

A study on Brand Consciousness among Children and Its Impact on Family Buying Behavior

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ABSTRACT

The dawn of new century has seen India emerging as one of the largest markets for commodities and services. Corporate now recognized that its real value lies not in production and distribution, but outside the business itself i.e., in the minds of potential buyers. After realizing the fact, they started giving due consideration for brands and the equity they create in the market and in the consumer minds. Few studies deal with the role of children in the family buying process. The present study has two dimensions to it, viz, a) study the level of brand consciousness among children, and b) Its effects on family buying behaviour.

The researchers also made an attempt to know: what the consumer is actually looking for in branded products, whether Indian consumers value only branded products or give equal value for unbranded quality products. In this study a sample of 150 children and 150 parents are taken and data was collected through convenience sampling technique by a structured questionnaire. This study was conducted in the Thiruvananthapuram and Kochi districts in Kerala. The responses are presented in the form of statistical tables for clear and easy comprehension. The researcher on the basis of findings has given valuable suggestions to the marketer that would help in product planning, product promotion, and product pricing.

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Introduction

In any product strategy, a crucial decision is branding. Branding a product means a long-term investment in building that brand by spending on promotion, advertising and packaging. A brand is a promise of the seller to deliver specific set of benefits or attributes or services to the buyers. Apart from attributes and benefits, it also reflects about values, culture, personality and user. Brands provide consumers with clear-cut choices, less confusion, great security, an emotional dimension and something they can trust. Brand enhances the perceived utility and desirability of a product. Brands have the ability to add or subtract the perceived value of a product. Consumers expect to pay lower prices for unbranded products or for those with low brand equities. On the other hand, they are ready to pay a premium for their favorite or socially valued brands. The dawn of new century has seen India emerging as one of the largest markets for commodities and services. Corporate now recognized that its real value lies not in production and distribution, but outside the business itself i.e., in the minds of potential buyers. After realizing the fact, they started giving due consideration for brands and the equity they create in the market and consumer minds.

Indian children have recently attracted considerable attention from marketers because the market for children's products offers

tremendous potential which pegged at Rs. 5000/- crore. Singh, Raghbir (2006) Academy of Marketing Science Review. According to available industry data, the chocolate and confectionary market is estimated at Rs.1300 crore, the apparel market at Rs.480 crore, and kids footwear at Rs.1000 crore (Ibid, Bhushan (2002). After years of direct or indirect observation of parental behaviour in the marketplace, they gradually acquire relevant consumer skills from their parents. 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. Today's kids are well informed, better than their parents. This is because virtually from birth today's children are exposed to TV commercials, banner ads, billboards, logos, and product promotions. Through this study, the researcher wishes to provide valuable insights to the marketers on the level of brand consciousness among children and its influence on the family buying behavior. Thus, enabling them to devise their marketing strategies based on the findings. Further, the researcher also wishes to study what the consumer is actually looking for in a branded product, whether Indian consumers value only branded products or give equal value for unbranded quality products.

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. Though an impressive body of research exists in this field in the West particularly in U.S, such as: Gwen Bachmann, Deborah Roedder, J. (2003), has studied on the "Meaning of Brand Names to Children: A Developmental Investigation the authors concluded that by the time children reach 12 years of age, they use brand names as an important conceptual cue in consumer judgments. Miguel Romero Mikkelsen, Maria K Norgaard (2006), 'Children's Influence on Family Decision-Making in Food Buying and Consumption'. The field study was carried out with Danish 10-13 years children with a sample of 451, and 20 families. The primary findings of their study are that children participate and gain influence on several decision stages and areas during family food buying, they also suggested that the food marketing should not only be directed at parents but also at children. Pavleen Kaur, Raghbir Singh (2006), studied on the "Role of children in family purchase decision making in India and the West: A Review" has stated that certain products are simply children's products for which they purchase a product themselves or select the product before it is purchased by the parents, for other products, parents' buying patterns are affected by prior knowledge of the tastes and preferences of their children. They concluded that 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. In order to bridge this gap in this important area of marketing the present study was undertaken.

