

Family Communication Patterns and Children's Influence on Purchase Decisions

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Abstract

Traditionally, children were not viewed as consumers. They were perceived as learners who learnt from various socialization agents how to become consumers. The social, cultural, and economic changes in the past few decades have redefined the role of children in family purchase decisions. Children's influence on purchase decisions has been acknowledged by the research fraternity. The paper specifically explored the effect of family communication patterns on children's influence on purchase decisions. Through hierarchical regression, empirical findings were presented.

Keywords: reverse socialization, consumer socialization, children, India, family communication, product category

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The active role of children as consumers is a relatively new area of interest. Most literature concentrates on how children become consumers, which is also the main focus of consumer socialization (Carlson & Grossbart, 1988 ; Dotson & Hyatt, 2005 ; Moschis & Churchill Jr., 1978; Moschis, Ong, Mathur, Yamashita, & Benmoyal - Bouzaglo, 2011 ; Ward & Wackman, 1974). The role of children as consumers has been recognized by the business world and it has acknowledged their contribution to decision making (Cook, 2009; Marshall, 2010). McNeal categorized children as three markets in one: current market for present products, future market, and market of influentials, who influence the purchase decisions of their parents on even products like cars and holidays (McNeal 1987, 1999). Three factors have been cited as reasons for growing importance of children as consumers:

- (1) Growing market for children's products,
- (2) Increasing influence of children in purchases of goods and services across categories,
- (3) Trend of accepting and encouraging children as co-decision makers in family (Sharma & Dasgupta, 2009).

Literature has highlighted the importance of understanding how influence takes place between family members as relations between parents and children have changed (Marshall, 2010). The topic gains special relevance in the Indian context due to the following reasons :

- (1) India has one of the largest proportions of population in the younger age groups in the world ; 30% of the population of the country is in the age group of 0-14 years as per Census 2011.
- (2) Personal disposal income in India grew by 15%-21% in nominal terms a year between 2008-09 and 2011-12 (Dharmala, 2013).

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(3) Most Indian households are now nuclear, and families are more children centered than being parent centered (Sud, 2007).

In view of the above, our study proposes the following research question:

↳ **How does the family communication pattern affect the influence of Indian children on purchase decisions of different products?**

In the following sections, first, the theoretical background through literature review is presented upon which the research hypotheses are formulated. Then, the scale for family communication and influence of child on different products was validated. Through hierarchical regression, the empirical findings are presented. Finally, we conclude with discussions, managerial implications of the results, limitations and directions for future research.

Literature Review

↳ **Background :** Some adjectives used to describe children in the past have traditionally been cute, intelligent, innocent, and naughty among others. Society did not associate the word 'consumer' with children. Even the marketing world did not see any consumer segment in that group. The interest of the marketers was restricted in knowing and understanding how children learnt consumer skills, acquired market knowledge, and became consumers when they grew up. This curiosity, inquisitiveness helped in the development of consumer socialization or the process by which children acquire skills and knowledge to become consumers. Substantial literature on this topic has proved that family, peers, and media are important socialization agents (Fan & Li, 2010 ; Ghazali, 2011 ; Hota & McGuigan, 2006 ; Minahan & Huddleston, 2010). Age, too, was identified as an important cognitive factor. Role of family as a socialization agent has been emphasized time and again. The process was unidirectional and children were assumed to have a passive role in the process. Their role was defined and restricted as only learners. Market researchers and practitioners led the research on the role of children as consumers. In contrast, academic researchers were comparatively slow in appreciating the cultural and monetary significance of same (Cook, 2009).

