



Children Consumer Behaviour: A Coalesce of Reviews

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Abstract: Albeit, young consumers have been pictured as the vulnerable and submissive segment in the marketplace, they hold a position of eminence in this sphere of dynamics. Children are no longer seated in the backstage. They have their own opinions, decisions, experiences and preferences that construct an overall thought process, paving their consumer behavior. They have been placed into three consumer brackets; first off, they are reckoned as consumers as they are at their present stage, secondly, they are the consumers that influence their parents' purchase decisions and lastly, they are also perceived as the future consumers. They consume goods and services not just on the basis of what they have internalized as preached by elders but take into consideration the facets as learned and understood by them on their own. This paper comprises of various studies conducted pertaining to children consumer behaviour, their perception on product or brand, price, place and advertisement.

Index Terms: Children, children consumer behaviour, product, brand, price, place, advertisement

I. INTRODUCTION

Children, in the modern world, have their strong and visible positions that is not merely restricted to their families but stretched out to marketplaces. They are becoming increasingly important consumers and have evolved into a significant consumer group. Young consumers' apparent say in the family has made them an important segment for the marketers and this has made them include children at different levels of strategies and selling tactics. Children socialization commences from initial stages that paves way to becoming responsible consumers and, furthermore, as age ascends, they progressively make independent buying. Children are now actively indulging in family decisions pertaining to purchases, brand choosing, and overall consumption preference. This understanding and participation in familial settings has elevated due to their improved comprehension about the products and their alternatives, prices as offered by competitors in the market, place of purchase with other related relevant information. Children consumer behaviour can be stated as the process and actions that children involve in while they are looking for, selecting, buying, utilizing or consuming, assessing, and disposing of goods and services to meet their requirements and preferences. Every stage has an influence of what the young consumers' percipience.

II. CHILDREN CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

Literatures on children's consumer behaviour stretches back to the 1950s, when limited studies on subjects like brand loyalty (Guest, 1955) and ostentatious consumption (Reisman & Roseborough, 1955) were published. In the 1960s, scholars broadened their field of view to include children's comprehension of marketing and retail mechanisms (McNeal, 1964), effect on parents in buying behaviour (Berey & Pollay 1968; Wells & LoSciuto, 1966), and the corollary impact of parents and peers on patterns of consumption (Cateora, 1963). Researchers have looked into a variety of topics related to children's growing sophistication as consumers, such as their understanding of products, brands, advertising, shopping, price, decision-making methods and parental involvement and negotiation tactics (John, 1999). Marketers were aware of the growing influence of children on their parents' purchasing decisions. Children and youth, while not being an economically strong segment, are appealing to marketers because of their ability to influence and convince their family (Šramová, 2017).

“Young consumer behaviour can be conceptualized as the study of the processes involved when these young people individually, or in groups select, purchase, use or dispose of products, services, ideas or experiences to satisfy needs and desires” (Gbadamosi, 2018). Young consumer behaviour can also be defined as the actions taken by young people while they are looking for, buying, utilizing, reviewing, and discarding products and services that they believe will meet their requirements (Schiffman, Kanuk, Kumar & Wisenblit, 2010).

2.1 Studies Pertaining to Product and brands

Creation of lifetime value in the minds of customers firmly holds its ground. As stated by Sasser, Schlesinger & Heskett (1997), retaining customers throughout their lives is indispensable not just for the viability of business but also for the positive value towards the brands as a result of a better exposure, plus spread of favourable word of mouth referrals. Such brands or products may be preferred to be purchased in different stages of life with high preference than the others falling in the similar category, for example, buying the same brand of car that was once owned by the family entailing good experiences. However, even if the product is not viable for the person's own use as the product restricts to a certain age group, the image of that product or brand would still top the list and would be hard-pressed to be caught by others in the line. Such product type may include baby products like of the brands having already set in the mind (Gbadamosi, 2018). There is no surprise that reams of brands are actively involved in this area of concern.

Two reasons why brands focus and aim at children, even if not directly, are Keller's customer-based brand equity model (1993) and Aaker's brand equity model (1991, 1996). This simply means that a brand's contact with a child can serve as the beginning of a customer journey that can continue throughout their existence. They built a stronger affinity and relationship with them, despite having presumably purchased very few of the brands. Brand ownership and relationships are thus akin to what Vargo & Lusch (2014) articulated that anything that is not owned as well as not in tangible terms. For many young consumers, it is the intangible relationships, consumption, experience, and feelings, rather than just their favourite products and services, that they desire to possess. The early years, for many children, are formative in terms of how they position and rank brands, assign important features to these products and establish meaning for them. Keller's and Aaker's models reflect the relevance of these components in the long run - that is, when children grow up, these features of a brand become very valuable components of brand equity.

