Parents’ perspective towards Pester power

Kapil Choudhary, Assistant Professor, Department of Computer Sciences, Hindustan Institute Of Management & Computer Studies, India

Garima Tiwari, Assistant Professor, Department of Business Management, Anand Engineering College, India

Abstract
The kids of today’s world are considered as savvier of the environment surrounding them then the children say, 10 years back. The grasping power is phenomenal because of the repeated exposure given to them through various broad casting and electronic mediums. The result is they ask for more. With the increase in number of working couples, the child’s nagging becomes inversely proportional to the time available with parents. Marketers are very much aware of these facts and as consequence they have shifted their marketing campaigns from adults (parents) to children.

This paper tries to give an insight of parent’s retort towards such nagging called as pester power because if children are pesky for their recommendations of purchase, the reason however could be they are very well-versed with the products information, sometimes times better informed than their parents, and they want nothing but the best.

Keywords: Parents, kids, Pester Power, positive effect.

Introduction
Children are a very large market. Spending by children aged 4 to 12 was estimated to be over $24 billion in 1997 – an increase of almost 300 percent from 1991! McNeal's research indicates that the children learn to shop, at least in part, by going shopping. Retailers are developing programs based on these learning patterns.

For most marketers, achieving a high involvement relationship with both parents and the kid is a priority. Parents react hysterically to brands that try to hook their little ones.

They know that kids pay attention to the advertising when they watch TV. A marketer tries to develop a strategy, which targets the kids and influences them totally, so that next time they are out with their parents, they get what they want i.e. what they see in ads. Impulse purchases due to POP promotions also play an important role, too. One advertising company that uses this strategy has found that between 20 and 40 per cent of purchases of food, movies and games wouldn't have occurred unless a child pestered an adult.

Children being vulnerable are easily influenced by ads on television and this activates “pester power”, i.e., where the children stalk their parents to purchase products they want. With the increase in number of working couples, the child’s pester power becomes inversely proportional to the time available with parents. A parent buys the product if it quiets the children temporarily.

Objective of the study
• To study the reasons why parents buy products as per their child’s recommendations.
• To what extent kids can persuade the buying decision of their parents for the products of their direct and indirect use.
• To know the opinion of parents on the marketer’s effort on targeting their children.

Literature review
Four types of parents have been identified through research: 1) "bare necessities" types, with no inclination to buy; 2) "kid's friends"; 3) "indulgers", often working mothers and separated fathers; and 4) "conflicted", who don't want to buy but will. Advertisers know that different buttons work on the different groups however it seems that children nag the first group with the importance of the product and the power of persistence works with the last three groups.

Marketers have always appealed to children to persuade their parents to loosen their purse strings. Putting toys in cereal packs, giving away toys with fast food and using sports heroes to promote anything from breakfast cereal to clothing are all tactics that were used in a less complicated age. However advertising to children and young people is changing as kids become more cynical and also they begin to use a greater variety of media. Nevertheless, when you continually hear the same constant message from a child or young person then that message often becomes the norm, which makes pester power so powerful and difficult to resist.

WHY PESTER POWER IS SUCCESSFUL IN 21ST CENTURY?

Pester power refers to children’s ability to nag parents to purchase food or other items they might not otherwise buy. The reasons which are prevailing the pester power in the kids could be:

1. Marketing to children is all about creating pester power because advertisers know what a powerful force it can be.
2. Parents are having fewer children and thus spending more on each child.
3. Parents are having children later at a time when they are beyond the struggle phase in their career.
4. Young professionals purchase presents for children to compensate for lack of time they are able to spend with them.
5. Children are known to have strong tastes and preferences, and advertising surely has an impact on them.

Marketers intentionally plant the seeds of brand recognition in very young children in the hopes of cementing a lifetime relationship. As adults many of us have fond memories of favorite cookies, candy, and burger restaurants we visited as children. Companies market nostalgic candy brands to adults who long for childhood treats. But the difference between our childhoods and those of children today is the ubiquitous presence of food advertising – TV, internet, social networking, cell phones, school events, and vending machines. Many companies employ “buzz marketing.” They get the coolest kids to wear their clothes or sip their drinks so other kids will elevate the product to trendy and cool.

Fast food and cereal companies have been cultivating brand recognition with children for decades. Cracker Jacks was one of the first companies to capitalize on children’s love of collecting things by hiding a toy at the bottom of each box. Restaurant chains often pack movie or cartoon characters in kid’s meals setting up parents for return visits to accumulate the entire collection.

