

Marketer's Miracle Tool: Pester Power

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Children are enjoying a bigger voice in decision to purchase many products in today's era. Marketers, by looking at this trend, are targeting children even harder in influencing the purchase of their products. This pestering behaviour of children is an area of focus to many people across the world.

In this paper, the researchers have tried to closely examine this sensitive issue of rising consumerism in children. Commencing with the study of available literature, the researchers studied some categories of products where pester power is more influencing and identified various techniques used by children to nag to their parents. The study further dwells upon the sources of information to the children and captured insights about the ethical issues surrounding the phenomenon. Various hypotheses are developed and effects of various factors like gender, age group, history of parent-child purchase relationship, sibling's influence etc. on pester power of children are studied using some descriptive statistics and inferential statistical tests like Chi square, t-test, ANOVA, Mann Whitney U test etc.

The research paper holds its importance to the marketers, who are going through this route quite often to sell their products; to the policy makers who bear the responsibility to ethically regulate the use of certain mechanism to protect interests of the parents; to other researchers, who would like to go in depth of the issue and finally, to the parents, who may like to study the behavior of children and various factors that may affect their children's pestering behavior.

Keywords: Pester, Children buying behavior, Nagging of children.

Introduction

What is Pester Power?

The power children have, of influencing their parents, to buy items they want is referred to as Pester Power. Sheth G. et. al. (2008) define pester power as "the nagging ability of children to purchase the product they desire due to some reason." It is also described as the technique of selling to adults (who have the money) by appealing to children (who do not) and relying on them to pester their parents into buying the item for them.

It's a common scenario all over the world where children see something on some media or in the hands of their peers and they also want to have the same

thing regardless of its price or parent's income or sometimes even regardless of its utilization to them.

Reasons for Growing Pester Power

Rise in so called "Six-pocket syndrome", whereby a child is pampered by nearly six adults, namely mother-father, grandmother-grandfather and uncle-aunt. As today's demographic patterns show, parents are preferring less children and thus the only child to this couple receives all the love and care in extreme which make a child reluctant to listen "no" in return of a demand.

Also, children's media habit has been changed very

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significantly where Television and recently internet have occupied their most of free time. Viewing the television has even replaced dinner table conversation when parents used to inculcate many good habits and healthy thoughts in children. Children have become so much techno-savvy that they know almost everything about the internet and their surfing habits increase their exposure to many such sites and items worldwide which they can demand to their parents.

Shifting the pattern of families is also one of the major reasons for the growth of pestering power. Nuclear families and working parents indicate that children get little time to spend with their parents. Driven by guilt, parents shower upon children many expensive gifts to compensate for their lack of time to spend with them. Also, increasingly cash rich parents give in to the demands of their children to dodge time-consuming process of fending off demands.

Pester Power in India

It's an era of rise in consumerism, thanks to speed of information flow all over the world and India is also witnessing the same pattern in increasing power of consumers. Many powerful groups emerged in recent period, children are one of the most influencing power. Among all the contributing factors in growth of pester power, the most significant ones seems to be penetration of TV as a major media and economically upward shift of the family. This has resulted in many channels being bombarded with products from Parle, Nestle, Britannia, Kellogg's, ITC, Hotwheels.com and even unusual ones like Actilife, LG and Expert burtan bar whose primary target is not children. Soni and Upadhyaya (2007) concluded that the top 5 products for which the kids pester their parents - Fast Food Restaurants, Own clothing, Chips Chocolates and games and toys. Also, there are different tactics used by children to nag their parents. Researchers have classified these tactics into 8 categories :

1. Pressure (using demands, threats, and persistent reminders to influence).
2. Upward appeal (saying that the request is approved or supported by an older of the family, teacher or even a family friend).
3. Exchange (offering an exchange of favors with a target).
4. Coalition (seeking the aid of others to persuade a target).
5. Ingratiation (seeking to get a target in a good mood or to think favorably before asking the target to do something).
6. Rational persuasion (using logical arguments and factual evidence to persuade a target that a request will result in something beneficial).
7. Inspirational appeal (arousing a target's enthusiasm by appealing to values, ideals, and aspirations).
8. Consultation (seeking a target's participation in planning and evaluation of purchase).

