

Mayank Bhatia

*Chimanbhai Patel Institute of Technology, Ahmedabad
mayank.bhatia@live.in*

Vivek Dave

*Department of Management Studies, AIT, Ahmedabad
vivekdave.dave@gmail.com*

Vishal Munshi

*Department of Management Studies, AIT, Ahmedabad
vemunshi8492@gmail.com*

Abstract

In today's era, while purchasing many products, voice of children has emerged as an important factor in buying decisions. They constitute a big consumer market and their role in family's buying decisions, play an important role in small as well as big ticket items. Children adapt various strategies to persuade their parents for purchasing the product they want. Marketers, in response to this information, have come up with marketing communications that targets children which influences the product purchase decisions of their parents. Across the world, the pestering behavior of children have become an interest area of focus amongst the marketers as well as researchers. The study highlights the factors that affect the pestering of children, tactics used by children to influence their parents, and its impact on the purchasing decision of the parents.

Keyword:

Pester Power, Children, Child Pestering, Influencing Tactics, Purchase Behavior

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Introduction

Due to easy availability of the information, consumers worldwide have become more knowledgeable and a new era of consumerism has risen, resulting in increased bargaining power of consumers. This increase in the power of consumers has also been witnessed in India. Emergence of new powerful groups have been reported by the researchers in recent period, with children being one of the most influencing powerful group. Consumer habits of young consumers are shaped due to varied level of influencing tactics and experiences. The most important factors impacting the decision making and behavior of children are found to be family, peers and media. Among various factors that contributed towards the growth of pester power, penetration of television as a major media, and changes in economic wellbeing of the family, are found to be the most significant factors.

India is one country where significant proportion of population is considered very young. Children have a

big influencing power over their parents in their purchasing decisions. In earlier times, a child was being raised in a joint family getting the pampering of parents, grand-parents and other relatives. However, as today's demographic pattern has changed and parents prefer less children, even delayed parenthood. Thus, families having only child provides special attention in terms of love and extreme care which results in child reluctance to listen to "no". Children's media habit has also changed drastically in recent times and they are busy collecting information by watching television and surfing the internet in their free time. Due to increased exposure of children to new technology products/services, their level of awareness about the internet has risen. They are devoting more time in internet surfing providing them with high exposure to the sites selling child products, which results in pestering to their parents for such products. Another reason for the increased power of children is the change in family patterns in recent decades in India. Now nuclear families have grown to a larger extent and both the parents are working, due to which parents have little time to spend with their children, which results in the feeling of guilt in the parents. Due to this guilt, parents compensate by providing gifts which are expensive in nature, to their children.

One of the reason in increased pester power could be the economic well being Indian consumers resulting in satisfying demands of children. This has increased the purchasing power of the children and they have become a prominent member influencing purchasing decision of parents. Marketers have also identified this change in the trend and have come up with marketing and communication strategies which targets the children to influence their parents to purchase their products. This pestering behavior of children have become an area of interest for the marketers as well as researchers worldwide, and they are now spending a big percent of the advertising budget for such products targeted for children.

Literature Review

Power, which the children possess, for influencing their parents, to buy items they want, is referred to as Pester Power(Gunter & Furnham, 1998).Seth, *et al.*(2008)defined pester power as "the nagging ability of children to purchase the product they desire due to some reason." It is also referred as a selling technique in which adults/parents (having decision making and purchasing power) are targeted by appealing to children (who do not have purchasing power) and influencing children towards pestering their parents to purchase the product/service for them.