Not just the product itself, but its packaging, also, adds to the salient features. McNeal (2007) suggested that, along with other related agencies, packaging designers target children with the motive to attract the target group of children. As the market place has become a contest for marketers and competition is fierce, it is prudent to focus on colour, design and overall appeal of packaging (Ning, 2015). Packaging is crucial as everyone, be it elder or young consumer, looks at the package for their own reasons. In case of children, packages communicate visually in the shopping stores. McNeal (2007) adds that packages which are not discarded unless they are emptied, for example, toothpaste tubes, body wash bottles, etc. show their messages to children on a recurrent basis, each time they handle the products. This makes way to children knowing and acquiring knowledge about various names of brands along with their features. For example, a study by Elliott & Truman (2020) concluded that food packets are easy to carry advertisements that send strong messages to children.

2.2 Studies Pertaining to Price

In view of the fact that children have their own spending power and influence family purchase decisions, young customers, or children as consumers, are a particularly appealing and unique niche for a wide range of firms in a multitude of sectors. Furthermore, they are not only current but also potential customers. They make the transition from childhood to maturity (Berey & Pollay, 1968; McNeal, 1999). As a result, it's critical to know how children comprehend the concept of the marketing mix, of which price is one of the most essential aspects from a broader marketing standpoint. More often than not, older children believe that brands are greater value for money than younger children, according to Pagla & Brennan (2014). Therefore, it can be construed that price, as one of the marketing mix variables, can be viewed differently depending on the type of customer. Bowen (2000) claims that 72 percent of young consumers believe that good quality entails a higher price. As a result, price has the same, if not greater, impact on young consumers as it does on adults. Furthermore, Moschis & Moore (1979), who explored how young consumers (7–12 years old) consider price and brand names as the most important factors for their buying decisions, present a somewhat different perspective on pricing. They claim that at this point, perceived product features appear to exceed social influences, however the relative relevance of these elements appears to vary depending on the product being evaluated. According to Lindstrom & Seybold (2003), children as early as six years old can apprehend the worth of money, and by the age of eight, they can make a purchasing decision based on the value they can obtain from the goods. Williams, Ashill & Thirkell (2016) further claim that children interpret price in terms of affordability, stating that by 9–10 years old, children begin to take price into consideration and compare prices along with affordability in their selections, and that by 11–12 years old, the majority had evaluated these first-order ideas. Children aged 13–14 years old, on the other hand, were less likely to state affordability. McNeal (2000) claims that at the age of seven, children can be viewed as 'active shoppers,' influencing their parents' decisions, utilizing their pocket money as well as are aware of price differences between products in different stores. Furthermore, children were once thought not to be price-sensitive agents; however, this perception has shifted in recent years. Experiences, awareness about brand and product, intentions, and affluence all influence children's price sensitivity (Gbadamosi, 2018).

2.3 Studies Pertaining to Place

Children and their peers co-create learning in their own surroundings, influencing how they understand and what they perceive about marketing channels. Adults in the child's Zone of Proximal Development teach their own culture's intellectual adaptation tools, which children then incorporate (Vygotskiĭ, Davidov & Silverman, 2006). Young consumers have accustomed to multi-tasking their media, yet continue to think about one medium even after using and knowing about another (Oviedo, Tornquist, Cameron & Chiappe, 2015). Children's desires and the channels they opt for, to fulfill these desires, are shifting quite frequently, as does the manner in which they relate to them. In order for the companies to distribute and deliver their products and services to the target group, they must do so by keeping their young customers at the front line - since young people will shop wherever is most comfortable and accessible to them, as suggested by Gbadamosi (2018). Further, he adds, children buy through physical stores as well as shop online via numerous websites. Young consumers are observant about the products as offered by competitors, the prices available, attributes of the products among others, purchasing online or offline is also one of the important aspects of making a purchase.

The changing character of the media environment has been emphasized, demonstrating how new internet channels for individuals to engage with one another have radically changed (Hollenbeck & Kaikati, 2012). As a result, there is growing evidence that young consumers are more open to novel technology and can even be labeled as change agents (Steenkamp, Ter Hofstede & Wedel, 1999; Spero & Stone 2004; Gurtner & Soye, 2016). Edwards (2013), in a study centred on digital play in the early years and the use of technology in early childhood curriculum, postulates that trends of development are less likely to stay static over time as children gain cultural cognizance that they would use in their adulthood stage, citing Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory. It has been demonstrated that young consumers now interact online in the digital realm. The ability to build brand image has been moved from marketers to consumers through internet content and connections (Tsai & Men, 2013; Godey, Manthiou, Pederzoli, Rokka, Aiello, Donvito & Singh, 2016). Children usually end their day holding gadgets and begin the next day in the same way. As a result, it is not unreasonable to assert that these devices have a significant influence on their consumption pattern (Gbadamosi, 2018). In addition to the previous statements, as materialism has gained prominence in children's lifestyles, their self image has also affected and altered (Chaplin & John, 2010; Otto, 2013; Goldberg, Gorn, Peracchio & Bamossy, 2003). The increasing exposure of youngsters to media, like television, smartphones, and social networking sites, has played a major role in this transformation (Dotson & Hyatt, 2005; Watne, Lobo & Brennan, 2011). Customers, including young consumers, are faced with a prodigious host of options and applications for meeting numerous benefits with the escalations of information technology, cyber technology and attached multi-fun applications and learning devices. Most individuals use their smartphones for a variety of tasks (Nagarkoti, 2009). Children have become one of the most important patrons of such devices, and owning one has also become a symbol of social status.

