CHILDREN INFLUENCE IN THE PROCESS OF FAMILY PURCHASE DECISION FOR HIGH, LOW AND CHILD – CENTRIC PRODUCTS

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ABSTRACT

The influence of children on the processes of family purchase decision depends on a number of parameters and situations. Children exercise various methods to influence their parent's decision of buying. This influence varies from one product to another. It depends on the education of the parents, their profession, income, whether the parent is single and working, or both parents work and also the family type, types of product (high, low, and child centric product) among others.
This research considers children in the age group of 8-12 in India. Descriptive statistics are used to summarize variables in terms of central tendency and measures of dispersion. Reliability test has been done using Cronbach's alpha. Pearson's product correlation, one-way ANOVA, Two-way ANOVA has been done using SPSS version 18.0. Regression is used to prove the causality between independent variables on dependent variable. The children's influence is maximum for products like bicycle, Ice Creams/chocolates/Juice and CDs/DVDs. There are a few products like CDs/DVDs, video games and hobby activities, which are used by the whole family and still children's influence is higher than their parents on family purchase decision. The ANOVA analysis of parent's perception of children influence indicates that parent's income impacts the children's influence. The quadratic relation is observed between children influence and family income.

Keywords: Children's influence, decision, family purchase, family structure, income, high-value product, low-value product.

INTRODUCTION:

In the context of increasing competition and changing social and economic environment, it becomes essential for the marketers to be customer-oriented. Buying behaviour of customers in the marketplace plays a significant role in the strategic marketing planning. The recent awareness of consumer behaviour has introduced many new dimensions in the marketing philosophy and practices. It is both, relevant and important for every business enterprise to know its customers and understand their buying behaviour.

"Family as a consuming and decision making unit is a central phenomenon in marketing and consumer behaviour" (Commuri and Gentry, 2000, p. 1).Family always plays a very important mediating function. It combines the individual with a larger society, where the person learns various roles suitable for an adult life (Foxall, 1977). The way children learn to become consumers in our society may be largely the result of family influence (Ward, 1974). Since culture exerts considerable influence on the family unit, it is also likely that cultural variables influence the socialization process of the children. The Fig. 1 highlights the stages for children becoming a consumer.