Soni and Upadhyaya (2007) posited in their research that, “Fast Food Restaurants, Clothes, Chips,Chocolates and Games and Toys” are the top five products for which children try to influence their parents by pestering. Various tactics are used by children to convince (pester) their parents. Yukl and Falbe (1990) have given 8 different influencing tactics used by children to nag their parents:

1. Pressure Tactics (using demands, threats, or intimidation to convince their parents for their request).
2. Upward Appeals (seek to persuade the parents by getting the request approved by an older member of the family).
3. Exchange Tactics (making a promise; explicit or implicit, to receive rewards or benefits).
4. Coalition Tactics (seek others aid to persuade the target to approve the request).
5. Ingratiating Tactics (seeking to get the person in a good mood or to think favorably before asking the person for approving request).
6. Rational Persuasion (using logical arguments and factual evidence to persuade the person).
7. Inspirational Appeals (child making an emotional request or proposal that arouses enthusiasm by appealing to parents' values and ideas).
8. Consultation Tactics (seeking a person's involvement in making a decision).

French and Raven (1959) suggested that pester power of children is equally affecting both mother and father. Chaudhary *et al.* (2012) asserted that children play a vital role in family's purchasing behavior when it comes to snacks and sweets and have strong purchasing power, however children indirectly pesters the parents for high value products/services. They also found that bargaining, persuasion, competition, emotional, aggressive, and playing a trick are a few important tactics used by children to pester their parents, however the use of different strategies is dependent on age, gender and number of siblings of child. It was found that level of pester power increases and changes with age (Gunter and Furnham, 1998; McNeal and Ji, 2003). Hill & Tilley (2002) also asserted in the past that age of children impacts the power of pestering in them. Carey *et al.* (2008) and Godhani *et al.* (2012) found that children smaller in age could readily influence their parents to various tactics of pestering.

McNeal and Ji (1999) found that amongst Chinese Children, many sources of information were utilized to learn about new products but advertising and television were found to be the most important factors. Lawlor and Prothero (2011) also asserted that advertising is one of the factor that affects the pestering of children. Children remain vulnerable to advertising messages; however, they may learn valuable information about the products they are purchasing, while their parents negotiate or discuss with the marketer.

Khandai and Agrawal (2012) found that children's brand preference and purchase behavior is affected by television commercials which validated for the product categories such as health drinks, fast food and sport shoes. However, they found that brand preference of children was not significantly affected by peer pressure from reference groups. Ambler (2007) asserted that point of sale displays also play an important role on nagging and pestering by children, when children accompany parents during shopping. Television is found to be the most effective medium of reaching to kids and internet is found to be the second most important medium which is gaining importance amongst children at a phenomenal rate (Khatri, 2011). It was also found that packaging and promotional events also play vital role in pestering of children.

Marshall *et al.* (2007) found that children often feel hungry after watching food advertisements leading to pestering their parents for that food item. It was also found that advertisements of food items made the children feel hungry and they start asking their parents to buy that food items shown in the advertisement. Canadian Studies on advertising towards children revealed that television advertising for food items plays a vital role on children pestering to their parents (Elliott, 2012). It was also revealed that food advertising is one of the most influential factor causing rise in the pester power of children and resulting in purchase of less healthy products by parents (McDermott *et al.*, 2006).

Caruana and Vassallo (2003) found that kids of parents with concept orientation, influences the purchase decisions as compared to those kids of parents having social orientation. They asserted that in case of concept orientated parents, children were encouraged to think rationally and to develop own skills and competence as consumers, which may result in higher yielding to demands by children. Family is found to be one of the most important influential factor affecting children decision regarding food, health care products and household effects (Wimalasiri, 2004). At the same time, peers and media also found to be vital in influencing the purchase behavior of children. It was found that children initiate the purchase in the either of the two forms; "demand" or "request". Wimalasiri (2004) concluded that the parents agree upon the requests made by their children rather than demand created by them. However, Ogba and Johnson (2010) found that packaging of the product does affect the preferences of the children. It was also revealed that parents claim that they do not fall prey to the pestering of children for unhealthy food which was in contradiction to the results of the previous studies.

Dotson and Hyatt (2005) found five major factors (which were termed as consumer socialization influence factors), viz., irrational social influence, television and advertising, familial influence, shopping importance

and brand importance that have the impact on children pestering to their parents. They asserted that various consumer socialization factors have varied relative impact and it depends on the gender, age of children and amount of money available for spending, amount of time available to children to watch television, and how children spend time after school.

