

Prioritization of Consumer Socialization Factors With Respect To Indian Children

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ABSTRACT

Children are exposed to many socialization factors in a complex environment and acquire consumer knowledge. This paper provides insights about the contribution of influencing factors parents, family communication patterns, siblings, neighbor kids, and classmates in purchase decision making and underlying relationships among the factors. This result will help the marketers to focus their marketing efforts on the most influential factors. Parents influence ranked first followed by concept oriented family communication, siblings influence, classmates influence, socio-oriented family communication, and neighbor kids influence.

KEYWORDS:

Consumer socialization factors, Family communication patterns, Concept oriented family communication, Socio-oriented family communication, Family influence

I. INTRODUCTION

Children are exposed to complex socialization environment consisting of different socialization factors. Ward.S (1974) traced the development of consumer socialization in the research paper and described the consumer socialization as “what processes characterize children’s acquisition of

knowledge, attitudes and skills relating to consumption behavior, how these vary by factors such as family environment and social class, and how these processes change over time.” Understanding the factors that influence the consumer behavior will help the advertisers to plan and enhance the effect of advertisements towards the consumers. Instead of simple stimulus-response perspectives, where exposure to socialization media like television advertising has direct influence on children, it is important to gain insight into the different antecedents of children’s exposure to different media to understand the media effects on children (Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2000).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Dotson, M. J., & Hyatt, E. M. (2000) had studied the consumer socialization significance related to differences between parents and children knowledge of brands and advertising slogans in United States. A convenience sample of children from 3rd to 8th grade from a county school board in a town in the Southeastern United States used for the study. Results indicated that children aged nine possess similar knowledge of their parents in respect of knowledge in advertising slogans. Positive relationship is identified between parent-child interactions and frequency of purchase requests (Wiman, 1983). Parents are the

important socialization factor in children influence in consumer decisions with respect to all types of goods in India (Chaudhary & Gupta, 2014) as children depend on their parents (Bao et al., 2007; Su, 2011). Moschis and Churchill (1978) in their research identified that children has less knowledge than parents about product offerings and parents acts as teachers in consumer learning to their children.

Hawkins, DL., Mothersbaugh, DL., & Best, RJ (2007) defined peer group as a group whose values and attitudes are used by a person as a foundation of his or her present behavior. Schiffman, L.G, & Kanuk, L.L. (2008) defined a reference group is any person or group that serves as a point of comparison (or reference) for an individual; in forming either general or specific values, attitudes, or a specific guide for behavior. Zeijl et al. (2000) found that children spending time with peers and family differs as younger children spend more time with family and older children spend more time with peers. Gbadamosi, A. (2012) had conducted a qualitative study on Nigerian children aged between five and twelve years and their parents to find the children role in family consumption and the tactics children use to influence the family consumption decisions. Through the study it is observed children used the tactic of referring friends and neighbors who bought the product or service. Goldstein (1994) had suggested that peer influence create desire and purchase requests among children. Hill

& Tisdall (1997) stated children learn different kinds of knowledge through peer relationships than parents or teachers.

Chaffee et al. (1971) conducted field studies on 1300 families from five eastern Wisconsin cities to find the parental influence and family structure on adolescent media usage. Children are encouraged to express their ideas in families following concept-oriented family communication pattern. In socio-oriented family communication orientation children are supposed to suppress their inner feelings to maintain harmonious personal relations. Moschis and Moore (1979) studied 301 adolescent students from Wisconsin state how family communication patterns influence in the childrens consumer acquisition skills. The study results explained children from concept-oriented family communication orientation were positive in media usage and children from socio-orientated family communication orientation media usage were restrictive.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A survey had conducted on parents from 6 selected cities (Hyderabad, Kolkata, Mumbai, Indore, Delhi, and Guwahati) using a structured questionnaire with a sample size of 3600 to prioritize the consumer socialization factors among the children. Children age group was 7 to 11 years. From each city total of ten schools were selected through convenience sampling. Internal consistency of the

constructs were measured through the Cronbach's alpha value and found acceptable with a value greater than 0.7. Factor analysis was conducted on the set of questions identified from the previous studies by observing the underlying dimensions structure to address the research question "What are the important consumer socialization factors among the children?"

Total sample size = 6 (cities) X 10 (Number of schools) X 5 (Number of classes) X 12 (Parent's of the students) = 3600 parents

IV. DATA ANALYSIS

Promax rotation factor analysis (orthogonal) was conducted on 21 statements related to different socialization agents. Parents were asked to express their opinions on 5 point Likert Scale (1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly Agree). The factor analysis produced a total of six individual factors with an Eigenvalue greater than 1, as seen in Table 5.7. After the first factor analysis, four items were dropped from further analysis because they did not load in any of the six factors produced in the first factor analysis. Using the rest of the 17 items, another Promax rotation factor analysis was performed. All items in the scale were loaded above 0.7 and proved the scale is reliable. This analysis produced the six factors which explained 74.65% of variance. Each statement had more than 0.5 factor loading in all 6 factors.