According to ASSOCHAM press release (Nov. 26, 2011), Kids wear industry is going to be worth Rs. 80,000 crores by 2015. According to this report, the industry is growing at CAGR of as high as 20% and is currently Rs. 38, 000 crore. Soni and Upadhyaya (2007) noted that girls spend heavily on clothes and shoes (58 percent), hair accessories (12 percent) and makeup (22 percent). As against this, boys spend heavily on Video games, Games and toys and clothing.

Many well known designers like Ritu Kumar, Gauri and Nainika, Gaurav Gupta, Malini Ramanuj etc. have also forayed into this sector sighting the enormous growth potential and the impact this can have on the choices of the future generations.

However, it's not always that this phenomenon has been taken in positive light. Some people even accuse this marketer's intention to target children to sell their product as highly unethical means of marketing.

Children lack proper consumer decision making skills and are not prepared to make rational and wise purchases. This changing situation can have very intense and serious consequences on the nutritional habits and health of the future generations.

Regulation in India

Sweden, Ireland, Greece, Italy, Denmark and Belgium all currently impose restrictions, and these have also been proposed in most other EU countries and in the USA. Self regulatory body like ASCI is operating in India which defines the regulations and standards for advertising in India. One of the objectives of ASCI, as described under Chapter III is "To safeguard against the indiscriminate use of Advertising in situations or of the promotion of products which are regarded as hazardous or harmful to society or to individuals, particularly minors, to a degree or of a type which is unacceptable to society at large."

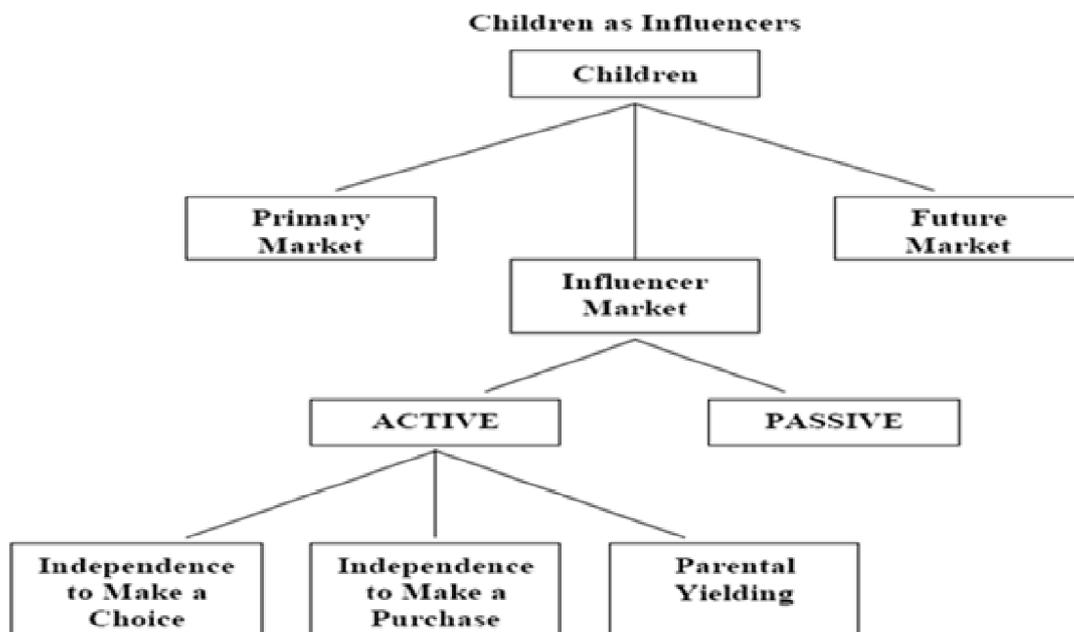
Literature Review

There are many studies done on the subject worldwide till now which demonstrated that how pester power

has emerged as a major force in the new era.