It was found that while buying luxury brands of infant apparel, parents check for quality and design associated with these brands (Prendergast and Wong, 2003). Child pestering was found to be the one of the moderating factor towards effectiveness of policies as parents were strongly affected by the pestering while making unhealthier choices (Papoutsiet *al.*, 2015)

Jain and Sharma (2016) found in the research that children influence the purchase behavior of the parents when it comes to FMCG buying in Indian context. However, parental influence was found to be the most important dominating factor in shaping the behavior of children. Researchers identified that parental influence, television viewing, product packaging, price of the product, peer-pressure, store-ambience, brands and product quality are the factors that influence the nagging of children. Latiet *al.* (2017) found that media and advertising significantly affect the purchase behavior and shape the pester power among children. It was posited that mobile phone was the most sought product among the age group of 7-14 years of children and the children, who watch television more, want more toys seen in the advertisement. Advertisement leads to pester the child for food seen in the advertisement.

Need for the Study

The nagging factor or the Pester Power has now evolved as a prime area of focus for the marketers as well as researchers in India as it provides a strong opportunity to pitch the products to the parents by targeting the children. As it is an indirect approach to pitch the product and due to changing patterns of families and increase in the nagging ability of the children, pester power is one area which no marketer wants to be left unutilized. Many of the companies in India are now coming up with the products targeted for children and are spending a huge portion of their advertising budget on such products. As marketing of products aimed for children requires a different approach to lure the children leading to pester their parents, the factors which influence the pestering of children to their parents are very important to the marketers. Also, not much research with respect to pester power of children has been carried out in India. This study aims to resolve the research question that what factors influence the pestering of children to their parents and its effect on their purchase behavior in Ahmedabad city and its nearby areas.

Research Objectives

1. To investigate the factors leading to the pestering of children to influence parents' purchase behavior.
2. To investigate various sources from which children get information about the products and to examine the effect of these sources on pestering of children.
3. To identify various tactics used by the children to pester their parents.
4. To study how adept the children are at recognizing brands of various products.
5. To investigate the reasons for agreeing the demands of children by their parents.

Hypotheses:

Based on the literature review and the objectives of the study, following hypotheses were generated to be verified with statistical analysis:

H₀₁: Pestering does not significantly differ amongst gender of children.

H₀₂: Pestering does not significantly differ amongst children of various age groups.

H₀₃: Pestering tactics used by children to pester their parents does not significantly differ amongst gender of children.

H₀₃: Pestering tactics used by children to pester their parents does not significantly differ amongst children of various age groups.

H₀₅: Various sources of information does not significantly impact the pestering of children.

H₀₆: Pestering tactics used by children does not significantly affect the purchase behavior of parents.

Methodology and Measurement

The unit of analysis used in this study are the parents of school going children of age in between 5 to 15 years. Questionnaire survey was used in this study to collect responses from the target respondents and descriptive research design is used in this study. Information collected through the survey was further utilized for analysis and to verify the hypotheses. Questionnaire was pre-tested by asking 15 respondents to examine the ambiguous terms, meanings and issues. The respondents were asked to rate the statements/questions on a 5-point scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. As the central value (neutral) of the scale is 3, those means having values above 3 suggests overall agreement with the statement and the mean below the value of 3 reveals disagreement. After the pretest, strata based on gender and age group was formed and total 400 sample elements were selected as per convenience, from these strata to collect the responses.

Analysis and Discussion

Age and Gender Analysis

Table 1: Analysis of Age Group of Children

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
5-8 years	133	33.3	33.3	33.3
9-11 years	136	34.0	34.0	67.3
12-15 years	131	32.7	32.7	100.0
Total	400	100.0	100.0	

It is evident that the distribution of children has been tried to be kept in equal proportion for all age groups under study.

Table 2 below shows the gender analysis of the children under study. It is evident that the distribution of children is kept in equal proportion on the basis of the gender.

