (1990) proposed that simulation games could be used to research families. Since the game environment provides a middle ground between laboratory and field research, it provides greater opportunity for control than does field research. It also allows investigating simultaneously a sequence of decisions over a long period of simulated time. The cost of data collection is also lower and the simulated environment removes much of the sensitivity associated with the problem area. Lee and Beatty (2002) studied family interactions triggered by simulated family decisions. Todd (2001) reviewed methods used to study children as consumers. She proposed that children's level of cognitive development and competencies must be recognized at the time of choosing a method with which to study children. Moreover, it has been noted that there exists a lack of interactive research on family purchase decision making (Johnson et al., 1994).

Mangleburg (1990) has also enlisted some problems associated with research in this domain—

1. Lack of theoretical explanation—the failure to provide conceptual justification for the observed patterns of influence or why children's influence varies with a number of factors.
2. Lack of reliability.
3. Failure to define 'influence' adequately in active and passive dimensions.
4. Problems with measures used to assess influence.

Implications

Researchers in the West have shifted from obtaining self-reports to observational methods, multiple methods, or simulation games to research on the role of children. Experiments have also been designed to study younger children who face problems in reporting. Khatri (1980) also illustrated the use of analysis of fiction, that is, the content of social novels to study intra- and cross- cultural family systems. Ruth and Commuri (1998) attempted to study shifts in decision making processes by couples in India using the critical incident method. Couples were asked to recall decision making processes from the past (eight years prior) as well as current decision making processes for the same product categories. Dellaert et al. (1998) conducted a two-stage conjoint analysis to analyze an individual's as well as other family members' preferences. Webster (2000) identified influence patterns of spouses in India using participant observation and multiple, in-depth ethnographic interviews. Such methods can be replicated for studying children as well. However, Indian researchers have largely relied on self-reports from a single family

member. Indian studies have been rarely tested for reliability and validity. This calls for greater rigor in designing research on families in the Indian settings.

CONCLUSION

Children are effectively fitting into the consumer role owing to time pressures and income effects in dual career families. Moreover, exposure to mass media and discussions with parents ensure that children are not only aware of the new brands available, but also know how to evaluate them on various parameters. While younger children clearly affect parental behavior and purchases, adolescents have full cognitive development and an understanding of the economic concepts required for processing information and selection. An analysis of children as consumers helps in the formulation of marketing strategies by identifying the motivations, interests, and attitudes of children who show the greatest involvement in making purchases in a specific product category. It has been seen that they act as purchasing agents for the family and are delegated the task of purchasing products which they themselves do not consume. Products for which children act as purchasing agents should be identified to help marketers understand the features that are preferred by these purchasers and to help direct appropriate messages towards them.

The complexity of the factors typical to the Indian marketing environment such as the prevalence of a joint/extended family system, gifts of durables as dowry, large rural markets, etc., means that studies need to be designed more systematically to capture the effects of all variables important in the Indian family context. Individuals in rural settings in India subscribe to an extended family system, and enter into- and exit from- an extended households according to their needs and requirements throughout life. Extension in family is generally sought for meeting childcare requirements (Ram and Wong, 1994) and exit is sought at the time of seeking a job. In India, wives have been seen to exercise covert influence in domestic decisions on critical matters. With their acceptance of the role of breadwinner for the family, they may express themselves more openly and their husbands may increasingly accept their wife's informal power (Ramu, 1987). Khatri (1972) proposed that shifts in family type occur over the life cycle of an individual both in India as well as in the West. Indians have gone through changes in the type of family they live in various sequences: large joint family, small joint family, nuclear family, and nuclear family with dependents. Khatri found a larger number of shifts in joint families as compared to nuclear families in India. In the West, establishment of an independent household follows immediately after marriage in most cases. The family type in this case, when the new couple shifted residence, remained the same—that is from nuclear to nuclear. In India, however, in many cases a newly married husband brought his wife to the same household and continued to stay with his parental family, thus changing the family type to a joint family. He also put forth that for American children living in intact, small sized, nuclear families, shifts in family type are to be less expected. However, for children living in large families, in families characterized by divorce and remarriage, the number of shifts would be higher. He cautioned that restricting focus to present family types and losing sight of the history of changes that have taken place will introduce an uncontrolled source of variation which is likely to contaminate results. Hence these shifts need to be gauged in light of the changes occurring in family types.

Children in India may not have the purchasing power comparable to their Western counterparts, but they are still the center of the universe in the Indian family system, and they can actually pull the parents to visit a place time and again. Children are an enormously powerful medium for relationship building in India. They not only influence markets in terms of the parental decision-making to buy certain kinds of products, they are also future consumers. Hence more investigation of children's roles in family decision making is imperative.

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