Ad agencies are eyeing kids as young as 3 years old as potential customers of the future. Young children cannot distinguish between commercials and regular programming. It isn’t until about age 8 that a child understands advertisements are separate from programs and that they may not always be truthful. When it comes to food, few commercials, less than 5%, are for wholesome unprocessed foods like apples, cherries or milk. The vast majority of ads are for restaurants, candy, soda and presweetened cereals. Children see these ads and when they go with their parents to the supermarket or mall, pester power kicks into overdrive.

Parents are often unaware of the tremendous influence all this ad exposure has on forming children’s opinions and brand recognition. Sometimes we think it is cute when a toddler recognizes a logo or food product. But, this recognition comes with a price, opinions are being formed and desires channeled which parents may find hard to change.

**Research methodology**

To attain the identified objectives of this research work, questionnaire and interview methods were used to generate data from parents falling in the family life cycle stage – Full nest I and Full nest II. They were contacted to find the effect of advertising on them and targeting children for the purpose of marketing. The primary and secondary research designs have been adopted. An effort was also made to find the influence of children in purchase decision of products for their direct or indirect use. Opinion of parents on the marketer’s effort on targeting children was also studied.

The universe was selected from Agra city, sample size was 100 couples in full nest I &II – family life cycle stage. The questionnaire was filled by parents, found shopping in both organized and unorganized markets.

**Findings**

Findings are based upon the response towards the questionnaire and interview focused on the parents falling in the family life cycle stage – Full nest I and Full nest II. When asked from parents how frequently your child watches television, (80%) parents responded that whenever their children are free, they prefer watching television. Option1: Whenever free (80%), Option2: 2-3 times / week (17%), Option3: 4-5 times / week (3%), Option4: Once/week (0%), Option5: Every time (0%).

For how many hours the child watches television, for maximum two hours (45%), children are allowed to watch the TV.

Option1: One hour (40%), Option2: Two hours (45%), Option3: Three hours (13%) Option4: Four hours (2%), Option5: More than Four hours (0%).

As expected, children’s first choice is watching cartoons (55%), also sports (35%) and daily soaps (10%) are the parts of their likelihood, when asked, what does your child watches the most on television.

Option1: News (0%), Option2: Sports (35%), Option3: Cartoon (55%), Option4: Daily soaps (10%), Option5: Any other (0%).

To our surprise, a huge percentage of children (75%) were found, taking good interest in watching advertisements, when asked that does your child notice ads while watching his or her favorite show.

Option1: Very much interested (75%), Option2: Interested (20%), Option3: Neither interested nor disinterested (2%), Option4: Little bit interested (3%), Option5: Not at all interested (0%).

The pull strategies (sales promotion) adopted by the firms are the main focus of children in a particular advertisement, that attracts them the most while watching a particular TV ad.

Option 1: Product Attributes (5%), Option2: Brand endorser (25%), Option3: Presentation of advertisement (15%), Option4: Claim of advertisement (15%), Option5: Sales promotion strategies adopted by the firm (40%).

The parents admitted the fact that children behave stubborn every time (45%) they are taken along for shopping.

Option1: Most of the times (30%), Option2: Sometimes (20%), Option3: Rarely (5%), Option4: Never (0%), Option5: Every time (43%)

Is TV, the reason for such nagging behavior of your child, 56% parents said YES they identify TV ads to be the reason for such stubborn nagging behavior.

Option1: Most of the times (35%), Option2: Sometimes (7%), Option3: Rarely (2%), Option4: Never (0%), Option5: Every time (56%)

When asked that do you take your child for shopping 60% parents responded most of the times.

Option1: Most of the times (60%), Option2: Sometimes (13%),
The prominent reason why parents take children for shopping is that they are more aware than parents about frauds (42%); they carry better knowledge about the products (30%).

Also there is no one to take care of the children (20%) is one of the selected reasons, as mother father both are working.

Option1: Child carries better knowledge regarding a product (30%)
Option2: Child is more aware about the frauds in the market (42%)
Option3: There is nobody to take care of him while I am away (20%)
Option4: Just for an outing I take him along (8%)
Option5: Any other reason (0%)

Toys and games (40%) come first then the food items (30%) in the shopping list of children. Parents answered this when asked about the preferred list of products of children for which they nag.

Option1: Food items (30%), Option2: Toys and games (40%), Option3: Clothes (5%), Option4: Electronic items (20%), Option5: Any other (5%).

