

"Child's Play"; Pestering Power Influencing a Parent's Purchasing Behavior in Sri Lanka

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Aims: For years, there has been extensive attention in both theoretical and sociological literature regarding a child's ability to exert influence on behavior; in both developed and developing countries, a child's pester power has well recognized by interested parties. Pester Power, often known as the 'nag factor,' refers to adolescent shopping requests directed at their parents.

Methodology: Due to the scarcity of information available on this social phenomenon in Sri Lanka, this paper focuses on conceptualizing a consistent set of factors and determinants discovered after an extensive literature review from a large number of sources and providing a foundation for future research that addresses an empirical and practical gap.

Results: This paper presents a concept model that can be used by Sri Lankan sociological as well as theoretical academicians and researchers to predict the pester power of Sri Lankan youth and adolescents. The model includes demographic, socio-psychographic, and informative factors that could influence the pester power of Sri Lankan youth and adolescents.

Originality: Because this is the first study of its kind in Sri Lanka, marketers and academics will be able to focus their attention on the growing behavior of young consumers in Sri Lanka in relation to

the FMCG market by using this consistent set of factors.

Conclusion: Despite the fact that Sri Lanka has a very traditional culture that places a premium on conformity to group norms and social acceptance and thus confirms a collectivistic culture in which children are expected to be subservient, there is this new wave of incredibly energetic, more informed young children who make their own consumer decisions. Empirical evidence on the increasing participation of children in family purchasing and their conversion into active consumers in a rapidly expanding market in south east Asian countries is predominant.

Keywords: Marketing; adolescents; young consumers; pester power; fast moving consumer goods; advertising; business.

1. INTRODUCTION

The social phenomenon known as pester power is one that is frequently raised in the literature for children's marketing, and indeed on a societal level. There is a prevalent school of thought that holds that when children make purchasing requests of their parents, they may become irritated and unsatisfied if their requests are not granted. In contrast to previous research studies, which have tended to prioritize parental perspectives on pester power, the type of the products requests ranging from fast-moving consumer goods to electronic items [1], it has accumulated a large body of knowledge about the nature of a child's interaction with his or her parents in a commercial context, particularly from a marketing perspective, and as many past researchers have denoted, a child's age has a significant impact on the level of pestering as well [2]. A common thread running through much of the debate is the fear that advertising will trigger the so-called "pester power" phenomenon, which will result in nagging, unhappiness, or conflict [3-4]. This is set against the backdrop of ongoing discussion about the role that various marketing activities play in children's purchasing decisions and requests to their parents [5-7], as well as the continued importance of the child consumer in contemporary society [8]. However, another perspective on pester power is offered elsewhere, questioning whether parent-child interaction in the context of purchasing requests is necessarily a cause for concern, or whether it is a normal part of growing up within the family unit [9]. According to the consumer socialization perspective, the journey through childhood is a learning curve in which children acquire consumer-related knowledge, skills, and behaviors [10-12]. Children learn these skills through interactions with their parents, peers, and the media [13-14].

Furthermore, past investigations of the power of pester power have tended to place a strong emphasis on the power of the parent in granting or declining a purchase request. However, it is equally possible that a child has his or her own personal wealth with which to purchase the product, and that the child's connection with parents is centered on earning their consent to use their own money in a specific manner during this encounter. Because of this, our current notion of pester power may be one-dimensional if parents are content to purchase the item without causing friction, or if parents are content to enable children to spend their own money to get the desired item. This paper aims to present a concept indicator model that combines a consistent level of factors, such as demographic, socio-psychographic, and informative factors, with the nature of children's interactions with their parents, which has traditionally been the focus of research. The authors acknowledge the paucity of literature in the Sri Lankan context, filling the empirical gap and providing a foundation for marketers to examine this social behavior to direct their marketing strategies and mix to maintain business growth, as it benefits marketers to increase market share by developing strategies and marketing campaigns [15]. This nag factor is a psychological proclivity that can be seen in children, and it is overwhelming and unavoidable [16]. After conducting an extensive literature review and stating congruent demographic, socio-psychographic, and informative factors, the findings are presented as a concept indicator model. It also aims to add to the body of knowledge on consumer socialization by responding to a call for more research in the Sri Lankan context on the relationship between purchase influence and negotiation strategies, as well as other aspects of children's consumer knowledge and behavior [11].