Table 2: Gender Analysis of children

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	195	48.8	48.8	48.8
Female	205	51.2	51.2	100.0
Total	400	100.0	100.0	

Children using Pester Power

It was found that majority of the children pester their parents to purchase the products they want. Analysis of data revealed that 67 percent (Table 3) of the people were agreeing about pestering of children with mean agreement score of 3.85 (Table 4)

Table 3: Children use pestering to parents for purchase of products.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	8	2.0	2.0	2.0
Somewhat Disagree	43	10.8	10.8	12.8
Neutral	81	20.2	20.2	33.0
Somewhat Agree	136	34.0	34.0	67.0
Strongly Agree	132	33.0	33.0	100.0
Total	400	100.0	100.0	

Table 4: Children use pestering to parents for purchase of products.

	Frequency	Mean
Children pester when they want something to purchase.	400	3.85

This gives strong implication to the marketers to promote their products to the parents by indirectly targeting the children.

Factors affecting pestering of children

Based on literature review, it was found that the various factors that affect the pestering of children to their parents include television and newspaper advertising (media), increase in internet usage, peers, family, social influence (School), shopping importance and brand preference. Empirical analysis of data revealed that Peers (friends) was found to be the most influential factor affecting the pestering of children with the highest mean score of 3.99, followed by TV Advertisements and Social Influence (schools) as shown in table 5 below. The responses have marketing implications in terms of designing marketing communication campaigns for television to increase the reach to the children.

Table 5: Factors influencing the pestering of children

Factors	Mean	Std. Deviation
Friends (Peers)	3.99	1.060
TV advertisements	3.88	1.039
Social influence (Schools)	3.8	0.965
Family	3.62	0.929
Newspaper advertisement	3.44	1.093
Internet	3.4	1.153

Products for which children pester

Literature review identified that toys, fast food items, snacks and sweets, watching movie, and big-ticket items (only to some extent) are the products for which children do use pestering to make the parents agreeing to their demands. Analysis of the data revealed that mobiles and electronic gadgets are the most nagged products with a mean score of 3.71 each, followed by shoes, movies and fast food items (as shown in table 6 below)

Table 6: Products the children nag for

Products	Mean	Std. Deviation
Mobiles	3.71	0.972
Electronic gazettes	3.71	1.004
Shoes	3.58	0.955
Movies	3.57	1.111
Fast food items	3.48	1.240
Sports instruments	3.45	1.160
Toys and games	3.42	1.197
Cars	3.41	1.111
Vacation trip for family	3.37	1.037
Story books and magazines	3.28	1.054
Clothes	3.2	1.160
Televisions	3.18	1.029
Refrigerators	3.09	1.048
Furniture	3.08	1.066
Vegetables and fruits	3.04	1.169
Cosmetics	3.03	1.139
Home decorative	2.94	1.137

Sources of Information

Table 7 below shows various sources of information used by children to gather information about the products they want to purchase.

Table 7: Sources of Information

Sources of Information	Mean	Std. Deviation
Friends (Peers)	4.01	.996
TV advertisement	3.90	1.056
Social influence (Schools)	3.81	.951
Family	3.60	.913
Social networking websites	3.48	1.119
Internet	3.40	1.153
Newspaper or magazines advertisements	3.38	1.047

It is evident from the table that Peers, TV Advertisements and Schools are the most important sources from which children gather information for the products they want to purchase. Marketers can design their communication strategy by using high exposure of their products in television advertising and campaigning in the schools to increase the visibility of the product.

Tactics used by children to pester their parents

It is evident from the table 8 given below that using emotional appeal is the most used tactic adapted by children (with a mean score of 4.05), for pestering their parents, followed by Persuading and Bargaining.

Table 8: Tactics used by Children to Pester Their Parents

Tactics	Mean	Std. Deviation
Emotional	4.05	.861
Persuading	3.63	.886
Bargaining	3.54	1.156
Competition	3.49	1.043
Aggressiveness	3.41	1.072
Playing Tricks	3.16	1.087

Brand Recognition

Table 9 as given below, revealed that majority of the parents have shown agreement that children are able to recall the product or brand of their interest.