Significance of the study

"Kids today are customers, buyers, spenders, shoppers, consumers"(The National Institute of Public Health, Denmark)- this quotation illustrates that children have come to constitute a very important as a primary market, and influencing market, and a future market. 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. Nevertheless, increasing participation of women in the workforce has prompted a shift in this role as children are increasingly the "buyers" or "influencer" for the entire family. 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.

Objective of the study

The objectives of this study are:

- To study the level of brand consciousness among children as influencer or buyers in the family buying decisions ;
- To analyses the brand impact on children in the family buying behavior; and
- To examine whether unbranded products provide same satisfaction as branded products and customers' preference for unbranded products.

Scope & Limitations of the study

The universe being large, the study was restricted to children residing in Thiruvananthapuram and Kochi.

- The sample size in only 150 children, so the sample may not be truly representative of the population.
- The questionnaires were to be filled independently by the children; only children from eight years upwards were included in the study. This is because, they need to read, comprehend and answer the questions.
- The maximum age limit considered is 16 years; otherwise the scope of the study would become extremely large.
- The above limitations serve as impediments for 100% accuracy in analysis.

Research Methodology

The data has been collected from primary and secondary sources.

Primary data was collected using two sets of questionnaires, one administered to study the level of brand consciousness, and the second administered to the parent to study the impact on the family behavior. In order to have adequate representation of children of all ages and gender.

Secondary data was collected from previous Dissertations/ Research Papers/Marketing Journals/ Text & Websites.

Sampling size and Technique

- (i) **Universe:** Children in the age group of 5 years to 16 years and parents of the children
- (ii) **Sampling unit:** Children and parents
- (iii) **Sample Size:** 150 children and their parents.
- (iv) **Sampling Design:** Convenience sampling method without any stratification to obtain a uniform size of responds each age/sex category.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

As shown in the table-1, the respondents were in the age of 8-16 years. Most of the children were 14 years (20%)old followed by 11 and 13 years olds (16%,14%), 12 years old 15 year olds (12%,10%) and the least were 8 year olds(2%).

**Table- 1:
Distributions of Children & their Age**

Age	Frequency	Percent
5-8	03	02
9-12	69	46
13-16	78	52
Total	150	100

Source: Questionnaire data

**Table- 2:
Gender distributions of Children**

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	81	54
Female	69	46
Total	150	100

Source: Questionnaire data

This study reveals that the gender-wise distribution. Out of the total children, male respondents were 81 (54%) and the respondents were 69(46%).

As stated earlier, the study is two-dimensional. One aspect is to analyze the level of brand consciousness among children and the other aspect is to analyze

the effect of brand consciousness in children on the family buying decision behaviour. In this section some of the responses are presented in the form of statistical tables for clear and easy comprehension.

Analysis based on 'Child as respondent'

Brand Consciousness: To understand if the child was aware of brands he/she was asked to name a few brands.

**Table-3:
Indicates presence of absence of
brand awareness among respondents**

Awareness	Frequency	Percent
Aware of brands	135	90
Not aware of brands	03	02
No response	12	08
Total	150	100

Source: Questionnaire data

The table shows 90 % of children are aware of brands, only 10% are not aware of brands. It is clear from the above table that there is a very high degree of brand awareness among children.

Independence of purchase decision: Series of Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) and durable

item consumed/used by children were listed and the child asked to name his/her favorite brand against each. Eg-chocolates, clothes, chips, shoes, bicycle; beverages/health drinks biscuits, soft drinks, pens, watches, bags... other items.

Children were asked whether they had the freedom to decide and buy of their own choice the above items.

Table-4:
Childs independence in making purchase decision

Child decides		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Yes	60	40
	No	12	08
	Not for all	78	52
	Total	150	100

Source: Questionnaire data

The table shows that children do not enjoy independence in decision making for all the items listed as most of them 52% have opted 'not for all', But sizeable respondents 40% have said 'yes' that they decide independently.

Cross Tabulation

Table- 5: Cross tabulation allow child to decide?* child decides to buy?