2. METHODOLOGY

The authors' study used a comprehensive literature survey method to investigate factors that contribute to the emergence of a child's behavior. The articles for this study were found in reputable journal databases such as Science Direct, Emerald Insight, Elsevier, Springer, JSTOR, and Research Gate, among others, between 1967 and 2020. Articles were found using keywords such as pester power, purchase behavior, and child-influence. Following that, a screening procedure was performed, which included the most relevant publications that met the requirements of the literature review. The number of studies found, saved, and discarded at each stage of the literature review is shown in Table 1.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introducing pester power of young consumer

As a concept, "pester power" is unquestionably one of the most delicate, emotionally charged, and contentious aspects of current marketing practice. According to Shoham And Dalakas [17] it can be defined as children's influence on family consumption patterns in general and children asking their parents to purchase products for

them in particular [18]. When describing this type of purchase request behavior, other authors use more loaded terminology than before. For example, Bridges and Briesch [19] refer to the "nag factor" as a factor in their research. McDermott et al.,[20] advocate for the use of the term "pester," acknowledging the emotive connotations associated with the term. Marshall et al.,[21] discuss the practices of denigration and denial employed by critics and advertisers, respectively, in the pursuit of pester power. Because of the potential for parent–child conflict [22], as well as concerns about the advertising and marketing of certain foods that may have implications for children's consumption, and the accompanying question mark over obesity, the phenomenon of pester power has elicited a great deal of societal disquiet(38). Pungent power has been discovered in children when it comes to products ranging from relatively inexpensive purchases such as food to expensive items such as the choice of a family car(16). The literature has also discovered many different methods by which children approach their parents and request items for them to buy them. As an illustration,(32) distinguishes between four types of approaches: informing strategies (asking or telling parents about products), negative strategies (pestering), persuasion strategies, and reasoning strategies (value-for-money offers).

Table 1. Literature screening process (Source- Authors Creation)

Variables	Factors	Literature
Demographic	Age	(Chaudhary, 2018; Chaudhary and Gupta, 2012; Laczniak and Palan, 2004; Mangleburg, 1990; McNeal, 2007; Nicholls and Cullen, 2004)
	Gender	(Elliott, 2009; Flurry and Veeck, 2009; Martensen and Grønholdt, 2008; McNeal, 2007; Thomson et al., 2007)
	Family Income	(Chaudhary, 2018; Evans and Chandler, 2006; O'Neill et al., 2014; Ramya, 2016; Sharma and Sonwaney, 2014)
	Family Structure	(Batounis-Ronner et al., 2007; Brody, 2004; Dunn, 2007; John, 1999; Lien et al., 2018; McHale et al., 2012; Rueter and Koerner, 2008; Sanner et al., 2020)
Psychographic	Materialism	(Colby and Kohlberg, 1987; Richins and Chaplin, 2015; Schor, 2005)
	Peer Pressure	(Bristol, 2005; Gulati, 2017; Heckler and Childers, 1992; Opoku and Abdul-Muhmin, 2017)
Informative	Advertising	(Ambler, 2007; Dotson and Hyatt, 2000; Hill and Tilley, 2002; Lee et al., 2007; Prible, 2017)
	Packaging	(Hota and Charry, 2014; Rettie and Brewer, 2000; Roberts, 2005; Saunders Philip Lewis et al., 2012; Taghavi and Seyedsalehi, 2015; Turner et al., 2006)