Researchers and marketers started questioning the uni- directional process of socialization (Ekstrom, Tansuhaj, & Foxman, 1987). Busy lifestyle of parents coupled with easy access to knowledge for children made them active participants in family decisions. Children were not only learners, but were teaching the parents as well. A new area, reverse socialization, started gaining strength and importance. It was paramount and crucial to understand the influence of children on purchase decisions of the family (Almeida, 2012 ; Belch, Belch, & Ceresino, 1985; Belch & Willis, 2002; Chaudhary & Gupta, 2012; Lee & Beatty, 2002; Wilson & Wood, 2004). Research on family decision making was initially directed to spouses; however, the role of children on decision making and negotiation strategies has become an important issue of study (Kaur & Singh, 2006). Much of the research on influence of children on purchase decisions has been done in the West, but it is the universality of research findings that should be examined (Cram & Ng, 1999). Children in India may not have purchasing power comparable to their Western counterparts, but they are the centre of the universe in the Indian family system, and can influence parental decisions to buy certain products (Kaur & Singh, 2006).

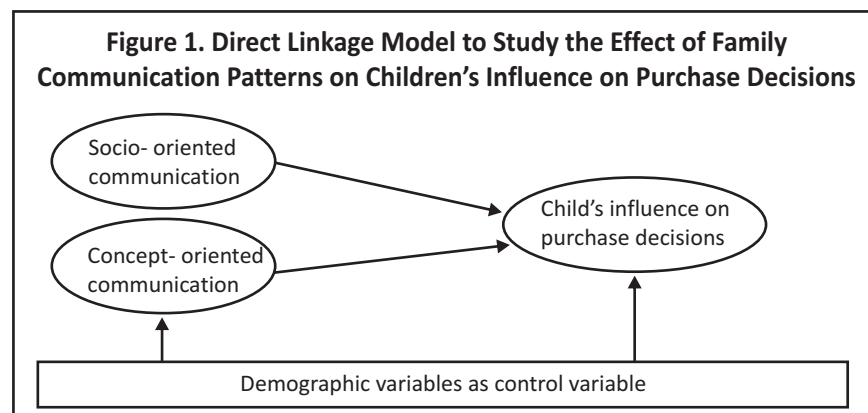
Research has been done to understand the effect of different factors on influence of a child. In this paper, focus is on family demographics, types of products, and family communication patterns. Family demographics and its effect on influence of a child on purchase decisions has been the centre of many studies (Tomko, 2012; Kerrane & Hogg, 2011 ; Neeley, 2005). Female children had more influence in decision making (Lee, 1994; Tomko, 2012). Girls participated more in purchase decisions than boys for apparels (Sharma, 2009). However, no difference in rating of products due to gender was found in another study (Chavda, Haley, & Dunn, 2005). Children's influence was found to increase with an increase in age of the child (Ahuja & Stinson, 1993 ; Ogden, Ogden, & Ramzy, 2012). While children of non working mothers had more influence on purchase of high-risk products (Isin &

Alkibay, 2011), this was in contrast to other findings, where children of mothers employed outside had more decisive power (Lee, 1994). Studies also highlighted that working situation of mothers did not have any effect on the influence of the child (Suwandinata, 2011; Wang, 2007). In contrast, no relationship between perception of influence of child and demographic variables like gender of the child, birth order of the child was found by Caruana and Vassallo (2003).

✍ **Children's Influence on Different Product Purchase Decisions :** Children's ability to influence purchase decisions and their interest levels vary across product categories (Sharma & Dasgupta, 2009). Importance of the product for the child and knowledge of the child about the product affects his/her influence (Watne, Lobo, & Brennan, 2011). A child's influence was the highest when products were low risk products used by a family (Isin & Alkibay, 2011). Children's influence was found to be low on purchase decisions when the decisions were related to finances of the family (Roberts, Wortzel, & Berkeley, 1981). Children played an important role in purchase decisions of food and personal hygiene products (Chikweche, Stanton, & Fletcher, 2012). Children's role was limited in purchase of products which are of less interest to them (Beatty & Talpade, 1994). Children's influence varies by products, and their influence was highest for products that were related directly to the them (Beatty & Talpade, 1994 ; Foxman, Tansuhaj, & Ekstrom, 1989 ; Mangleburg, 1990 ; Shoham & Dalakas, 2005 ; Watne et al., 2011). Based on the above, the first hypothesis is:

➡ **Hypothesis 1:** Children's influence on family purchase decision varies across product categories.