Child to buy decides		Yes	No	Not for all	Total
Allow child to decide	Yes	42	01	20	63
	No	01	-	02	03
	Not for all	15	07	62	84
	Total	58	8	84	150

Source: Questionnaire data

According to the cross tabulation presents the results from two dimensions: (i) Child decides to buy- there are 66.67 percent of respondents have concurred with the option 'yes' they decides to buy', whereas 31.75 percent of them were opined that not for all, and only 1.59 percent of respondents have concurred with the option 'no'. (ii) Child allowed deciding- the same percent (66.67) agreed that their children were allowed to decide the decision factor. There are 72.41 percent of parent-respondents opined that 'yes' i.e., their children's allowed to decide whereas 25.86 percent 'not for all' and very less number of respondents (5.33%) not at all allowing the child as deciders. It is concluded that for most of the FMCG items such as chocolates, chips, soft drinks, etc, the child is allowed to decide independently, although not for the durable goods like watches, clothes, bags, etc that are relatively more expensive. The table substantiates the earlier interpretation that 'children do not enjoy independence in decision making for all the items listed.

Parents acceptance of child's decision

Parents do not agree with all that the child buys (58%), but approve most of them (36%). A very negligible percent (06%) do not approve of their child's choice in decision making process of family buying pattern which is shown in the following table

Table-6: Parents' agreement with child's decision

Parents agree		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Yes	54	36
	No	09	06
	Not for all	87	58
	Total	150	100

Source: Questionnaire data

Brand gives satisfaction

Most of the children respondents (75%) said that selecting a particular brand gives them a sense of satisfaction. Whereas 23% of respondents were able to say anything (Can't say). It is very clear that brand awareness and satisfactory level is also high in case of if they buy such branded products.

Table-7: Selecting a particular brand gives a sense of satisfaction

Brand gives satisfaction		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Yes	125	75
	No	03	02
	Can't say	22	23
	Total	150	100

Source: Questionnaire data

Reason for preferring a branded item

Table-8: Reason for preferring a branded item

Preference	Frequency	Percent
Prestige	09	06
Fashion	15	10
Brand name	18	12
Quality	84	56
It attracts you	21	14
Others	03	02
Total	150	100

Source: Questionnaire data

The most important reason that respondents prefer buying branded products is for quality (56%). About 14% prefer the brand because it attracts them, about 12% brand name and 10% prefer because of fashion.

Table-9: Buying decision parameters

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Popularity	33	22
Price	06	04
Quality	51	34
Durability	06	04
Past experience	09	06
All of these	45	30
Total	150	100

Source: Questionnaire data

All variables listed in the table help in choosing a brand constituting 30% of respondents; however, 'quality' is the most important individual factor 34% that helps in choosing a brand. It is followed by popularity of the brand 22%. Price is least important factor according to the respondents.

Unbranded products vs. branded products

Children were asked to respond to the question about what they feel about an unbranded

products, is unbranded also sometimes give them the same satisfaction as a branded products?

Table-10 : Respondents' perception of unbranded products

Gives same satisfaction	Frequency	Percent
Yes	102	68
No	42	28
No response	06	04
Total	150	100

Source: Questionnaire data

68% have expressed that unbranded products provide same satisfaction (if quality is good) as that of branded products. 28% indicated that they do not qualify the norms of branded products.

Analysis based on parents as respondent Parents consider children's opinion

According to the table 66% of the parents consider their child's opinion sometimes while purchasing durable goods mentioned in the table. About 16% always take into consideration their children's opinion while making such purchases. An equal percentage of parents respondents (16%) have opined that they never consider their children's view.

Table-11:
Parents consider children's opinion

Consider children's opinion	Frequency	Percent
Always	24	16
Sometimes	99	66
Never	24	16
No response	03	02
Total	150	100

Source: Questionnaire data

Value of children's suggestion to parents

Table-12: Extent parents value children's suggestions

How far Valuable	Frequency	Percent
High level	18	12
Moderate level	120	80
Not at all	12	08
Total	150	100

Source: Questionnaire data

According to the table 80% parents have expressed that children's suggestions are valuable to them at a moderate level while making purchases for the family. 12% parents said that

their children suggestions are highly valuable to them while purchasing goods. A very negligible number of respondents 08% said their children's suggestion is not at all valuable to them.