2.4 Studies Pertaining to Promotion

Questions regarding children's awareness and understanding of advertising sparked research in the field of consumer socialization. Beginning in the early 1970s, there were claims that advertising to children was fundamentally unjust. Contributions by child psychologists and consumer researchers discovered that young consumers have limited emotional intelligence, knowledge of advertising's persuasive goal and perceiving it as informative, accurate, and amusing (Blatt, Spencer & Ward, 1972; Reale, 1972).

However, later research works showed different studies on children. Children can establish attitudes toward commercials even at a very early age (Abideen & Salaria, 2009), judge the commercial's message(s), and react to it appropriately (John, 1999). The impact of the media on a child's attitude varies based on a variety of circumstances, including social status and family role (Asadollahi & Tanha, 2011). When negatively regarded, the media can either help or hurt child's individual self (Harris et al., 2009). Advertisements can lead to violence, discrimination, and negative stereotypes, all of which can negatively affect a child's mindset (Abideen & Salaria, 2010). Advertising has been seen to influence a child's behaviour at all stages (Livingstone & Helpser, 2004), and Harrison (2008) claims that advertising has an implication on children's perception in their usage and consumption. While some other research works have showcased that children are influenced in different ways by commercials based on multiple factors and situations, such as age, position in the society, and the surrounding environment (Goldberg & Gorn, 1978; Stephens, Stutts & Burdick, 1982). Advertising reaches children in a variety of ways, including television, YouTube, apps, radio, billboards, magazines, newspapers, movies, the internet, advergames, text messaging, social media, and more. It is critical for young consumers to understand that commercials are designed to persuade them to buy something. Advertisements attempt to sway the opinion or persuade to alter their audiences' views about anything. Furthermore, advertising strives to make their products and services appear worth buying, perhaps even better than they are. Children, on the other hand, are frequently unable to distinguish between what is genuine and what is not, as stated in a study by Gulla & Purohit (2013). They further established that a child's attitude about ads varies based on how the commercials are perceived.

Because of the importance of children as a major target group, businesses have geared a large amount of marketing messages towards them (Cross, 2002). As a corollary, children increasingly come in contact with advertisements that are specifically targeted at them. Children are more exposed to advertising due to the expanding amount of media utilized by children and the increased freely available, location-independent availability of media (O'Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011). Furthermore, a great variety of commodities are targeted specifically at children as purchasers, for example, through a colourful packaging

design with child-oriented imagery, the tactile or composition of the products (Cook, 2009; Honeyman, 2010; Wilson & Wood, 2004). Children, on the other hand, are not solely influenced by the commercial messages that are aimed specifically at them, they perceive messages and other marketing efforts that are intended for adults and impact their preferences. And Cram & Ng (1999) concluded: “Even before they learn to read, write, or do arithmetic children have already become consumers.”

III. CONCLUSION

In early research, young consumers were not thought to be important in the market environment. But they are a significant market group in the contemporary scenario. Literatures that already exist imply that there is a lot of research focus on children consumers as a research topic. From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, the region grew increasingly apparent and expanded in a variety of ways. However, a lot has evolved since then, and these developments must be taken into account.

Young customers are active from the moment they recognize a need until they evaluate the product after it has been purchased. Moreover, it's not just the products and their attributes that concern them, what is offered by the competitors, different prices such products and services are available at, medium of purchase, that is, the location or place the product is available to them along with the intent of the commercials are several factors of prominence for them to make purchase related decisions. Plethora of studies at different times have been conducted with their findings that may not comply with one another, making it even more indispensable to have further researches in this field.

Recent developments like internet and other technologies have impacted the consumer behaviour of children in many ways. The easy availability of information and frequent interactions with media communications are the extended sources of a child's perception development and behavioural patterns, children's surroundings, comprising of parents and immediate family, friends, schoolmates, etc. are still considered as the primary influencers. They help shape their consumer behaviour and modify it with change in such interactions and passage of time.

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