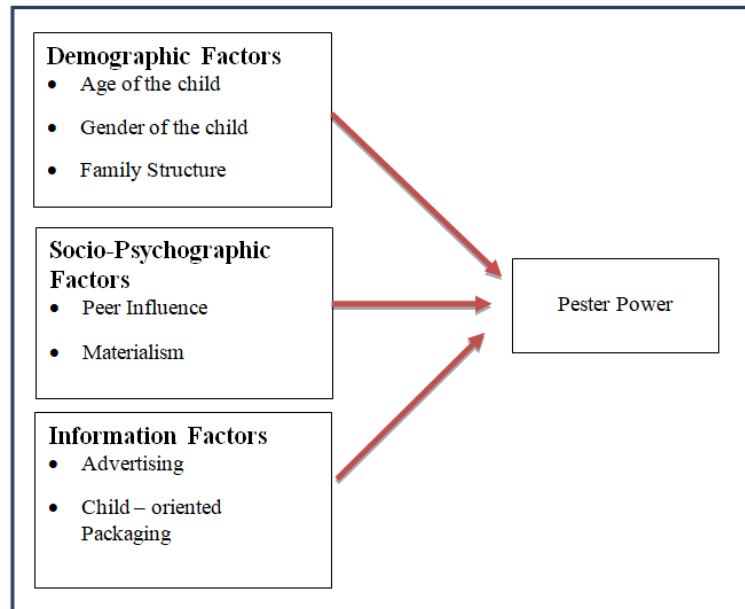


Fig. 1. Concept indicator model (Source; Author Creation)

3.2 Pester power in different cultures

A study done by Chaudhary et al., [23] explained how global factors shape children's behavior and actions. From the 1940s to the 1950s, children were seen as extensions of their parents' purchasing power. Time, socio-cultural shifts, decreasing family size, rising incomes, and expanding media, especially television and the internet, have proven children to be irrefutable co-decision makers. Marketers say kids are a major consumer market with direct buying power for snacks and candy and indirect buying power for big-ticket items. In Oman, Chaudhary et al., [23] investigated how a child's influence changes over time and how young consumers' pestering behavior varies across cultures. McNeal and Yeh, [24] conducted the first empirical study on Chinese children, which was expanded in consumer socialization model [24], materialism [19] and product knowledge sources among Chinese children [25]. On the other hand, India has been slow to recognize the importance of kids. The literature supports this. Few studies have looked at the situation of young Indian children. In India, the focus has been on long-term transactions (such as computers or TVs). They didn't ask if this was for the kid or the family (because ownership influences participation in decision-making). Parents sought their children's advice on a variety of purchases due to their brand awareness. However, as shown in the West, children do influence expressive decisions

such as color, model, brand, form, and time of purchase [26]. Hence, it is clear that children in multiple nations elicit a various ranges of pestering behavior.

3.3 Analysis

3.3.1 Demographic Factors influencing the emergence of pester power

Age: The inherent curiosity, inventiveness, and impulsiveness of children lead to a marked difference in their thinking and behavior from that of their adult counterparts. The development and consumer behavior of children are influenced by their chronological age. A variety of demographic factors have an impact on how involved children are in their parents' shopping choices. The education and income of parents, as well as the age and gender of the children, and their socialization, are all factors that influence the development of children. The influence of children grows stronger as they get older [27-29]. Children between the ages of 11 and 12 are more likely than children between the ages of 8 and 10 to employ strategies to annoy their parents [27]. Because of the high level of influence held by the targeted demographic, advertisers now have a plethora of new opportunities at their disposal. Marketers have begun to categorize young people based on their age. Significant factors in determining a child's level of engagement and involvement in the

shopping process include the child's age, as well as his or her natural cognitive and physical development [30]. Additionally, according to Chaudhary, [31], "almost every parent" purchases items for their three-year-old children's benefit. The ability of a child to bargain and persuade their parents to make logical purchases increases as the child grows in maturity. In accordance with McNeal,[32], older children employ persuasion more frequently than younger children because they are more familiar with brand names. The emotional system of the human being will become more apparent to children as they grow in understanding.