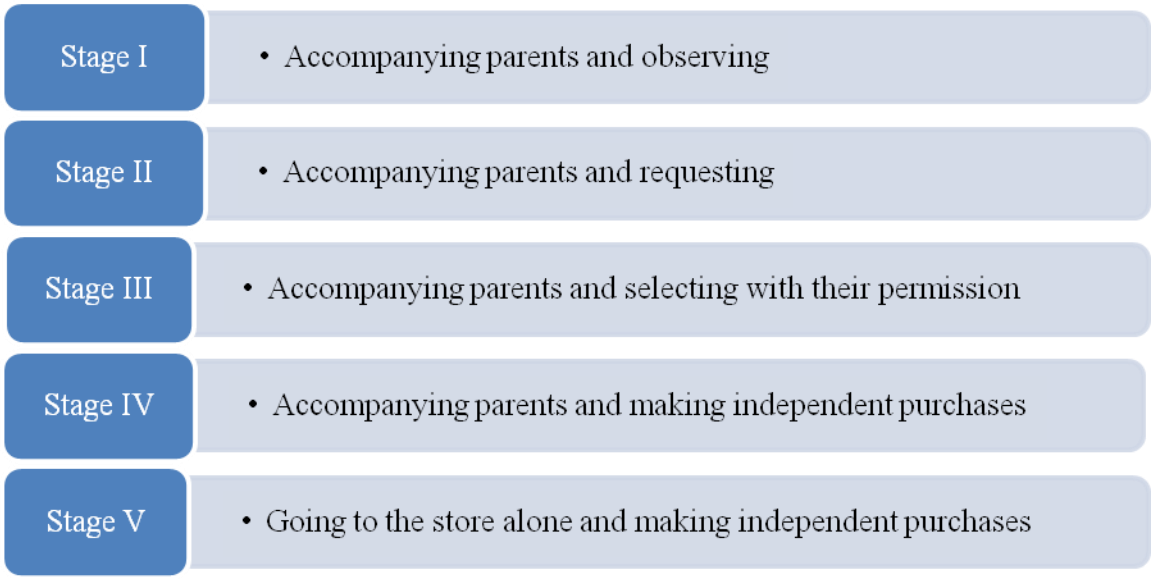


Figure 1: The stages for children becoming a consumer

One of the very important influences operating on family purchase behaviour is the influence of children on the budget allocation and purchases and consumption. The birth of a child creates a demand for a wide variety of products a couple never needed or considered purchasing previously. In addition, children influence the purchase of many products both directly and indirectly. Thus in a child-centred culture such as it exists in Indian society, children tend to dramatically affect family expenditures. When children are part of a family, their influence may or may not be felt. However, it is found that the child centeredness of mothers may increase their receptivity to the child. A similar influence is observed in other countries as shown in Fig. 2.

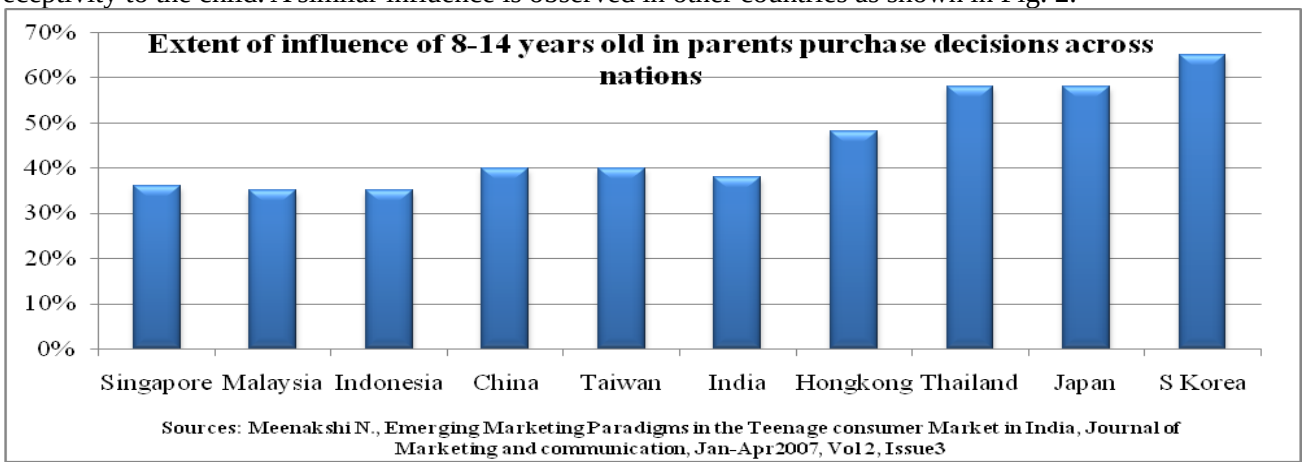
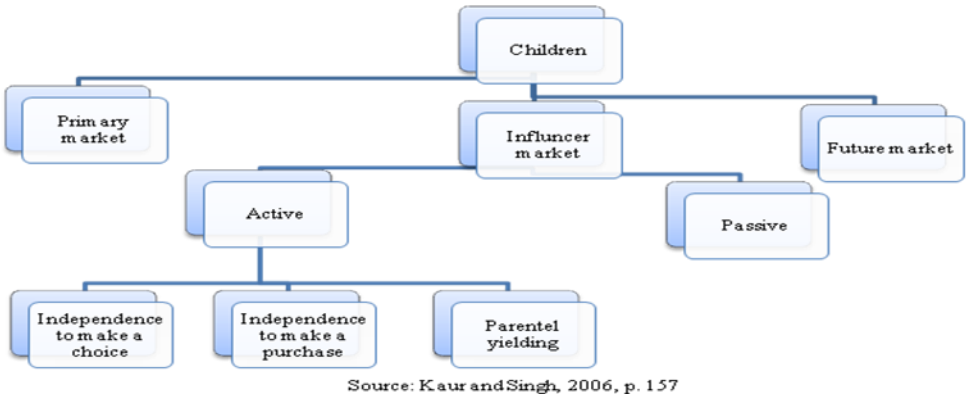