✍ **Family Communication Pattern and its Effect on Influence of Child :** Family communication patterns were found to be key features in consumer socialization (Moschis, 1985). Family communication patterns are defined by two parameters : socio - orientation and concept - orientation (McLeod & Chaffe, 1972). Socio - oriented communication structure leads to control and monitoring of children's consumption behavior, and concept - oriented structure leads to children's increased consumer experiences, learning of different consumer skills and knowledge, adopting rational consumer skills (Moschis, 1985). concept - oriented parents actively solicit the child's input in consumption related discussions and activities (Wonsun, 2010). Parents with concept - oriented communication encouraged conversation with children regarding companies collecting personal information on the web (Youn, 2008). Family communication patterns in different countries were examined to reveal distinct influences on children's influence (Rose, Boush, & Shoham, 2002). Family communication patterns have been studied widely to examine their effect on children's consumer socialization (Carlson, Walsh, Laczniak, & Grossbart, 1994 ; Chan & McNeal, 2006 ; Hsieh, Chiu, & Lin, 2006 ; Moschis & Moore, 1979 ; Moschis, Moore, & Smith, 1984 ; Moschis, Prahato, & Mitchell, 1986). A few studies have been conducted to understand the effect of family communication pattern on influence of child on family decision making (Caruana & Vassallo, 2003 ;



Foxman et al., 1989 ; Rose et al., 2002). Perception of influence of child was related to the concept - orientation of parents (Caruana & Vassallo, 2003). An open communication pattern between parents and children about simple food related issues was shown to have a crucial influence on conflicts, their resolution, and outcome of influence techniques used by children (Nørgaard & Brunsø, 2011). Children with more concept - oriented mothers tended to have greater influence in purchase decisions involving both durable and non - durable products for their own use (Kim, Lee, & Tomiuk, 2009). It has been mentioned that understanding the effect of family communication pattern on child's influence can contribute to effective marketing (Bakir, Rose, & Shoham, 2006). Accordingly, the second and the third hypotheses are :

➤ **Hypothesis 2** : Mother's concept - oriented communication is positively associated with child's influence on purchase decisions.

➤ **Hypothesis 3** : Mother's socio - oriented communication will be negatively associated with child's influence on purchase decisions.

The present study presents a direct linkage model under the controlled effect of demographic variables (Figure 1).

Research Design

✍ **Questionnaire Development** : The following scales were validated : Family communication scale ; Scale to measure influence of children.

Qualitative (focus groups, interviews) and quantitative techniques (pilot study) were used for developing the final questionnaire (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). Dimensions on family communication were included in mother's questionnaire. Nine items were used to measure concept - orientation and five measures were used to measure socio - orientation. The respondents were asked to rate their responses on a 5 - point Likert scale, where 1 meant *strongly disagree* and 5 meant *strongly agree*. Questions to measure the influence of the child on 14 products were included in another section. Both mother and child were asked to rate the influence of children on a 5 - point likert scale, where 1 meant that parents decided *completely*, and 5 meant that the children decided *completely*. The last section included demographic details.

✍ **Measure** : Family communication scale by Caruana and Vassallo (2003) was used with changes to develop the family communication scale for the present study . The scale to measure the influence of children was developed based on literature review and information gathered by interviews and focus group discussions. Using a semi-

Table 1. Sample Profile

Mother		Family		Child	
Age: 30-34years	41.9%	Joint family	29%	Age: less than 11 years	3.5%
35-39 years	41%	Nuclear family	71%	11-13 years	51.1%
40-44 years	12.2%			14-16 years	45.4%
Above 44 years	4.9%	one child family	26.2%		
		two children family	65.5%	Boys	54.1%
Working mother	57%	three children family	7.9%	Girls	45.9%
Non-working mother	43%	More than four children family	0.4%		

structured script as reference, detailed interviews were conducted with four pairs of mother and children in Pune city, India. Interviews were conducted in the homes of the respondents to provide them a comfortable environment ; the mother and child were interviewed separately. Duration of the interview was from 45 minutes to 1 hour. Judgmental sampling technique was used for interviews and focus groups. Three focus groups were held - two were of children and one was of mothers. On an average, 6-8 participants were part of each focus group, and these lasted 45 minutes to 60 minutes. Children fell in the age group of 11 - 16 years. Further interviews and focus groups were recorded with due permission.