Gender: Specifically, McNeal,[32] asserts that, when compared to their peers, children exert a disproportionate amount of influence over their parents' purchasing decisions. Because gender is determined at birth, it can have an impact on conversations, as well as on humor and conflict. All of our institutions and actions, as well as all of our thoughts and goals, are shaped by the gender of the people who participate in them. Before the age of two, a child is unable to distinguish between male and female sexual characteristics. Growing in both age and gender, a child's purchasing power increases as he or she grows in age and gender. In accordance with Elliott,[33] research, women choose items that elicit sentimental thoughts or recollections of previous experiences. Visual appeal, mental enjoyment, and emotional attachment are all factors that influence females' purchasing decisions when it comes to clothing and accessories. Men make purchasing decisions based on their physical characteristics, whereas women make purchasing decisions based on the utility of the items they are considering purchasing. It has been reported that when parents are out shopping, they do not take their children's suggestions into consideration, according to Martensen and Grønholdt,[34] The authors such as Flurry and Veeck,[35] discovered that men have a greater influence on food purchases in the home than women. They also discovered that male children have a greater influence on food purchases than female children. One study, on the other hand, discovered that female children had an impact on the purchasing decisions of their families. Thomson et al.,[36] discovered that the purchases made by their families were influenced by the purchases made by their female children. For the final point, female children of the in same age group have greater emotional attachment to a product than male

children of the same age group, according to research. According to the findings of a recent study, sons are more likely than daughters to provide explicit explanations for their gift requests. And it is undeniable that marketers employ this strategy to communicate with people of all ages and genders, including children.

Family Income: According to Ramya,[37], the income level of a consumer can have an impact on their shopping habits. Because people's spending habits differ, the amount of money earned by the family is significant. Earnings per person are calculated as follows: After meeting one's basic needs, it is possible to earn additional income. As a result of purchasing more frequently, higher-income families have a better chance of obtaining what they desire in comparison to low-income families, according to Chaudhary,[31]. Aside from independence, the child's behavior was influenced by the wages earned by his or her parents and other relatives and extended family members. Children have more freedom to discuss their options and spending habits, regardless of their family's financial situation. Parents can empower their children's consumption by encouraging it while also establishing appropriate limits for them. Families with two incomes have greater purchasing power from a psychological standpoint. Having a second income, especially one that is well compensated, means deferring motherhood, as we are all well aware of this fact. Several researchers, including Sharma and Sonwaney,[38], have found that parents are overly emotional about their children as a result of delayed parenthood and greater family affluence. According to O'Neill et al.,[39] the mother is in charge of overseeing and purchasing goods for the household. When it comes to their children's pestering, parents with a higher income are less irritated. Every day, children use their persuasive abilities to demand goods, regardless of the financial situation of their family. However, many, if not all, children resort to deception in order to persuade their parents to make a purchasing decision [40].

Family Structure: "Regular" families are no longer relevant in the twenty-first century. Western societies are witnessing an increase in divorce, single-parent households, and the presence of hidden extended families [41]. The purchasing habits of a family are a reflection of their values. In accordance with McHale et al.,[42] and Sanner et al.,[43], changes in family structure have an impact on children's academic

performance. It makes no difference how a child's growth and development are influenced by connections and dynamics in their environment. Since then, significant progress has been made in the field of sibling research. Additionally, frequent sibling contact allows them to have an impact on the behavior and development of their younger siblings [44][42]. Siblings, along with partners, serve as the "primary benchmark for social comparison," as the phrase goes. For example, siblings can benefit from their parents' ability to see things from their perspective, to empathize with them, and to solve problems [45]. In accordance with Batounis-Ronner et al.,[46], children's influence on family purchases is growing in importance. While they are a part of the family group, they are less reliant on their parents for support. Aside from that, they are known to irritate their siblings on a regular basis.

Aspects of consumer socialization were examined through the lens of patterns of family communication that were described as pluralistic, protective, lax, and consensual [47]. Their ability to study independently is enhanced by the fact that they are encouraged to express themselves without regard to authority or conformity. The absence of conversation and the absence of uniformity are two characteristics of free-range households. Family members rarely communicate with one another and place a lower value on the importance of family unity. The environment in which a child grows up differs depending on the household in which the child lives. The degree of freedom of thought and expression varies depending on the size and structure of the family [11]. Families with a single child are more likely to be able to meet their responsibilities on a regular basis than other families. The foundation of the family has an impact on the children, the parents, and the consumption of the household. When it came to purchasing, mothers frequently had an advantage over their fathers or male relatives. As a result, the attitudes of the members of the family toward their pastimes were very different [43].

3.4 Socio-psychographic Factors Influencing the Emergence of Pester Power

3.4.1 Materialism

According to Schor,[48], materialism is defined by emphasizing the acquisitive nature of children.