Table 9: Brand Recognition by Children

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Children are aware of specific brand or product with regard to the level of information	3.83	.974

Reasons for agreeing demand of children

It was found that emotional bonding is one of the most important reason for which parents agree to the demands of their children, followed by fulfillment of the promise made, with mean score of 3.95 and 3.76 respectively (Table 10). The reason for this was found in the earlier researches where researchers have stated that parents are not able to provide due time due to nuclear families or both parents working and hence fulfill the demands of their children.

Table 10: Reasons for Agreeing to Demands of Children

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Emotion bonding	3.95	1.069
Promise made to child/children	3.76	.964
Want to fulfill all demand of child/children	3.75	.977
The level of Information is high in children and do not want to waste time in arguing	3.74	.953
In return of something that parents want to be done(conditions)	3.43	1.180

Results of Hypotheses Testing

With respect to the first hypothesis H_01 , it was found that pestering does not significantly differ amongst gender of children ($t=0.355$, $p>0.05$), which states that null hypothesis is stands accepted. With respect to the second hypothesis H_02 , it was found pestering does not significantly differ amongst children of various age groups ($F=0.131$, $p>0.05$), stating that null hypothesis stands accepted. For the verification of third hypothesis, H_03 , t-test was conducted (as shown in Table 11 below) to examine whether pestering tactics used by children to pester their parents significantly differ amongst gender of children. It was found that pestering tactics used by children to pester their parents does not significantly differ amongst gender of children. However, it was found that girl child uses various strategies more than

boys (evident by comparing the mean scores for the tactics used).

Table 11: t-test for equality of means

<i>Influence Tactics</i>	<i>Mean Scores and Std. Deviation of Gender</i>			<i>t-test for equality of means (gender)</i>		
	<i>1=Male (n=195)</i>	<i>2=Female (n=205)</i>				
	Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Bargaining	1	3.51	1.123	-.629	398	.530
	2	3.58	1.188			
Persuading	1	3.58	.906	-.999	398	.318
	2	3.67	.866			
Competition	1	3.46	1.061	-.675	398	.500
	2	3.53	1.027			
Emotional	1	4.03	.879	-.492	398	.623
	2	4.07	.846			
Aggressiveness	1	3.35	1.137	-1.018	386.835	.309
	2	3.46	1.007			
Playing Tricks	1	3.07	1.113	-1.634	398	.103
	2	3.24	1.057			

While verifying fourth hypothesis H₄, it was found that use of Bargaining, Competition and Emotional tactics significantly differ amongst children of various age groups (as shown in below tables). For all other tactics, no significant difference was found in their usage, on the basis of age groups.

Table 12: ANOVA (Bargaining and Age Groups)

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	6.711	1	6.711	5.073	0.025
Within Groups	526.479	398	1.323		
Total	533.190	399			

Table 13: ANOVA (Persuasion and Age Groups)

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2.815	1	2.815	3.609	0.058
Within Groups	310.425	398	.780		
Total	313.240	399			

Table 14: ANOVA (Competition and Age Groups)

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	4.644	1	4.644	4.305	0.039
Within Groups	429.333	398	1.079		
Total	433.978	399			

Table 15: ANOVA (Emotions and Age Groups)

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.986	1	1.986	2.689	0.010
Within Groups	293.912	398	.738		
Total	295.898	399			

Table 16: ANOVA (Aggressiveness and Age Groups)

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.036	1	.036	.031	0.861
Within Groups	458.724	398	1.153		
Total	458.760	399			

Table 17: ANOVA (Playing Tricks Vs Age Groups)

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.621	1	1.621	1.374	0.242
Within Groups	469.457	398	1.180		
Total	471.077	399			

It was found that various sources of information have significant impact on the pestering of children (H_05), shown in Table 18. The p-value given in below table suggests a strong significant impact.