↳ **Data Collection :** Schools in different parts of Pune were contacted. Children in the age group of 10-16 years were given two questionnaires- one for the child and one for the mother. The questionnaires were given only after taking due permission from the Principals of the respective schools. The age group was identified as children in this age group are able to analyze on more than one dimension as compared to younger children (John & Lakshmi - Ratan, 1992). The data were collected between December 2012 and April 2013. In total, 329 usable pairs of questionnaires were analyzed using SPSS17. The details of the sample are given in the Table 1.

Data Analysis and Results

Scales developed by us were used to do the data analysis (Sharma & Sonwaney, Forthcoming). Family communication scale and scale to measure influence of child on different products were subjected to exploratory factor analysis . Before proceeding for factor analysis, dimension reduction suitability was checked using KMO and Bartlett's test of sphericity. The KMO values for all scales were more than 0.5, and hence acceptable (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2008). Similarly, the requirement of significant Bartlett's test of sphericity was also met in the present study (Malhotra & Dash, 2012). Principal component analysis and Promax rotation were used to obtain the factor loadings. Promax rotation, which is a type of oblique rotation, was used as it derives factor

Table 2. Reliability and Construct Validity Measures for Concept - Oriented and Socio - Oriented Scales

	Indicators	Standardized Factor Loadings	Variance	Error	SCR	AVE(Average Variance Extracted)	Cronbach's alpha
Concept - oriented family communication (FC1)	Ask child where to go for family outing	.698	0.487	0.513	0.790	0.489	0.644
	Ask child for advice about buying things	.786	0.618	0.382			
	Ask child about things bought for self	.733	0.537	0.463			
	Ask child's preference when buying	.559	0.312	0.687			
Socio- oriented family communication (FC2)	Complain when not like things bought by child	.607	0.368	0.632	0.842	0.646	0.684
	Tell child not allowed to buy certain things	.885	0.783	0.217			
	Tell child not to buy certain things	.887	0.787	0.213			
	It is important to have branded products	.830	0.689	0.311			
	Pay attention to brands	.845	0.714	0.286			
	Like products with brand name showing	.769	0.592	0.408			

Table 3. Reliability and Construct Validity Measures for Scale to Measure Influence of the Child

Factor detail	Products	Factor loading	Variance	Error	SCR	AVE	Cronbach's alpha
Influence of child on purchase of technical products (P1)	Music system	.723	0.523	0.477	0.858	0.549	0.805
	car	.674	0.454	0.546			
	Laptop	.781	0.611	0.389			
	Playstation	.691	0.477	0.523			
Influence of child on purchase of products used by the child (P2)	Mobile	.826	0.681	0.318	0.829	0.496	0.721
	Icecream	.748	0.559	0.441			
	Chocolate	.822	0.676	0.324			
	Child's Shoes	.639	0.408	0.592			
Influence of child on purchase of everyday products used by family (P3)	Cycle	.679	0.461	0.539	0.859	0.670	0.759
	Child's Spare time activity	.613	0.376	0.624			
	Bread	.788	0.621	0.378			
	Fruits	.794	0.630	0.370			
	Dairy products	.871	0.758	0.241			

Table 4. Discriminant Validity

	FC1	FC2	Pcat1	Pcat2	Pcat3
FC1	0.489*				
FC2	0.0081	0.646*			
Pcat1	0.051076	0.012321	0.549*		
Pcat2	0.004356	0.002304	0.154449	0.496*	
Pcat3	0.01	0.000225	0.015876	0.045369	0.67*