These purchases are necessitated by the availability of funds as well as the willingness to work in order to generate income. Examination of children's materialism throughout this formative period appeared to be critical because it was a novel value to be considered at the time. "When I get older, all I want is to have a well-paying job," he says. The current generation of adolescents, according to him, is the most materialistic, brand-conscious, and consumer-driven generation in the history of the world. Approximately 400 labels can be recognized by a toddler, while approximately 300 brands can be recognized by a kindergartener, according to Richins and Chaplin,[49]. Brainwashing or clever marketing are both possible outcomes of using a product's name to repeatedly target small children. In order to demonstrate their affection for their children and to uphold the family's values and reputation, parents frequently purchase gifts for them.

Parents frequently use their material possessions to influence the behavior of their children. These items should not be used to discipline children but should instead be used to socialize them [50][49]. As a result, parents unintentionally instill a culture of consumerism in their children. Parents frequently motivate their children with material gifts, rather than affectionate words from their own lips. On the other hand, parental love and wealth may have an impact on the materialistic impulses of young children. Children are in a "preconventional level" of moral development until they are nine years old, with their attention focused on their own needs and desires. Materialism, such as money, communicates the message, "I want this; please get it for me. Materialism is a new value system that encourages children to be acquisitive from an early age.

3.4.2 Peer pressure

When people act in ways that their peers approve of, this is referred to as peer pressure. Despite the fact that peer pressure is not always harmful, it can lead to individuals engaging in behaviors that are disapproved of by their peers. Gulati,[51] asserts that, whether people are aware of it or not, their peers have an impact on their lives in a variety of ways. Peer pressure and persistent learning have both been shown to have an impact on an individual's decision-making. Furthermore, young people are susceptible to peer pressure in order to be accepted, to fit in, or to avoid being teased by their peers. Others may be interested in taking

part in your experimentation. Because "everyone does it," some children may be oblivious to their own judgment or common sense as a result of the widespread practice. Others are swayed by their peers. Peer pressure has been shown to influence young people's perceptions of what "is" and "is not" acceptable [52]. Peers, instructors, and coworkers all serve as normative reference groups, as do parents and other relatives. These individuals are referred to as comparative reference groups due to the fact that they have achieved a level of success that others can strive to achieve. Bristol,[53] emphasizes the critical role that parents, and friends play in the development and self-esteem of children and teenagers as well as their own. Young adults' materialism and financial expectations are influenced by their parents' financial support. Adolescents who are self-sufficient are more likely to be able to reconcile their materialism with their parental support. The rejection of one's parents is necessary for the development of a healthy self-concept in adolescents who have low self-esteem [54]. The materialistic outlook on life that these adolescents have developed stems from their desire to increase their self-esteem through the acquisition of material possessions. When a teen's purchases are challenged by his or her parents, the teen is more likely to misrepresent information. When it comes to sensitive and cooperative families, sincerity is more prevalent than when it comes to multicultural and free-spirited families.

3.5 Informative Factors Influencing the Emergence of Pester Power

3.5.1 Advertising

According to Lee et al.,[55], child-centric advertising is defined as an increase in consumption among children. Furthermore, advertising emphasizes children as the primary influencers of family purchasing decisions, which is counterproductive. As a result of the findings, new children's television programs are now able to intimidate their parents into purchasing promoted goods. Children are also educated about new products and companies through television advertisements, which account for approximately 80 percent of all primary sources of information. According to Ambler,[56], children have harassed their parents for fast food, clothing, chocolate, chips, and toys, among other things. Furthermore, product modifications alone will not be enough to entice young buyers. Allowing children to watch commercials

increases their ability to pester their parents and teachers. Demand is increased as a result of publicity, which leads to an increase in sales. When given the opportunity, young customers will pester their parents to allow them to purchase the items they want. Sales will eventually increase as a result of this strategy [57].