In her study, Datta D. (2010) marked that "the biggest change within Great Indian Family is not women's liberation and all that. It's the way parents treat children- "like an equal", "like a friend". 'No' is no longer a household word." 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 citing that a decision in any household is influenced by other decisions that were taken before or are to be taken later.

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). Children, however have expressive decisions on features such as color, model, brand, shape and time of purchase (Belch et al., 1985; Darley and Lim, 1986).



(Source : Kaur and Singh, 2006)

Fig. 1 Influence of Children

A study conducted by Kaur and Singh (2006) explained that there are three kind of market over which children can exert their influence, namely; the primary market, for which they are the main users; the influencers, where children have influence over the purchase and lastly the future market, where children are going to constitute the future customers for the business firms. Their "Passive Dictation" of choice is prevalent for a wide variety of daily consumed product items as well as products for household consumption. Sheth et. al. (2008) studied the potential effect of pester power of children as consumers. They conducted a study to understand the influence of pester power towards purchasing cars in the households of urban Mumbai.

A study by Kaur P. and Singh R. (2006) concluded that the 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.

There are many information sources for children. Among all that, the major one that has risen is advertisements. 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). Singh (1992) studied the role played by family members while purchasing a television across five occupational categories: teachers, doctors, business people, lawyers, and engineers. Children of engineers and doctors were found to have remarkable influence in the purchase decisions. Robert Mayer (1994) has observed that it is quite evident that children not only attempt to influence their parents to make purchases of products of special interest to them, but also products of remote interest (e.g. laundry detergents) for which they see advertisements on television.

Swain and Sahu (2007) observed that "The wireless Internet is their central nervous system, and simply put, they just don't need much else." Soni and Upadhyaya (2007) discussed this sensitive issue of rising consumerism owing to TV programming where they concluded that several ads could be detrimental to children because either they make children act in certain questionable ways or they inculcate not-so-good values. The authors in the same paper also highlight the issue of 'product placement in movies and programmes targeted at children which is a covert form of advertising used by the marketers.

Study done by Fan Y. and Li Y. (2010) in China illustrates the effects of interpersonal, environmental and product level influences. The study revolves around some findings like TV advertisements and in-store experiences were the primary sources of information and desire for advertised food products was related to children's level of exposure to the media.

Children adopt varying degrees of many strategies to pester their parents. Soni and Upadhyaya (2007), in their study, observes that kids influence them into buying by adopting a variety of strategies- offering to pay part of the cost (60 percent), doing extra chores (62 percent) as well as more aggressive tactics - keep on asking and asking (70 percent) and 'begging' (70 percent) 50 percent of tweens are reported as using "doing better at school" as leverage to persuade their parents to buy something the parents are reluctant to buy, this emerged as the nagging strategy that parents say works best (30% of parents saying it is effective all or most times). A study done in Israel by Shoham and Dalakas (2006) carried out their research on two products as reference (breakfast cereals and athletic shoes) and concluded that Israeli adults use more of rational tactics than those of emotional appeals. Results also show that rational appeals results in more parental yielding than emotional tactics.

Fan Y. and Li Y. (2010) concluded that children are very vulnerable group and need protection from unfair and deceptive kind of communication from the marketers. In their study, Chaudhari and Marathe (2007), suggested that "a comprehensive approach is needed that involves voluntary actions on the part of industry, regulation policies on the part of government and advocacy strategies to bring a stronger voice and more attention to our imperative to arrest childhood obesity. Wootan (2003) noted that many children lack the cognitive skills and advertisers may exaggerate the claims and may not understand what advertisers are trying to tell them.

Purpose and Scope of the Study

Purpose of this research is to find out children's pestering effect across various categories of products and study effects of various factors like gender, age group, history of parent-child purchase relationship, sibling's influence etc. on pester power. Such researches are not yet carried out in Western part of India. Thus, this paper contributes to check pester power in this region (especially in Gujarat).