Figure 2: Extent of influence of 8-14 years old in parents' purchase decisions across nations

INDIAN CULTURE AND ITS IMPACT ON CHILDREN'S ROLE IN FAMILY DECISION MAKING:

Indian society to a greater extent differs from the west in terms of family composition and structure, norms, values, and behaviour. Hence it becomes important to understand children's influence in the purchase decision making in families in the Indian context (Jain and Bhatt, 2004). They not only influence markets with regard to parental decision making on purchasing certain kinds of products, but they also act as future consumers.
Children in India have become the most important object of research. India has one of the largest populations of children in the world, and Indian children have substantial economic power and unique influence of their parents.
Research indicates that children play a significant role in some family purchase decisions, and their influence varies by-product categories and decisional stages (Moschis 1987). In general, for products in which the child is directly involved in consumption, the child is expected to have at least some influence on the decision. Few studies, however, have attempted to distinguish patterns of influence by a product user (i.e., products for children, for parents, or for family use); and most studies have measured children's influence only for the purchase of breakfast cereal, or for major family purchases. There has also been no investigation of the relationship between product importance perceptions and children's perceived influence on decision making by family.



Source: Kaur and Singh, 2006, p. 157

Figure 3: i c b

This particular paper attempts to address the major research question that is, to examine the perception of the parents about children's influence on family purchasing decisions in relation with some factors such as the number of children in the family, product type, parents' profession, income and working status of the parents. The analysis will allow us to ascertain if these factors are important for the children's influence on the family's purchasing decision and increase understanding of the relation between these factors and children's influence on the family's purchasing decision. This study has been conducted in India; the findings contribute to our understanding of children's influence on family purchasing decision in this country and provide an opportunity to conduct cross-national studies.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Today children are not only passive observers but they have taken a considerable place in the families and have a significant influence on parental buying decisions.
Mangleburgb (2010) evaluated parental and peer influences on teen purchase decisions by applying social power theory, which had not been examined in the teen context. The conceptual model examined how family socialization practices might impact teens' perceptions of social power influences from parents and peers. For example, family communication environment may promote teens' reliance on particular bases of social power influence. This study also examined the relationship between the bases of perceived social power and the purchase of different types of products (e.g., luxury/necessity, public/private). Results are generally consistent with predictions, demonstrating that teens from high socio-oriented communication environments are subject to greater perceived peer reward/coercive and referent power, whereas teens from high concept-oriented communication environments perceive greater parental expert and legitimate power. Finally, perceived bases of social power influence differ depending on the type of product purchased. Interpretations of findings and implications have been discussed.
Kaur and Medury (2010),explain in his article how urban Indian adolescents have a significant influence on the family decision-making process. In the 11 sub decisions (six for high-technology products and five for vacation)

examined in their study, teenage children's role in decision making was found to be more than the mid-value in all cases except in the financial decision – how much to spend. There are many other factors which, boost newer aspirations and dictate consumptions. These factors are early consumer socialization, busy parents, rising media influence and susceptibility to peer influences.

Schdeva (2009) mentions that a few decades ago Indians copied baby boomer from US and that most of the families were more than two children. It was considered a matter of pride having a big and bustling family. Now more and more couples are going for nuclear families with one child. Another important change is related to working status where both parents are working and creating a strong financial base, and it provides one of the best facilities International schooling, high standard of materials for the day to day activities and costly games, tennis, are becoming normal for the children. These factors are moving the child to the centre of attraction for families. Now children are more often like friends to their parents.