AVE values are represented by (*). Other values are square of the correlations

loadings based on the assumption that factors are correlated (Dien, 2010). Variables were extracted using Kaiser criterion (Eigen values greater than 1). Only variables with significant loading were retained (greater than 0.5). Family communication items loaded to two factors - Socio - Oriented and Concept - Oriented. Four items were retained for Concept - Oriented Communication (FC1) and three items were retained for Socio - Oriented Communication (FC2) (Table 2). The final perceived influence of the child was calculated as average of the child's response and mother's response. No significant difference was found in the opinion of the mother and the child ; the exceptions being ice cream ($p = 0.003$, $\alpha = 0.5$) and child's spare time activity ($p < 0.001$, $\alpha = 0.5$). Thirteen items were retained and three factors were formed (Table 3). The name given to three factors to measure children's influence on products is as follows :

P1, which includes technical products used by the family (music system, car, laptop/PC, play station, mobile);

P2, which includes products used by children (ice cream, chocolate, shoes, cycle, child's spare time activity) ; and

P3, which includes everyday products used by the family (bread, fruits and vegetables, and dairy products).

The scales were further tested by establishing convergent validity. Our scales passed the convergent validity test as all the factor loadings were more than 0.5, and all constructs exceeded the critical level of 0.70 for scale composite reliability (SCR) and 0.5 for average variance extracted (AVE) (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) (Tables 2, 3). Further discriminant validity was also established as squares of Pearson coefficient between any two factors was less than the leading diagonal entries of the matrix represented by AVE values (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) (Table 4).

Table 5. Details of the Scale to Measure Influence of the Child on Purchase Decisions

Factor details	Short name	Products in the category	Mean and SD
Influence of the child on purchase of Technical products used by the family.	P1	Music system, car, laptop/PC, Play station, Mobile	$M = 2.689$ $SD = 0.7784$
Influence of the child on purchase of Products used by children.	P2	Ice cream, chocolate, shoes, cycle, child's spare time activity	$M = 4.074$ $SD = 0.5393$
Influence of the child on purchase of Everyday products used by the family.	P3	Bread, fruits and vegetables, dairy products	$M = 2.137$ $SD = 0.8066$

Table 6. Testing of Hypothesis 2a**FC1 → P1**

	Predictors	Beta	VIF	Durbin Watson	Significance of model	F value	R ²
Model 1	Age bracket	0.413**	1.04	1.818	$P < 0.001$	7.774	0.094
	Gender	-0.286**	1.05				
	Mother's employment status	0.111	1.01				
Model 2	Age bracket	0.414**	1.04	1.818	$P < 0.001$	10.6886	0.161
	Gender	-0.355**	1.07				
	Mother's employment status	0.149	1.01				
	FC1	0.339**	1.03				

** $p < 0.01$ **Table 7. Testing of Hypothesis 2b****FC1 → P2**

	Predictors	Beta	VIF	Durbin Watson	Significance of model	F value	R ²
Model 1	Age bracket	0.156*	1.05	1.781	0.066#	2.435	0.032
	Gender	0.052	1.05				
	Mother's employment status	0.106	1.01				
Model 2	Age bracket	0.156*	1.05	1.781	0.086#	2.066	0.036
	Gender	0.039	1.07				
	Mother's employment status	0.113	1.01				
	FC1	0.063	1.03				

* $p < 0.05$ # significant at $\alpha = 0.10$ **Table 8. Testing of Hypothesis 2c****FC1 → P3**

	Predictors	Beta	VIF	Durbin Watson	Significance of model	F value	R ²
Model 1	Age bracket	0.146	1.05	1.713	Not significant	0.751	0.010
	Gender	-0.094	1.05				
	Mother's employment status	-0.058	1.01				
Model 2	Age bracket	0.147	1.05	1.713	Not significant	1.199	0.021
	Gender	-0.123	1.07				
	Mother's employment status	-0.042	1.01				
	FC1	0.147	1.03				

* $p < 0.05$ # significant at $\alpha = 0.10$

The EFA output was used as an input for hierarchical regression analyses to test our hypothesis.

Assumptions for Regression Modeling

The assumptions for regression analyses were checked by normal plot, VIF statistics using collinearity diagnostics, and Durbin Watson statistics. The assumptions were met. As mentioned earlier, linkages were developed based on our literature review. Linkages between independent variables were not considered as the values of Pearson's coefficient among the constructs were low, which suggests that independent variables are independent of each other. A simple hierarchical regression was conducted keeping demographic variables as control variables. For our study, the demographic variables which were used as control variables were age of the child, gender of the child, and mother's employment status. Controlling the demographic variables would ensure that they do not explain away the entire association between family communication and influence of child on various product categories. At the same time, they will get credit for any shared variability that they may have with the predictor.