As per to the findings of the study, celebrities who portray children's film or cartoon characters can increase the ability of children to pester their parents. Young people are more likely to discover new companies and products as a result of public relations efforts. Because of the immaturity of a child's thought process, advertising encourages them to purchase a particular brand when they reach the buying age. Advertising on children's films can be used by marketers to draw attention to their products [58]. The food manufacturing industry in the United Kingdom, according to Prible,[59], has gained significant access to young customers as a result of continuous advertising. Commercials are broadcast during children's after-school shows and Sunday morning programs in order to accomplish this. This strategy increases the number of young customers who are drawn to products and pester their parents to purchase them. In light of the foregoing, previous studies have discovered that advertising is more concerned with informing children than it is with informing adults. Marketers are increasingly enlisting the assistance of children in order to persuade their parents to make a purchase. Marketers reach out to teenagers through traditional media and social media platforms.

3.5.2 Packaging

It is claimed by Taghavi and Seyedsalehi,[60] that packaging attracts young clients who are inconvenient for their parents and other adult relatives. Infants and toddlers respond favorably to visual cues that direct their attention to bright colors and encourage them to think outside the box. Marketers can use the pester power of young consumers to influence their parents' purchasing decisions. The use of a container or cover to protect a product while it is being handled, shipped, stored, or otherwise handled. The container or cover that surrounds protecting a product while it is being handled, shipped, or kept in a storage facility. Packaging that is child-friendly should be used to entice young consumers, who will then hound their parents to purchase the goods once they have seen them

[2]. Colors, graphics, and brand logos are used by a child to nag his or her parents into purchasing a product. Utilizing child-friendly packaging may result in an increase in nagging behavior on the part of the consumer [22]. At the same time, proper packaging protects the product and effectively communicates its message [61]. Marketers who use child-friendly packaging are frequently successful in persuading parents to purchase their products. Packaging has the ability to captivate and excite young consumers. In the food industry, child-size packaging labeled "kid's meals" is now available for purchase [62]. Package design has a significant impact on the purchasing decisions of young consumers, as explained by Rettie and Brewer,[62] and Saunders Philip Lewis et al.,[63]. As a result, marketers can communicate with children while simultaneously encouraging them to worry about their parents. They discovered that the packaging had an impact on both the purchasing decisions of customers and the ability of young customers to irritate the parents who are the real customers.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The concept indicator model (figure 1) was created with the goal of developing a model that could be used to identify the most likely methods through which elements determining pester power originate. The model was developed with the purpose of identifying the most likely elements determining the behavior of pester power elicited in children. In addition, because earlier research has revealed a vast and inconsistent number of factors impacting the pester power of children, the investigation of these elements will contribute to the development of the model. Using the consumer socialization hypothesis, which says that young customers have the power to influence their parents' purchasing behaviors, the naive assumption was explored in conjunction with the other findings. This was supported by the study conducted Ward,[12] Following that, the research team performs a thorough examination of the literature on this social phenomena, with a particular emphasis on three key factors: demographics, socio-psychographics, and instructive content, among others.

A century ago, researchers in countries in the western region discovered that, despite significant research, studies of the social phenomena of pester power had come up with no definitive answers, that was further analyzed

in the mid-western and South Asian countries due to the dearth of studies founded [31]. A study has been conducted to identify the characteristics of individuals' demographic, socio-psychographic, and informational traits that contribute to the establishment of pester power. We began by discussing age, gender, household income, and family structure, before moving on to other topics of conversation. Sub-factors such as materialism and peer pressure were explored, and they were found to be significant. Third, advertising and packaging was used to disseminate information to the public. Specifically, the model asserts that these three variables lead to the development of a young consumer's pester power, which in turn influences the decision of a parent to acquire Sri Lankan fast moving consumer products (FMCG). As marketers by emphasizing on these consistent level of factors to tap into this social phenomenon that acts as a behavior of a child would help them to persevere the growth in business [15].

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Further research is encouraged in order to validate the described relationships in terms of their pestering power, and it will serve as a foundation for marketers and academicians in the child-behavior areas of interest in the Sri Lankan context, on both a theoretical and practical level in both theoretical and practical areas of interest. As there is a paucity of research accessible in Southeast Asia, the results of this study will be useful in determining whether the ailment is prevalent in the aforementioned region. The research is recommended to conduct understanding this behavior among the youngsters under the age category of eight to eighteen as it was also recommended by past research [64].

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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