Veloso et al. (2008) studied some parents and children in low-income families. It was observed that these families did not buy products in bulk and had to take care of more than one child. And because of these reasons, it is further observed that they make several trips for shopping and hence end up spending more time in a shopping environment. Another observation is that they often take their children for shopping.

Tinson et al. (2008) suggest that the level of children's influence correlates with the product type. This implies that children generally have a greater influence if the product is designed for their personal consumption than if it is a family product.

Flurry (2007) reveals that children have a greater influence when the product is designed for their personal consumption, some research has concluded that for some family products such as family holidays or automobiles, children, especially those living in a single-parent household, have an indirect influence on the family decision-making process jointly. This has to do with the fact that children have an elevated, almost equal status and will often be consulted in family product decision making.

Greenspan et al. (2002) analyses the extent of children's influence in purchasing electronic products and identifies the sources of influence among the children. The study concludes that children indeed have a very strong hold in the purchase of these items as they were recognized to be the ultimate decision makers of products such as computer software, mp3 players and PDAs whereas they had a 50% chance when it came to other similar items such as cell phones, digital cameras and internet access. The author concluded stating that the bread winners are no longer the decision makers of electronics in American households.

Chang and McNeal (2003) studied the children influence in China. They also looked at peer pressure aspect. If any friend has bought any specific brand product then the child tries to get the same brand product with more active assertiveness. In this way it increases the likelihood of children's influence on products for which they are the primary consumers. They observe that Chinese parents by nature and culture are mostly consensual. The Chinese parents use to keep children in strict guidance and still allow them to choose specific brand products. Chan and McNeal (2003, p318) presented changed theoretical framework as shown in Figure.

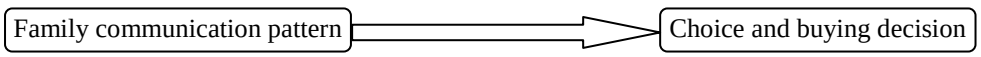


Figure 4: A theoretical framework predicting family communication and buying choice and decision

A number of research findings indicate that children have a significant influence in the purchase of products for which they are the primary consumers, such as food, toys, children's clothes and school supplies (Atkin, 1978; Foxman and Tansuhaj, 1988, Foxman et al., 1989; Jenkins, 1979; Lee and Beatty, 2002). Various researchers have revealed that a number of factors play a substantial role in children's influence on parents buying decisions across different product categories. They also have a significant influence on the purchase of leisure activities or where the purchase decision has a personal relevance to the child (Filiatrault and Ritchie, 1980; Szybillo and Sosanie, 1977). In contrast, children have less influence on decision making for products that are used by the entire family, especially for high cost products, such as cars, furniture and life insurance (Foxman and Tansuhaj, 1988). This may be explained by the fact that parents are likely to restrict children's involvement and also that the children may be less motivated to participate in the decision making process as the product is not personally relevant to them (Mangleburg, 1990). This may imply that children might not have a very strong direct influence in the purchase of a family home, as it is a high cost product to be used by the whole family.

Therefore, it can be concluded from the above review of literature that the problem in hand requires more research, as it is yet an emerging phenomena in the Indian society. Indian society is still characterized by a large proportion of rural population with joint families. Emergence of the urban population with joint as well as

nuclear families can also be seen. So a comparison of children's influence in double income family versus single income family or a single child nuclear family versus joint family with more children factors can definitely yield fruitful insight in the different product categories.
A thorough analysis of the related literature reveals the fact that there is a dearth of studies specific to the emerging markets. Most of the studies were focusing on developed countries. There is a need for more studies with a focus on the Indian scenario.