Table 18 - ANOVA: Various Sources of Information and Pestering

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	212.127	7	30.304	50.299	0.000
Within Groups	236.170	392	.602		
Total	448.298	399			

It is evident from the below table (Table 19) that TV Advertisements ($t=14.912$, $p<0.05$) and Newspaper/Magazine Advertisements ($t=-3.071$, $p<0.05$) have significant impact on pestering of children.

Table 19 : Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.506	.306		4.928	.000
TV Ads	.646	.043	.644	14.912	.000
Schools	.007	.050	.007	.150	.881
Friends	.043	.045	.040	.961	.337
Relatives	-.006	.049	-.005	-.124	.902
News Paper or Magazines Ads	-.130	.042	-.128	-3.071	.002
Internet	.064	.042	.070	1.537	.125
Social Networking websites	-.039	.041	-.041	-.935	.350

With respect to the sixth hypothesis (H₆), the pestering tactics used by the children significantly affect the purchase behavior of the parents (as shown in below Table 20). The p-value given in below table suggests a strong significant impact.

Table 20 : ANOVA Tactics Used and Purchase Behavior

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	42.473	6	7.079	30.892	0.000
Within Groups	90.056	393	.229		
Total	132.530	399			

It is evident from the below table (Table 21) that Bargaining (t=3.036, p<0.05), Persuading (t=5.189, p<0.05), Emotional (t=8.041, p<0.05) tactics significantly affect the purchase behavior of parents.

Table 21 : Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.613	.167		9.638	.000
Bargaining	.071	.023	.142	3.036	.003
Persuading	.160	.031	.246	5.189	.000
Competition	.036	.025	.065	1.451	.148
Emotional	.244	.030	.364	8.041	.000
Aggressiveness	.032	.024	.060	1.330	.184
Playing a Trick	.018	.025	.033	.716	.474

a: Dependent Variable: Purchase

Findings and Implications

Parents were found to be strongly agreeing regarding pestering of children to convince their parents, influencing their purchase decision. However, pestering was found to have no significant difference amongst gender and age group of children. This suggest strong implication for the marketers to promote their products to the parents by indirectly targeting the children.

Various tactics were used by children to pester their parents. Pestering tactics used by children were

identified as Bargaining, Emotions, Persuasion, Competition, Playing Tricks and Aggressiveness, out of which, Emotional tactics was found to be most used technique by children followed by Persuasion and Bargaining. Bargaining, Competition and Emotional tactics were also found to be significantly differ amongst children of various age groups. This implies that different age groups use different level of these tactics to pester their parents. It was also found that various tactics used by children have significant impact on the purchase behavior of the parents. Bargaining, Persuading and Emotional tactics were found to have significant impact on the purchase behavior of parents. It was also found that girl child uses more tactics to pester her parents than a boy child.

It was found that various factors influence the pestering of children, which includes friends (peers), family, television & newspaper advertisements, social influence (schools) and internet. Friends (peers) and television advertisements were found to be the most important influencing factor towards pestering. Marketers can design their communication strategies for television advertisements to increase their reach to the children. They can also tie up with schools for sponsoring events and can promote their product at those events.

Mobiles and electronic gazettes were found to be the top two products for which children pester their parents. Other products for which child pesters were shoes, movies, fast food items followed by sports instruments, and toys & games.

Friends and Television were found to be the leading source of information to the children. It was also found that various sources of information have significant impact on the pestering of children. TV advertisements, and Newspaper/Magazine advertisements were found to have significant impact on pestering of children. At the same time, children were found to recall the brand of the product they want to purchase. Marketers can come up with promotional programs with high exposure of their products on television and campaigning in schools to increase their products' visibility to children.

It was found that parents are agreeing to the demands of the children and the most important reason for agreeing their demands was found to be the emotional bonding of parents to their children. The study has implications for marketers and makes a good case for start of an era of pester power of children and its parental response in India. As this study is focused on limited geographical area, it has limited generalizability but provides good insights regarding the increase in pester power of children. The study can be replicated on a larger scale to get more insights about the rise of pester power in India.

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