Hypotheses Testing

(1) Hypothesis 1 (H1): Children's influence on family purchase decisions varies across product categories. Using exploratory factor analysis, we were able to identify three product categories as mentioned earlier in the paper (refer Table 3 and Table 4).

Children's influence is found to vary across product categories. Children's influence is found to be the highest for products used by them, and is minimum for everyday products used by the family (Table 5). This is in tune with earlier research, where children's role was found to be limited in purchase of products which were of less interest to them (Beatty & Talpade, 1994) and in case of regular household products (Chaudhary & Gupta, 2012). Children were found to have maximum influence for products used by them (Chaudhary & Gupta, 2012). Foxman et al. (1989) concluded that children had greater authority if products were for their personal consumption. Our findings are congruent with literature and show that children's influence varies with product categories. Hence, we accept Hypothesis 1.

(2) Hypothesis 2 : As Hypothesis 1 is accepted, initial Hypothesis 2 (H2) is further sub - divided into three different hypotheses, which are:

➤ **H2a :** Mother's concept - oriented communication (FC1) is positively associated with child's influence on purchase of technical products used by the family (P1).

➤ **H2b :** Mother's concept - oriented communication (FC1) is positively associated with child's influence on purchase of products used by the child (P2).

➤ **H2c :** Mother's concept - oriented communication (FC1) is positively associated with child's influence on purchase of every day products used by the family (P3).

To test the hypotheses, three separate hierarchical regression analyses were performed by controlling the demographic variables (age of the child, gender of the child, and mother's employment status). The control variables were entered in the first block using the enter method and concept - oriented communication variable was entered in the second block (refer Tables 6, 7, and 8).

Mother's concept - oriented communication (FC1) is a positive determinant of child's influence on purchase of technical products used by the family (P1). As can be seen from the Table 6 , Model 2 is significant with $p < 0.001$. R^2 has also increased from 9.4% to 16.1%. Also, mother's concept - oriented communication is a significant and

Table 9. Testing of Hypothesis 3a**FC2→ P1**

	Predictors	Beta	VIF	Durbin Watson	Significance of model	F value	R ²
Model 1	Age bracket	0.413**	1.04	1.848	P<0.001	7.774	0.094
	Gender	-0.286**	1.05				
	Mother's employment status	0.111	1.01				
Model 2	Age bracket	0.408**	1.05	1.848	P<0.001	6.445	0.104
	Gender	-0.294**	1.05				
	Mother's employment status	0.116	1.01				
	FC2	-0.118*	1.00				

** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$ **Table 10. Testing of Hypothesis 3b****FC2→ P2**

	Predictors	Beta	VIF	Durbin Watson	Significance of model	F value	R ²
Model 1	Age bracket	0.156*	1.05	1.781	0.066#	2.435	0.032
	Gender	0.052	1.05				
	Mother's employment status	0.106	1.01				
Model 2	Age bracket	0.158*	1.05	1.781	0.086#	2.066	0.036
	Gender	0.056	1.05				
	Mother's employment status	0.103	1.01				
	FC2	0.059	1.00				

* $p < 0.05$ # significant at $\alpha = 0.10$ **Table 11. Testing of Hypothesis 3c****FC2→ P3**

	Predictors	Beta	VIF	Durbin Watson	Significance of model	F value	R ²
Model 1	Age bracket	0.146	1.05	1.708	Not significant	0.751	0.010
	Gender	-0.094	1.05				
	Mother's employment status	-0.058	1.01				
Model 2	Age bracket	0.147	1.05	1.708	Not significant	0.567	0.010
	Gender	-0.093	1.05				
	Mother's employment status	-0.059	1.01				
	FC2	0.014	1.00				

* $p < 0.05$ # significant at $\alpha = 0.10$

positive predictor of child's influence on purchase of technical products, even when demographic variables are controlled. Child's influence on purchase of technical products is also predicted by age and gender of the child. Older children have more influence than younger children on purchase of technical products. Also, male child's influence is more than that of the female child's influence on purchase of technical products. Overall, Hypothesis 2a (H2a) is accepted.