METHODOLOGY:

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

The researcher has made an effort to understand the degree of influence exercised by the children in family purchase decision in the different product categories. Hence the statement of the problem is to study Influence of Children in The Process of Family Purchase Decision for High, Low and Child-Centric Products

SCOPE OF THE STUDY:

The study is carried out in Bangalore, a silicon city in India. The marketer will get insight on the children influence on family purchase decision for various product categories. It will help marketer to design the strategy to market their goods and services to tap the market more efficiently

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- To analyse children's influence in double income family (where both parents are working)
- To examine the level of influence on various categories of products (high/low/child) between parents and children
- To study the relative influence of children in family purchase decision with respect to family income, type and the number of children.

STATEMENT OF THE HYPOTHESIS:

H1: The influence of parents and children for purchase of various products (categories: high-value, low-value, & child-centred) are same.
H2: Children from the family where both parents are working have more influence on the family purchasing decisions than those of single parent working.
H3: Statistically, there is a linear relation between children influence and family income, family type and the number of children.

DESIGN OF THE STUDY:

This research applies a quantitative approach, and this approach has followed the deductive logic in order to test the theory. The present study employs descriptive research design. This design is for summarizing the set of factors and variables. The survey method is followed in this study, and a set of questionnaires was used to collect primary data.

VARIABLES INCLUDED IN THE STUDY:

The variables included in the study are as follows:-
Dependent variable: Children influence
Independent variable: High/ Low/"child centric" products, Family income/type and number of children /family working status

DATA COLLECTION:

Data collection was done from primary as well as secondary sources.

PRIMARY DATA QUESTIONNAIRES:

Further it was modified and validated using a 5-point Likert scale for the present study.
The reliability test of sample data is shown in Table 1

Table 1: The reliability test of sample data

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
.710	16

Secondary data was collected from selective sources of data like journals, websites, textbooks, company brochures, magazines and newspapers.

SAMPLES FOR THE STUDY:

The present study is restricted to India only. Respondents are the parents of 8-12-year-old children and children. This study looks at the degree of influence of children on family purchase decisions.

SAMPLE SIZE:

For the study, 400 samples were chosen from the population which included 200 parents and 200 children from Bangalore city. The questionnaire was administered to 400 samples, and the response rate was 390, which includes 195 children and 195 parents.

STATISTICAL TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES:

Considering the amount and nature of data for this research, it is necessary to use statistical tools .Following descriptive and inferential statistical methods were employed in the present investigation. The statistical techniques which are used in the study are given below in brief:

- Descriptive statistics – is used to summarize variables in terms of central tendency and measures of dispersion.
- Reliability test – is used to check the measurement error and ensure the goodness of data.
- One-way ANOVA – is utilized to find the gap on various factors based on independent variables.

All the statistical methods were carried out through the SPSS for Windows (version 18.0) and for calculation and data preparation, MS-Excel 2007 was used.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:

The survey data has been analysed with descriptive statistics and percentages and one-way ANOVA. The results have been shown in tables and figures for better interpretation.

Table 2: Decision making on the product category – parents vs. children

	Parents		Children		Parent-Children	
	Mean	**Stdev**	**Mean**	**Stdev**	**Mean**	**Stdev**
TV	2.32	0.80	2.71	0.52	6.369	2.705
Refrigerator	1.53	0.79	1.72	0.63	2.682	1.987
Home theatre	2.33	1.04	2.10	0.99	5.210	3.752
Car	2.59	0.99	2.93	0.55	7.667	3.285
Computer/Laptop	2.56	0.92	2.36	0.93	6.313	3.572
Vacation choice	2.83	0.88	2.75	0.81	7.687	3.337
Fruits/Vegetables	2.86	1.01	2.48	0.94	7.323	3.881
Toothpaste	3.25	1.12	3.13	0.81	10.451	5.099
Newspaper	2.05	0.99	2.17	0.99	4.810	3.610
Bread	2.49	1.04	2.49	0.95	6.549	4.082
Detergent/Soap	2.35	0.99	2.20	0.93	5.487	3.698
Cereals	3.50	0.96	3.12	1.02	11.287	5.227
Bicycle	4.03	0.82	4.19	0.45	16.908	3.859
Hobby activity	3.61	0.89	3.41	1.12	12.528	5.562
Video games	4.14	0.75	3.58	1.09	15.046	5.763
CDs/DVDs	3.76	0.98	3.63	0.82	13.903	5.314
Ice Creams/Chocolates/Juice	4.23	0.81	3.80	0.76	16.067	4.599