Research Methodology

A descriptive research was carried out to find out pestering effects of children. A self administered questionnaire was used as a research instrument to record the responses. A pilot survey was done by taking responses from 25 parents. The analysis of pilot survey

was done to check whether the questionnaire has been able to meet the objectives of the study. The final questionnaire was then developed which is used to obtain responses from 180 parents. Out of this, 24 responses were discarded due to invalid and missing responses. Hence, final 156 responses are subjected to further analysis. Convenience sampling method is used as sampling procedure.

Analysis of the Data

Various hypotheses were assumed to carry out analysis of the data. This set of hypotheses was then checked using number of statistical tests.

Hypothesis I:

H0: There is no significant difference between Gender of children and Items over which they exert influence.

H1: There is significant difference between Gender of children and Items over which they exert influence.

To analyze this hypothesis of checking difference of means between independent data, t-test is proposed. Before conducting independent sample t-test, the underlying assumption of normality of data is examined. One sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test is carried out to check the normality of the data. The p values in table 1 are found to be less than the level of significance ($\alpha=0.05$), which proves that the data are not normal.

Table 1: One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test ($\alpha= 0.05$)

	Males		Females	
	Z score	Significance value(p)	Z score	Significance value(p)
Clothes for him/her	2.907	.000	3.073	.000
Mobile/Gazettes for him/her	3.436	.000	1.992	.001

Toys/Games for him/her	3.671	.000	2.198	.000
Chocolates/sweets for him/her	3.553	.000	1.670	.008
Shoes for him/her	2.580	.000	1.962	.001
Storybooks/magazines for him/her	2.057	.000	1.576	.014
Cosmetics for him/her	2.361	.000	2.411	.000
Fruits & vegetables for him/her	1.693	.006	1.696	.006
Waffers & namkeen for him/her	3.888	.000	1.513	.021
Movies with family	2.649	.000	1.841	.002
Eating out with family	2.981	.000	1.518	.020
A family car	1.813	.003	2.455	.000
Vacation trip with family	2.776	.000	1.964	.001

Hence, to prove this difference of means in such non-normal data, non parametric Mann Whitney U test is carried out. Z scores and p values of the test are shown in table 2. Items where p values are found to be less than the degree of significance ($\alpha=0.05$), H0 is rejected and alternative hypothesis is selected which assumes that there is significant difference between Gender of children and Items over which they exert influence.

H0 in some items, like chocolates and sweets, wafers and namkeen and movies with family, is not rejected

hence; there is equal influence from both the genders over purchase of these items. Boys and girls tend to exert similar pressure over purchase of confectionaries, sweets and movies.

On the other hand, Clothes for child, Mobiles and Gazettes, Toys and games, Shoes, Storybooks/Magazines, Cosmetics, Fruits and Vegetables, Eating out, Family car and vacation trip are the things over which each gender tends to exert different influences.

Table 2: Mann-Whitney U test ($\alpha=0.05$)

	Z score	Significance value(p)	Statistical inferenc	Implication
Clothes for him/her	-9.166	.000	H0 rejected	Significant difference
Mobile/Gazettes for him/her	-4.841	.000	H0 rejected	Significant difference

Toys/Games for him/her	-7.264	.000	H0 rejected	Significant difference
Chocolates/sweets for him/her	-1.827	.068	H0 not rejected	No significant difference
Shoes for him/her	-5.453	.000	H0 rejected	Significant difference
Storybooks/magazines for him/her	-3.639	.000	H0 rejected	Significant difference
Cosmetics for him/her	-7.654	.000	H0 rejected	Significant difference
Fruits & vegetables for him/her	-2.725	.006	H0 rejected	Significant difference
Waffers & namkeen for him/her	-1.732	.083	H0 not rejected	No significant difference
Movies with family	-1.953	.051	H0 not rejected	No significant difference
Eating out with family	-3.567	.000	H0 rejected	Significant difference
A family car	-5.404	.000	H0 rejected	Significant difference
Vacation trip with family	-6.783	.000	H0 rejected	Significant difference

Mean scores of these items show that boys are having more demands regarding purchase of items like mobiles, electronic gazettes, toys and games, shoes, Storybooks/magazines, vegetables and fruits, eating out, family car and vacation trip with the family than those of the girls. Girls demand more of clothes and cosmetic items for her.