Mother's concept - oriented communication (FC1) is a positive determinant for child's influence on purchase of products used by the child (P2) ; however, it is not a significant predictor when demographic variables are controlled. Also, age of the child is a significant predictor, with older children having more influence on purchase

of products used by them. Model 2 in Table 7 is significant at $\alpha = 0.10$. Hence, the Hypothesis 2b (H2b) is partially accepted.

Mother's concept - oriented communication (FC1) is a positive determinant for child's influence on purchase of everyday products used by the family (P3), but it is not a significant predictor when demographic variables are controlled. Even Model 2 in Table 8 is not significant. Though, as per the model, older children have more influence; males have more influence ; and children of working mothers have more influence on purchase of everyday products used by the family, but none of the demographic variables are significant. Hence, we reject the Hypothesis 2c (H2c).

(3) Hypothesis 3 (H3) : As Hypothesis 1 (H1) is accepted, the initial Hypothesis 3 (H3) is further sub - divided into three different hypotheses :

➤ **H3a:** Mother's socio-oriented communication (FC2) is negatively associated with child's influence on purchase of technical products (P1).

➤ **H3b:** Mother's socio-oriented communication (FC2) is negatively associated with child's influence on purchase of products used by the child (P2).

➤ **H3c:** Mother's socio-oriented communication (FC2) is negatively associated with child's influence on purchase of everyday products used by the family (P3).

To test the hypotheses, three separate hierarchical regression analyses were performed by controlling the demographic variables (age of the child, gender of the child, and mother's employment status). The control variables were entered in the first block using the enter method and socio- oriented communication variable was entered in the second block (Table 9, 10, 11).

Mother's socio- oriented communication (FC2) is a negative determinant of child's influence on purchase of technical products. As can be inferred from the Table 9, Model 2 is significant with $p < 0.001$. Also, R^2 has increased from 9.4% to 10.4%. Even after controlling the demographic variables, mother's socio-oriented communication is a significant and negative predictor of child's influence on purchase of technical products. Other significant predictors are age and gender. Older children have more influence on purchase of technical products than younger children. Furthermore, boys have more influence than girls on purchase of technical products. Hence, Hypothesis 3a (H3a) is accepted.

Mother's socio- oriented communication is a positive determinant of child's influence on purchase of products used by the child, but it is not a significant predictor when demographic variables are controlled. Model 2 in Table 10 is significant at $\alpha = 0.10$, but the only significant predictor is age. Older children have more influence on purchase of products used by them than the younger children. Hence, we reject Hypothesis 3b (H3b).

Mother's socio- oriented communication is a positive determinant of child's influence on purchase of everyday products used by the family, but it is not a significant predictor when demographic variables are controlled. Model 2 in Table 11 is not significant, and none of the predictors are significant in the model. Hence Hypothesis 3c (H3c) is rejected.

Summary of Main Findings and Discussion

Our results show that children's influence on purchase decisions varies with products. Children's influence is highest for products used by the them. Previous studies have shown that children's influence varies by product categories (Mangleburg, 1990 ; Shoham & Dalakas, 2005 ; Watne et al., 2011). Hence, our study is in tune with previous studies. However, our study has further identified the product categories. Interestingly, since significant difference between opinion of mothers and children was found only for ice creams and children's spare time

activity, this also indicates that mothers today understand and acknowledge the influence of the child. This is a significant outcome considering the socio - cultural aspect of India. Until a few years ago, it was an unsaid rule in India that parents are always right, children need to unquestioningly obey parents, and the opinion of the child was not important. This is also in contrast to previous studies which stated that there is a difference in perception of children's influence between the parent and the child (Foxman & Tansuhaj, 1988; Ramzy, Ogden, Ogden, & Zakaria, 2012 ; Wang, Hsieh, Yeh, & Tsai, 2004 ; Watne & Winchester, 2011). Indirectly, this also points towards an increase in communication or understanding between mothers and children.