This survey analysed the decision making by parents, children, Joint (parents and children) for various products and services. The specifics of the same are as follows:

- Parents' decision making: The influence was found to be maximum in the purchase of a refrigerator (with a mean score of 1.53). This was followed by newspaper and TV (with mean scores of 2.05 and 2.35, respectively). Home theatre and detergent/soap followed with mean scores of 2.33 and 2.35 respectively where parents decided on the purchase of the product.
- Children's decision making: The influence was found the maximum in case of purchase of the bicycle (with a mean score of 4.19). This was followed by ice creams/chocolates/juice and CDs/DVDs (with mean scores of 3.80 and 3.63, respectively). Video games and hobby activity followed with mean scores 0f 3.58 and 3.41, respectively were children decided on the purchase of the product.
- Parent-children decision making: The influence was found the maximum in case of purchase of the bicycle (with a mean score of 16.91). This was followed by ice creams/chocolates/juice and CDs/DVDs (with mean scores of 16.067 and 15.046, respectively). Video games and hobby activities followed with mean scores of 13.903 and 12.528 respectively. These were joint decisions by parents, and their children made while purchasing the product.

HYPOTHESIS-WISE ANALYSIS: PARENT DECISION MAKING BY ANOVA:

Null Hypothesis: The influence of parents and children for purchase of various products (categories: high-value, low-value, & child-centred) are same.

Table 3: One-way ANOVA result

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig.
High value products	Children	195	2.43	0.43	1.368	.243
	Parents	195	2.36	0.70		
	Total	**390**	**2.39**	**0.58**		
Low value products	Children	195	2.60	0.69	4.648	.032*
	Parents	195	2.75	0.71		
	Total	**390**	**2.68**	**0.70**		
Child centred products	Children	195	3.72	0.64	14.883	.000*
	Parents	195	3.95	0.54		
	Total	**390**	**3.84**	**0.61**		
Rating scale score close to 1 is parent dominated and close to 5 is child dominated						

- High value products: Children respondents gave this category a mean score of 2.43 while the parents gave this a mean score of 2.36. The ANOVA table shows the F value is 1.368, and the significance value is 0.243. Since it is >0.05, the mean difference existing between parents and children for the purchase of high-value products is not statistically significant at the 5% level. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted.
- Low value products: The children respondents gave this category a mean score of 2.60 while the parents gave this a mean score of 2.75. The ANOVA table shows the F value is 4.648, and the significance value is 0.032. Since it is <0.05, the mean difference existing between parents and children for the purchase of low-value products is statistically significant at the 5% level. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected and alternate hypothesis is accepted.
- Child centred products: The children respondents gave this category a mean score of 3.72 while the parents gave this a mean score of 3.95. The ANOVA table shows the F value is 14.883, and the significance value is 0.000. Since it is <0.05, the mean difference existing between parents and children for the purchase of children-cantered products is statistically significant at the 5% level. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected and alternate hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis-wise analysis: Children from the family where both parents are working have more influence on the family purchasing decisions than those of single, working parent.

Table 4: Two-way ANOVA: Working status and number of children on parents-children Interaction score

Descriptive Statistics				
Dependent variable: parents-child interaction score				
Working Status	**Number of children**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**N**
Both parents working	Single child	6.23	2.11	90
	Two children	6.53	2.16	49
	Total	6.34	2.12	139
Single parents working	Single child	6.06	2.23	48
	Two children	4.14	0.82	8
	Total	5.78	2.19	56
Total	Single child	6.17	2.14	138
	Two children	6.19	2.19	57
	Total	6.18	2.15	195

From the above table, it is inferred that respondents from the category of single child and two children seem to have a high score of 6.23 and 6.53 respectively on both working-parents when compared to single working parents. Their means are 6.17 and 6.19 respectively. In total, both working parents seem to have influenced the parents-children interaction score, that is, children are more predominant compared to single parent working.