Hypothesis II:

H0: There is no significant difference between Children's influence and Parent-child purchase relationship.

H1: There is significant difference between Children's influence and Parent-child purchase relationship.

K-S test was carried out to check the normality of the data. Assumption of normality was accepted at 0.05 levels of significance. Data was found to be normal.

Table 3: One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test ($\alpha = 0.05$)

Parent child purchase relationship	Z value	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean values
Children make independent decision	2.046	0.083	2.33
Family make consensual decision	1.102	0.107	1.85
Parents make all decisions	1.971	0.18	4.75

Hence, in these normally distributed data, one-way ANOVA can be carried out to find the difference between groups. To carry out ANOVA, data should be

homogeneous within the group. To check homogeneity of the data, Levene statistic is calculated. Results for Levene statistic is shown in table 4.

Table 4: Test of Homogeneity of Variances

Levene Statistic	Sig.
1.573	.196

Assumption of homogeneity of data is fulfilled. Hence, analysis is further carried out to conduct One-way

ANOVA.

Table 5: ANOVA ($\alpha = 0.05$)

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.(p)
Between Groups	230.692	2	115.346	156.317	.000
Within Groups	112.898	153	.738		
Total	343.590	155			

In analysis of variance, p value of the test is found to be less than the degree of significance (α). Hence, null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted. Thus, it can be concluded that there is significant difference between Children's influence and Parent-child purchase relationship. It is also clear from their mean values in table 3 that three categories of relationships considered here widely differ from each other in terms of influence they carry on children's pester power.

Hypothesis III:

H0: There is no significant difference between Number of children and Frequency of purchase of items they demand.

H1: There is significant difference between Number of children and Frequency of purchase of items they demand.

To carry out the analysis of the hypothesis, Chi square test is carried out. Output of the Chi square is shown in the table 6. Values of the tests show that p value is less than the level of significance ($\alpha=0.05$). Thus, null hypothesis is rejected and alternate hypothesis is

considered. It can be thus concluded that there is significant difference between Number of children and Frequency of purchase of items they demand.

Table 6: Chi-Square Tests ($\alpha = 0.05$)

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) (p value)
Pearson Chi-Square	36.990 ^a	4	.000
Likelihood Ratio	34.380	4	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	18.845	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	156.000		

Table 7 shows the cross tabulation summary of the data related to number of children and frequency of purchase of items they demand.

Table 7: Cross tabulation of Number of children and Frequency of purchase

Number of children	Frequency of purchase	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
One	Always	29	42.0	42.0
	some time	28	40.6	82.6
	Never	12	17.4	100.0
	Total	69	100.0	
More than one	Always	11	12.6	12.6
	some time	52	59.8	72.4
	Never	24	27.6	100.0
	Total	87	100.0	

Table 7 also clearly shows that in case of families with only one child, around 42% of the time their requests are fulfilled. Compared to that, only 12.6% of the requests in case of families with more than one child are fulfilled always. 17 % of the time requests made by children are overheard in families with single child while in families with more than one child (nearly 83% of time their demands are fulfilled); around 29% of the requests are gainsaid by the parents and others in the family.

Thus, now days, with change in the demographic patterns in the families, number of children are fewer and hence their influencing power is also more now. This shows that as more families with single children are arising, the pester power is growing in the marketplace.