Concept - oriented communication has a positive effect on children's influence on purchase of technical products, products used by the child, and everyday products used by the family. Concept - oriented communication is found to be a significant and positive predictor only for children's influence on purchase of technical products. Literature has also shown that mother's concept - oriented communication is positively linked to children's influence in purchase of durable and non - durable products and also affects agreement between family members about children's influence (Foxman et al., 1989 ; Kim et al., 2009). On the other hand, mother's socio - oriented communication is negatively linked to children's influence on purchase decisions (Kim et al., 2009). In our study also, mother's socio - oriented communication is a significant negative determinant of children's influence on purchase of technical products. At the same time, socio - oriented communication is not a significant predictor for children's influence on purchase of products used by the child and everyday products used by the family.

A possible explanation can be understood by understanding the product categories and the relevance of family communication patterns. Socio - oriented communication tends to control children's consumption behavior and does not encourage children's input in discussions. On the contrary, concept - oriented communication encourages and welcomes children's input in discussions. Among the three product categories defined in our study, purchase of everyday products used by the family saw the minimum influence of the child ($M = 2.13$), most probably because children have the least interest in such products and hence, there are no discussions between mothers and children over the topic. The same explanation also holds true for purchase of products used by the children where children's influence is maximum ($M = 4.07$). Mothers and children agreed that they (children) played the most important role in purchase decisions of this category, and accordingly, this reduces the scope of discussions and hence, the role of the family communication pattern is also restricted. Influence of children on purchase of technical products is in between these two categories ($M = 2.7$). It is a product category where both the mother and children decide together. The scope for discussions and arguments is the maximum in this category, and hence, the significant role of concept - oriented communication and socio- oriented communication. Our study clearly shows that the study of influence of children on purchase decisions cannot be done on a general level and has to be category specific.

Managerial Implications

Moving beyond the academic contributions laid out above, what are the implications of this study for marketers? Can marketers use these insights in their marketing strategies?

From a marketer's point of view, this study reiterates that children have substantial influence on purchase decisions. However, this influence needs to be understood in context of product categories. This would help the marketers to reach out to the target consumers with relevant points in the process, example: when marketers want to talk about technical products used by families, they should address both mothers and children in their marketing communication. This product category involves maximum discussions between parents and children, and thus, the marketers should provide information to both the participants of the decision-making process. This also indicates that marketing communication should be visible on platforms visited by both - mothers and children. In other words, marketing campaigns should reach both - children and mothers.

In contrast, when marketers want to communicate about everyday products used by families, the communication should be targeted towards parents. Developing a communication strategy to target children for this product category may not be the correct usage of resources. Similarly, developing a communication strategy to

target parents for products used by children may be wasting the resources. The resources can be better utilized to target only children as they more or less take the decision in this regard. Marketing managers, therefore, need a deeper understanding of the dynamics at play, which effect the influence of the children.

Unique Contributions, Limitations of the Study, and the Way Forward

Our research has contributed to the existing body of research by giving new insights about the effect of family communication on influence of children on purchase decisions in India. Our study reiterates what has been proved in some previous studies (Caruana & Vassallo, 2003 ; Foxman et al., 1989 ; Kim et al., 2009) that concept - oriented communication is positively linked and socio- oriented communication is linked negatively to children's influence on purchase decisions. Our study has gone one step further and showed that the study of influence of children on purchase decisions is of more relevance if it is related to a specific product category. Product categorization is an important tool to reach the right consumer. Furthermore, gender equality from a young age is a positive change in India.

The findings of this research should be interpreted in light of some limitations. Our study has been conducted with respondents from the urban population of Pune. Perhaps, replication studies elsewhere in India would be useful. Our model only attempts to understand the effect of mother's communication patterns on influence of children on different product categories after controlling the demographic variables. Future researchers may also attempt to explore and understand the effect of media and peers on children's influence on purchase decisions.

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