Use of brand awareness among children to parents

It is evident from the table given above that brand awareness amongst children is helpful to parents to some extent, as about 76% of respondents have opted for it. 18% of respondents said it is highly helpful. While only 06% of respondents feel it doesn't help at all.

Table-13: Extent brand awareness among children

Level	Frequency	Percent
High level	27	18
To some extent	114	76
Not at all	09	06
Total	150	100

Source: Questionnaire data

Research Findings

Child as Respondent

- The sample size is 150 which 135 respondents (90%) are aware of brands. It is clear that

there is a very high degree of brand awareness among children. To be specific even children as young as 8 year olds had given names of at least 3 well-known brands.

- Children do not enjoy independence in decision making for all the items listed in the questionnaire as most of them (52%) have ticked 'not for all' but sizeable respondents(40%) have said 'yes' that they decide independently.
- Good quality is the foremost reason for buying a branded item (45%) followed by reliability (25%). About 30% of respondents feel that all the aspects are important to them.
- 81% respondents said they don't mind paying for a branded product as they get value for money. 68% of respondents have expressed that unbranded products provide same satisfaction as that of branded products. 28% indicated that they do not qualify the norms of the branded products.
- 80% of the parents have expressed that children suggestions are valuable to them at a moderate level while making purchases for the family. 12% parents said that their children's suggestions are valuable to them to make the purchases. There are very negligible number of respondents (8%) said that their children's suggestion is not at all valuable to them.
- Brand awareness among children is helpful to parents to some extent as about 76% of respondents have opted for it. 18% of respondents have said that it is highly helpful, while only 6% of the respondents feel it does not help at all.

Parent as Respondent

- 59% of parents have said that their children insist for branded items at some point of time. 29% of respondents said "yes! They insist," and 12% of respondents said "no" they do not insist on branded items.
- 66% of the parents consider their children's opinion sometimes while making such purchases and equal percentage (16%) of parents have said that they never consider their children's opinion.
- Successful brand building among children can carry over into adulthood. It ensures brand

Suggestions

- Companies need to allocate huge budgets for advertising, promotion and publicity in order to build a brand image in the minds of consumers. Studies show that children begin to recognize the product brands at an early age, hence even if the child does not have use for the product immediately, the marketing must begin in the childhood so as to build the brand image.

loyalty. A child's insistence for branded products is likely to have more effect on the parent than advertising. The study reveals that the parents prefer branded products because a child insists for that. Brand awareness among children is helpful for parents to a large extent. They consider their opinion while making purchase decision of durable goods for the family.

- Girls and boys have different motivating factors while buying branded items. This necessitates that the marketer has to reach accordingly to the different segments. Separate advertising campaign to be initiated for boys and girls.
- Customers associate branded product with "good quality." To successfully promote a brand and to retain the customer loyalty, the marketer must ensure the quality of the product is maintained at high level.
- More than the brand name or company name, consumers primarily seek quality of the products. They are satisfied with an unbranded product if it is of good quality. Marketers of unbranded products must strive to penetrate the market by improving quality of the product and give wide publicity. If local marketers deliver the promise of quality they can compete with top branded products.

6. The promotion strategy adopted by marketers of unbranded products should strive to change the mind set about customers' perception of quality of unbranded products.

Conclusion

A brand aims to segment the market in order to differentiate supply and fulfill the expectations of specific groups of customers. Products cannot speak for themselves; the brand is what gives them meaning and speaks of them. Today, brands are considered to be among the greatest strengths of a company and the brand image is very important. It is what people remember, if they remember at all. Brand image is built with the logo, name and slogan all consistently speaking about the USP of the brand. Strong brands command premium, they do well during economic slowdown and can be extended to new businesses with ease.

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