Hypothesis IV:

H0: There is no significant difference between Age of children and Tactics used by them to influence their

parents children and Tactics used by them to influence their
 H1: There is significant difference between Age of parents

Table 8: Cross tabulation and Chi-square tests ($\alpha = 0.05$)

Tactics employed	Age of children			Total freq.	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) (p)	Statistical inference	Implication
	< 5 yrs	6 to 10 yrs	> 10 yrs				
Pressure/Begging	24	40	5	69	.000	H0 rejected	Significant difference
Upward	18	24	5	47	.000	H0 rejected	Significant difference
Exchange	6	12	12	30	0.894	H0 not rejected	No significant difference
Coalition	6	11	10	27	0.932	H0 not rejected	No significant difference
Ingratiating	0	0	6	6	0.004	H0 rejected	Significant difference
Rational	0	23	21	44	.000	H0 rejected	Significant difference
Inspiration	12	17	11	40	0.112	H0 not rejected	No significant difference
Consultation	0	6	23	29	.000	H0 rejected	Significant difference

Table 8 shows the p values of chi-square tests and cross tabulation of the age and frequencies of tactics used by children. Pressure tactic is most widely used ael by the children followed by Upward, Rational and Inspirational aels. Ingratiating, Coalition and Consultation are the least used tactics. At 0.05 significance, Pressure ael, Upward ael, Ingratiating, Rational and Consultation tactics vary with the age, while Exchange, Coalition and Inspiration do not carry any difference as age advances.

From cross tabulation values, it can be concluded that

children with lower age generally uses Pressure/Begging and Upward aels as the ways to influence the parents while children at higher age adopts Ingratiating, Rational and Consultation aels. This also carries logical argument that small children usually nag in front of their parents or make requests aroved by the older of the family. Children with higher age possess that sense to use rational arguments, make target think favourably before making request and logically plan and evaluate the purchase of the products. The skills and abilities to use such kinds of ael are lacking in children with lower

age category.

Other Findings

Family Member's Vulnerability

Responses were taken to about who is most vulnerable

to the requests by the children. Results of the analysis, as shown in table 9, show that father is most vulnerable, closely followed by the grandparents to the nagging done by the children.

Table 9: Family members most vulnerable to the requests

Family members	Frequency	Percent
Father	65	25.2
Mother	34	13.2
Grandfather	52	20.2
Grandmother	54	20.9
Uncle	41	15.9
Aunt	12	4.7

Sources of information

As seen from table 10, highest numbers of children get all the information from Friends and peers.

Advertisements from the companies are the second sources and family members and internet stand next as the information sources for the children.

Table 10: Sources of information for children

Information sources	Responses	Percent
Ads	76	24.7
Friends/Peers	86	27.9
Teachers	36	11.7
Family members	58	18.8
Retailers	12	3.9
Internet	40	13.0

Perception of Ethicality

Parent's perception towards marketers attempts to target children was measured on the scale of 1 to 5 where 1 represents extreme ethicality. Mean was found

to be 3.94 which shows that parents think these practices as unethical. Thus, marketers need to make all possible attempts to sell their products to children in ethical manner.

Conclusions

From analysis, there appeared many results and findings. The summary of the findings can be as follows:

- Boys and girls tend to exert similar pressure over purchase of confectionaries, sweets and movies. Boys are having more demands regarding purchase of items like mobiles, electronic gazettes, toys and games, shoes, Storybooks/magazines, vegetables and fruits, eating out, family car and vacation trip with the family than those of the girls. Girls demand more of clothes and cosmetic items for her.
- Children with lower age generally uses Pressure/Begging and Upward appeals as the ways to influence the parents while children at higher age adopts Ingratiating, Rational and Consultation appeals.
- Different parent child purchase relationship tend to have different nagging behavior from the children. In case of parents who allow their children to make independent decisions, children exert more influence while children nag less if parents do not allow children to have a say in the decision-making.
- Families with single child tend to fulfill the wishes of children more frequently than the families with more than one child. As more families with single children are arising, the pester power is also expected to rise in the marketplace.
- Parents find the practices adopted by marketers as unethical ones. Hence, marketers need to scrutinize the actions taken by them in targeting children.
- Father and grandparents are more vulnerable to the requests done by the children
- Friends and peers are most widely used information sources followed by ads, family members and internet.

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