

Literature Review on the Role of Selected Consumer Socialization Factors on Children

T Mallikarjuna Raju, Dr. G. Chandra Sekhar

Abstract— Study of consumer decision making is influenced by many socialization factors. Important consumer socialization factors are exposure to media, parents influence, family communication patterns, and influence of peer groups. Children are under influence of many socialization factors concurrently which leads to the complexity in understanding the role of these factors. In this paper literature review is done to understand the role of family communication patterns and peer group influence on children consumer decision making process. Since there is cultural diversity from country to country this paper emphasizes the need for study of consumer socialization factors separately to identify which factors should be given priority. The study results will help the marketers to design better marketing communications

Index Terms— Children consumer socialization, Family communication patterns, Role of peers, Socialization factors

I. INTRODUCTION

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.” A comprehensive understanding of consumer socialization factors leads to develop a conceptual framework to study. Literature review emphasized the family communication patterns, and peers influence are the important consumer socialization factors apart from media exposure and parents influence. This paper attempts to a comprehensive review of literature review pertaining to the role of consumer socialization factors on children.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Family communication patterns:

Moschis (1985) had studied the role of family communications on children consumer socialization process. Children learn the consumer socialization from their parents. Influence of parents differs based on the type of products, decision making process stages, and consumer characteristics. It is also observed that concept-oriented family communication style positively relates with the children

participation in consumer decisions and negatively related in socio-oriented family communication style.

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. In concept-oriented family communication orientation children are encouraged to express their ideas. In socio-oriented family communication orientation children are supposed to suppress their inner feelings to maintain harmonious personal relations. Based on the observations family communication patterns are divided into four types which are depicted in the figure 1.

Figure 1. Family Communication Pattern Typology

		Socio-oriented communication	
		Low	High
Concept-oriented communication	Low	Laissez faire	Protective
	High	Pluralistic	Consensual

Moschis and Moore (1979) studied on 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. Foxman, E. R., Tansuhaj, P. S., & Ekstrom, K. M. (1989) in their study revealed that there is less disagreement on adolescents influence in family purchase processes in more concept-oriented families.

Mukherji, J. (2005) found that Indian mothers shown positive attitude towards children advertisements. Also mothers had interactions with their children about television advertisements and exercised control over their children television viewing. These findings are indicating the concept oriented family communication.

Role of peers in children consumer socialization process

Hawkins, DI., Mothersbaugh, DL., Best, RJ (2006) 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. Ward, S., Wackman, D.B., & Wartella, E. (1977) stated peer group influence on children consumer socialization process. Vygotsky, L.S. (1978) emphasized the

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T Mallikarjuna Raju, Research Scholar, Department of Management, Rayalaseema University, Kurnool, India

Dr.G.Chandra Sekhar, Professor & Director, School of Management Studies, Joginpally B.R. Engineering College, Hyderabad, India

role of peers in children learning process and proposed children learns while interacting in their environment and with the cooperation of 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 and Tisdall (1997) stated children learn different kinds of knowledge through peer relationships than parents or teachers. Rogers, D. (1969) had found children at young age start interacting with peers and siblings rather than alone and thus shape their emotional and social development. 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. Moschis, G. P. & Churchill (1978) stated children who frequently communicated with the peers shown higher level of materialism. Peers also influence in transferring the knowledge of brand, style, and consumption patterns to children.

Achenreiner, G. B. (1997) conducted a study on 300 children in the age group of 8, 12 and 16 to examine the relationship between susceptibility to peer group influence and materialistic attitude of children. The study revealed there is a positive correlation between susceptibility to peers influence and materialistic attitude of children. Valkenburg, P.M. and Cantor, J. (2001) developed a descriptive model to understand the development of consumer behavior of children aged between infancy to 12 years opined that peers opinions played an important role on the children in the age group of 8 – 12 years.

Costanzo, P. R., & Shaw, M. E. (1966) had studied the relationship of conformity and age of children. Total of 24 subjects were taken in four age groups. Analysis of results indicated tendency to conform to peers increase with age during the preadolescent period and thereafter decrease through early adulthood. This has proved conformity to pressure from peers is a non linear function of age. Moschis, G. P., Moore, R. L., & Smith, R. B. (1984) conducted a study on 734 adolescents through self administered questionnaires in class room to find the impact of family communication on adolescent consumer socialization and explained adolescents learn consumer knowledge through the interactions with the peers. Brittain, C. V. (1963) conducted a research study to find the parent and peer cross pressure on adolescent choices. The study revealed adolescents shown more peer conformity in their choices where social value are changing rapidly and also on the decisions where immediate results are expected.