Based on the previous studies each factor was labeled as parents influence, socio-oriented family communication, concept-oriented family communication, siblings influence, classmates influence, and neighbor kids influence through Table 1 it is inferred that parents influence identified as the major children socialization factor among other socialization factors considered in the study. In the given construct parent's interaction with the children was observed as the important variable. This is in accordance with the previous research findings (Bao et al., 2007; Chaudhary & Gupta, 2014; Su, 2011; Wiman, 1983). Concept-oriented family communication is the next major children socialization influencing factor. Due to the nuclear family structures and both parents working has made the Indian parents giving more importance to their children. This has reflected in the higher agreement with the statements asked in the concept-oriented family communication construct. Previous finding shown concept-oriented family communication leads to the positive attitude towards the media usage by the children (Chaffee et al., 1971; Moschis, 1985; Moschis & Moore, 1979). Next in the ranking was siblings influence. Siblings also played an important role in the children socialization factor. This is in accordance with the previous research findings (Cotte & Wood, 2004; Filiatrault & Ritchie, 1980; John, 1999). Next in the ranking was classmates influence since peer group also influence the children socialization role.

Previous research findings (Costanzo & Shaw,1966; Farooq & Latif,2011; Moschis & Churchill,1978; Soni & Upadhyaya,2007; Valkenburg & Cantor,2001) also indicated similar results. Next in the ranking was Socio-oriented family communication. In Indian family context parents are giving due importance to the children and thus disagreement percentage of the statements by the parents are high. Socio-oriented family communication exerts negative influence on the children usage of media with respect to their consumer socialization. The last and the least influenced factor among the

children consumer socialization factor was Neighbor kids influence. This could be the restrictive access to socialization of children with the neighbor kids due to increased academic burden on the children. Many children soon after returning from the schools were attending private tuition classes to complete their home work. This has resulted into unavailability of time to interact with neighbor kids. Though neighbor kids has shown significant role in children consumer socialization in previous studies (Brooks- Gunn et al., 1993), this study proved less importance with respect to this factor.

Table 1. Factor analysis of the items related to children consumer socialization

| Factor Name (% of variance) | Statements | Factor loading | | | | | |
|---|--|----------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|-------------|------------|
| | | 1 (PI) | 2 (COFC) | 3 (SI) | 4 (CI) | 5 (SOFC) | 6 (NKI) |
| Parents influence (PI) (21.24%) | There are many interactions between me and my child | 0.814 | | | | | |
| | I watch television along with my child | 0.773 | | | | | |
| | My child asks to buy the products suggested by me | 0.734 | | | | | |
| | I accompany my child to the school | 0.521 | | | | | |
| Concept-oriented family communication (COFC) | I ask my child to help in buying things for the family | | 0.732 | | | | |
| | I ask my child to decide about the things he/she should buy or not buy | | 0.610 | | | | |
| | I ask my child advice for buying things | | 0.565 | | | | |
| Siblings influence (SI) (13.41%) | My children play and read together at home | | | 0.671 | | | |
| | My child exchange consumer knowledge | | | 0.612 | | | |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|--------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| | withsiblings | | | | | | |
| | My child asks to buy the products suggested by siblings | | | 0.545 | | | |
| Classmates influence (CI) (10.12%) | My child discuss about their classmates at home | | | | 0.671 | | |
| | My child asks to buy the products suggested by classmates at school | | | | 0.652 | | |
| | My child exchange consumer knowledge (information about products, brands) with classmates at school | | | | 0.569 | | |
| Socio-oriented family communication (SOFC) (8.13%) | I tell my child what type of things he should buy | | | | | 0.761 | |
| | I tell my child not to buy certain things | | | | | 0.633 | |
| Neighbor kids influence (NKI) (5.43%) | My child plays with neighbor kids at home | | | | | | 0.536 |
| | My child exchange consumer knowledge with neighbor kids at home | | | | | | 0.541 |
| Eigen value | | 5.51 | 3.42 | 2.33 | 1.67 | 1.25 | 1.19 |
| Total variance | | 74.65% | | | | | |

V. DISCUSSION

As Indian families exhibit strong family bonding not surprisingly the parents influence has emerged as the top consumer socialization factor among the given six consumer socialization factors. It was evident through this research more interactions took place between the parents and children. This is due to the parents activities like co-watching of television commercials with children, and accompanying to school. A study conducted on 7000 Indian children and parents by the Turner International also revealed that 50% parents enjoy

watching television with their kids daily and majority of them closely monitor what their kids are viewing.

Concept oriented family communication stood as second position in children consumer socialization. Rise in nuclear family structure has made the families to confine the family member's to parents and one or two children. This made the parents to give importance to the children in finding the products and seeking the children help in purchase process. Socio oriented family communication shown less influence than the concept oriented family

communication in children consumer socialization. This is due to the increasing affinity towards the children by the parents. Siblings shown peer influence among the children which is another important consumer socialization factor followed by Concept oriented family communication. This is due to the close interactions among the siblings as they stay together at home for longer period. More over there is a direct influence on children with respect to the activities of their siblings activities like television watching, products they purchase, and playing toys etc;.

Classmates stood next to siblings among the peer influence and neighbor kids influence stood last among the all six socialization factors considered in the research objective. This could be due to the higher amount of spending time with the classmates than the neighbor kids. Along with the interactions with classmates at school, access to mobile phones for the children helping them to stay in touch. Lack of play grounds near to homes, busy after school study schedules were restricting the children to interact with the neighbor kids. One more reason for the less interactions among the children was children are glued to the television programs as well as playing games on electronic gadgets like smart phones, tabs etc;. The above results help the marketers in developing better marketing communications.

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