Table 5: Two-way ANOVA: Parents Interaction Score by Working Status and Number of children

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects					
Dependent Variable: Parents-child interaction score					
Source	**Type III Sum of Squares**	**Df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig.**
Corrected Model	40.13	3	13.38	2.98	0.03
Intercept	2,972.92	1	2,972.92	662.30	0.00
Working status of parents	37.05	1	37.05	8.25	0.00
Number of children	14.81	1	14.81	3.30	0.07
Interaction (Working status * No of child)	27.45	1	27.45	6.12	0.01
Error	857.36	191	4.49		
Total	8,342.00	195			
Corrected Total	897.48	194			
R square .045					

In order to justify the outcome of the mean score, two ways ANOVA is employed. In this model, independent variables are working status of parent and the number of children; dependent variable is the parents-children interaction score. To know the effect of working status and number of children on parents-children interaction as main effect and interaction effect two ways ANOVA is used and shown in the above table. Since sig. value is significant in all categories i.e. Working status, number of children and interaction (Working status * number of children) F value showed higher in the working status category on parents-children interaction, i.e. 8.25. But the number of children F value is 3.30 and sig. value is >.05 it is not statistically significant. However, the interaction effect showed sig. value is <.05, it is significant. R squared indicating the explained variance of independent variables (working status of parent and Number of children and dependent variable) is the parents-children interaction score is 4.5%.

CORRELATION AND REGRESSION:

Here we have tried to test the hypothesis H3. The Pearson correlation test is employed in order to know the relation between or among the variables. In this study, correlation is used to test the relation between parameters (X1: Family income, X2: Family type and X3: Number of children) based on the dependent variable (Y: Children influence).

The outcome of the test ranges between -1 to 1. From table 6, out of 3 independent variables, X1 has highest relation with Y and significant at minimum 5% level. Hence linear regression has to be tested. Remaining two variables are showing neither relation nor significance. Hence other regression methods have to be estimated.

Table 6: Correlation Score

	Family income	Family type	Number of children
Pearson Correlation	.155	.045	.031
Sig. (1-tailed)	.015	.267	.333
N	195	195	195

Table 7: Model Summary and Parameter Estimates

		Model summary					Parameter estimates		
	Equation	R square	F	df1	df2	Sig.	Constant	b1	b2
Family Income	Linear	.024	4.777	1	193	.030	90.496	2.439	
	Quadratic	.142	15.938	2	192	.000	128.848	-32.495	6.418
Family Type	Linear	.002	.390	1	193	.533	93.756	2.799	
	Quadratic	.002	.390	1	193	.533	95.622	.000	.933
Number of children	Linear	.001	.187	1	193	.666	98.068	.896	
	Quadratic	.	.	.	.	.	.000	.000	.000

Regression analysis was used to find the effect of independent variables on the dependent variable. The results of the analysis are shown in the model summary table 7. For family income, it is seen from the table that the R square (goodness to fit) is 14.2 %. The R square of the quadratic relation (14.2%) is better than linear relation (2.4%) and hence the quadratic relation exists between family income and the dependent variable. For remaining two variables (X2: Family Type and X3: Number of children), neither showing any relations (quadratic relation and linear relation) nor significance.