Farooq, W., & Latif, A. (2011) studied how Pakistan urban children process television advertising messages by taking sample size of 230 children in the age group of 7 to 12 years by including the consumer socialization of children, gender issues, and psychographic factors as independent variables.

The study revealed peer interaction by the children shown influence in understanding and interpretation of television commercials. Srivastava, R., & Dash S.K. (2011) conducted a study to find the influence of factors on children FMCG products buying behavior on 180 children in the age group of 12 to 15 years. Children gave more importance to peers opinions than the television commercials in product purchase since interpersonal communication is perceived more trustworthy. Soni, S., & Upadhyaya, M (2007) explored the pester power of kids, and effects of television commercials on buying of FMCG and consumer durables. Descriptive and exploratory research design methods used for the study with a stratified sample size of 100 children in the age group of 9-14. The study revealed peers and media greatly influenced the children's choice of brands, consumption behavior and consumption patterns.

Acuff, D. (1997) explained in the children in their early stages of adolescence peers play important role in deciding the buying decisions. Festinger, L. (1954) studied the opinion influence processes among social groups and extended the study to include social comparison is also a part of the process. Adolescents will get reaffirmation with the peers to validate their perceived knowledge acquired from the family members. Chaffee, S.H. and Albert R. Tims (1976) evaluated family communication patterns of adolescents in context of television viewing along with parents, siblings, friends and alone. The study revealed peer orientation is likely with compliance to peer viewing norms when viewed with friends.

Rossiter, J. R., & Robertson, T. S. (1974) studied the children's defenses against television commercials by conducting personal interviews with sample size of 289 primary school boys from five schools in the area of Philadelphia Catholic school system. Children's defenses could be responsive to suggestions in relevance contexts through the parents and siblings social interactions as well as with the peer group experiences with advertising and advertised products. This study suggests children build defense strategies against the television commercials using social interactions. Mangleburg, T. E., & Bristol, T. (1998) conducted research to the sources of adolescent skepticism by surveying 300 high school students with an average age of 16 and identified that social interactions with the parents, peers, and television helped them in developing skepticism towards the television advertising. Knowledge learned from the market place helped them to learn the advertiser's persuasion techniques.

Martensen, A., & Hansen, F. (2001) in their research paper found children aged eight able to understand the advertisement intentions. One in five teenagers often bought the products even though they do not trusted the advertisements due to the exposure of peer pressure. Ritson, M., & Elliott, R. (1999) evaluated children interpretation of advertisements in context of cultural themes namely experiencing the text, interpreting the text, evaluating the text, ritualizing the text, and applying the text by following ethnographic approach. The study revealed children received assistance from the peers while interpreting the advertisements text and ritualizing the text which indicates advertising is a cultural phenomenon and obviously conveys personal and group meaning through how the advertising is

experienced, interpreted, evaluated, ritualized and metaphorical contexts.

Boush, D. M., Friestad, M., & Rose, G. M. (1994) made a longitudinal study of high school students to assess the skepticism towards advertisements. The study revealed that youngsters exhibit more skepticism with the increased levels of awareness of advertising tactics to influence consumers along with product experiences, and social interactions with parents and peers. Lee, E. B., & Browne, L. A. (1995) conducted a study on African American teenager's response to television advertisements on athletic shoes featuring African American athletes. Sample size of 161 was drawn from the public schools in Houston in the age group of 12 to 18. It is found that friends were most important source of the product category apart from television advertising. Caron, A., & Ward, S. (1975) found that television is the important source followed by friends as the source of Christmas gift request among the children in third and fifth grade. Brooks-Gunn et al. (1993) concluded that neighborhoods directly influence child and adolescent development.

III. DISCUSSION

In this paper an attempt is made to review the literature pertaining to family communication patterns and peer influence on children socialization process. Other important children socialization factors are media exposure, parents influence. The past literature indicating concept-oriented family communication orientation encouraged the children involvement consumer decision making process. Peer influence played important role in understanding about the brands, consumption, and choice of brands among the children. Children also learned to analyze and interpret the television commercials through peer communications. Since multiple consumer socialization factors are influencing the children concurrently, further studies are required to prioritize the socialization factors using appropriate statistical modeling. Also it is important to replicate these studies both at country levels and state levels within the country due to the vast cultural diversity. This research studies will help the marketers in designing better marketing communications towards children.

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