When tried to understand the level of acquaintance provided by parents towards their children recommendations; parents sometimes (40%) value their child’s suggestions while purchasing the product. However there are 35% of parents in the selected universe who value their children’s suggestion every time.

Option1: Most of the times (35%), Option2: Sometimes (40%), Option3: Rarely (25%), Option4: Never (0%), Option5: Every time (0%).

When asked to indicate the reason for parent’s valuing their children suggestion while making the purchase decision are they fed-up of the child nagging (35%). Also the child carries better knowledge about the brands available (30%).

Option1: Child carries better knowledge about the product (15%)
Option2: Child knows more about the brand available (30%)
Option3: Fed up of their child nagging for a particular product (35%)
Option4: They don’t want to disappoint their child by not valuing his decision (20%) Option5: Any other reason (0%)

Mostly (42%) parents get convinced as per their child’s recommendation as they carry better exposure of the offerings then the parents.

Option1: Most of the times (42%), Option2: Sometimes (30%), Option3: Rarely (20%), Option4: Never (8%), Option5: Every time (0%)

For the question asked to the parents that, Have you ever purchased a product as per yours child recommendations, parents answered that they not only listen to their child recommendation to purchase but also purchase products accordingly most of the times (40%).

Option1: Most of the times (40%), Option2: Sometimes (30%), Option3: Rarely (10%), Option4: Never (0%), Option5: Every time (20%)

Maximum recommendations of children are accepted for food and beverages (60%) then for FMCG products (15%) gadgets like laptops, I-pods etc (14%) and consumer durables like home appliances (10%) when asked, normally in the purchase of which consumer non durable product; do you value your child’s recommendation?

Option1: Food & Beverages (60%), Option2: Consumer durables (10%), Option3: FMCG products (15%), Option4: Gadgets (14%), Option5: Personal care (1%)

For the question asked, what is the normal expenditure level that your child insists on a weekly basis, the parent’s response was Rupees 400-500 is the maximum (40%) insisted expenditure level recommended by children to get their nagging fulfilled. A remarkable 30% insists for more than rupees 500 expense was registered.

Option1: 100-200 (5%), Option2: 200-300 (10%), Option3: 300-400 (15%), Option4: 400-500 (40%), Option5: 500 and above (30%)

Conclusion
As a conclusion of the study we come across these points which collecting information from the parents:
Parents are dual earning now and could not manage enough time for their kids every day. To pacify this lacuna of time, they take their children along with where ever they go after their job hours. These places a several times lends up at a shopping place. However besides this, the study reveals that parents accompany their kids for shopping because of their extended exposure towards the marketer’s offerings, which many-a-times helps them select a suitable product (attribute-wise and price-wise) in lesser time for the family, which is a recommendation of their kids.

Mostly, parents get perused by their kid’s suggestions when the product is not very costly and generally of the daily usage irrespective of fact that the goods purchased are of their direct or indirect use. The recommendations made are purely based on the best deals, as in the maximum the pull (strategy) by the marketer the maximum the purchase, which is inversely proportional to brand loyalty- also a characteristic of pestering depicted by children and observed by parents.

However, parents agree that children nag a lot while making a purchase decision, and behave abruptly if the purchase decision is against their recommendation, however they agree that the reason for such pestering is the varied exposure of offerings through various sources facilitated by marketer through an effective promotion mix, which thereby allows the kids to get informed well, can make a comparative analysis of products and can choose nothing but the best. Now this facilitates the parents to buy a finest
products based on the updated and reliable information and provided by their own kids which is the positive effect of pester power, however cannot be ignored.

References


Consumer behavior by Michael R Solomon & Gary Bamossy, Chapter 3: Shopping, buying, evaluating, Page no. 59-86.

Simplicity parenting by Kim John Payne & Lisa M. Rose

www.media-awareness.ca/english/parents/marketers_target_kids.cfm

www.emeraldinsight.com/journals.htm?articleid=1648600

www.guardian.co.uk/.../pester-power-parents-spend-children-Christmas-presents

www.mendeley.com/research/wordofmouth-marketing-beyond-pester-power:

www.esomar.org/.../research_papers/In-Depth-Interviews_1011_Is-pester-power-dead.php

www.scribd.com/doc/36632325/Pester-Power-Research-Paper

www.ask.com/pester-power-and-kids


Times of India:
http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-01-6/mumbai/30597511_1_brands-dettol-suri-cruise

Hindustan Times:
http://www.hindustantimes.com/StoryPage/Print/768693.aspx