Hence dependent variable Y can be expressed in terms of X1: Family income as

$$Y = a\,(128.848) + b_1\,(-32.495)_* X_1 + b_2\,(6.418)_* X1^2 \qquad (1)$$

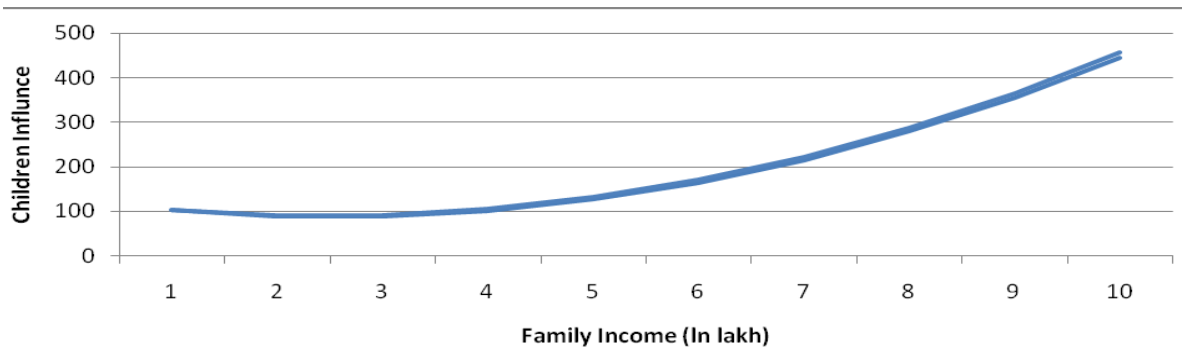


Figure 5: Graph of Y (children influence) in terms of X1 (Family income)

From Fig.4, the influence decreases till the family income 3 lakh and after that influence increases. As family income starts increasing, the influence of children on family decision making increases.

Hence, statistically there is no linear relation between children influence and family income, family type and the number of children, although the quadratic relation exists between children influence and family income.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION:

MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY:

- Table 2 indicates that for products like refrigerator, newspaper and TV, home theatre and detergent/soap, which are used by the entire family, parents take a major decision to buy these products.

- Table 2 indicates that for products like bicycle, ice creams/chocolates/juice and CDs/DVDs, video games and hobby activity, both children and parents believe that children have been influenced more in purchasing these products.
- Table 2 indicates that the combined influence of parent and children is maximum for products like bicycle, ice creams/chocolates/juice and CDs/DVDs.
- For high value products, parents influence more than children in purchase decisions.
- For low value and child centric products, children influence more than parents.
- Children have more influence in the families where both parents work, when compared to families where only one parent works.
- Child's influence depends on family income as quadratic equation.
- Child's influence does not depend on family type and number of children.

SUGGESTIONS:

This study has different implications for marketers, parents and children. For all three of them there is a clear indication that children influence exists, although it depends on various other factors. Based on the findings the suggestions are as follows:

- The bicycle is mostly influenced by children irrespective of different family type or employment status or family income.
- Higher value products like TV and car are also getting children attention across different families irrespective of income and number of working members.
- Marketers should advertise for products during the child's viewing hours and not traditional business hours. To find about the TV viewing habits, a detailed investigation is essential.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY:

- Influence of children on other products and services needs to be studied.
- Western literature has given a broad insight of family influences in children's behaviour. The literature has focused only on father–child or mother-child relationship. The influences of siblings would give a broader picture and deeper understanding of family influences in children purchase decision. Hence, further research required in this area.
- Further research should also be carried out on indirect influence children would have on family purchase decision. This would help to understand the family as a socialisation agent in more detail.
- There seems to be no research on which brands influence child's purchase decision. Further research should be done on children's awareness of the brand and what particular element persuaded them to purchase that particular brand.

CONCLUSION:

The children influence is analysed from various aspects. The low/high-value products as well as directly used by children are taken for the study. For low value products and products directly used by children, it is mostly decided by children themselves. The descending order of influence for products are Bicycle, Ice Creams/Chocolates/Juice, CDs/DVDs, Video games, Hobby activity, Toothpaste, Cereals, Car, Vacation choice and TV.

The children are the centre of attraction in any family irrespective of country and culture. They have been participating in all activities of the family. In the same way, they have been voicing their opinion for purchase of various products. Products directly used by children are mostly decided by children themselves. There are few family products where children influence is observed higher.

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