CHAPTER FOUR

LITERATURE REVIEW

The earlier chapter helps to understand the basic child development theories so as to produce an elementary understanding of various psychological, cognitive and behavioural dynamics of children. The present chapter reviews the past literature and is divided into three broad dimensions:

a) Influence of children in family decision making,
b) Child request strategies and parents’ responses and
c) Child socialization.

4.1 Influence Of Children In Family Decision Making

In the recent years, children have been recognized as a formidable segment affecting the family decision making process and hence have received increasing attention from the marketers, advertisers, retailers, academicians, consumer educators, public policy makers and of course the students of socialization and consumer behavior.

‘Pester Power’ or ‘Kidfluence’ or the ‘Nag’ Factor is the direct or indirect influence kids have over family household purchases (Soni and Upadhyaya, 2007). As noted by Rossister (1979), the influence or involvement construct really has two meanings: Children’s influence can result from active efforts of the child to influence purchase decisions and also passive effect (Wells, 1968) borne by parents’ consideration of the child’s unstated preferences/needs (as cited by E. Belch, A. Belch, and Ceresino, 1985).

Research on the influence of children in family purchase decision-making dates back to the 1960s when Berey and Pollay (1968) conducted a study on the child’s role as influence in cereal purchase decisions. Many research studies since then furthered the
research on the degree to which parents yield in to children’s influence attempts. Some researchers have expressed concern over the fact that studies on family decision making hover over husband-wife interaction giving less importance to children (Ward and Wackman, 1972).

4.1.1 Factors affecting children’s influence in decision making

McNeal (1999) portrays children as the major influencers in most family decisions. However, the extent to which children affect the purchasing decision is determined by the following factors - mainly being Product, Family and the Child’s Characteristics.

![Diagram showing factors affecting children's influence in decision making]

(Source: Developed by the researcher)

Figure 4-1: Factors affecting Influence of Children in Decision Making
Figure 4-1 broadly categorizes the determinant variables for the child’s influence in family purchases. A brief description on each of these variables helps to understand the influence patterns clearly.

1) Product

Many researchers have concluded that the level of child influence is product-specific (Moschis, Moore, and Stephens 1977). However, product related characteristics like the product type, end usage and the price value moderate their influence level.

a) Product type - Past studies include evidences of children’s nagging for various children products like toys, restaurant visits, games, soup, ketchups, facial tissues, CDs, cassettes, etc. More influence is shown on the decision related to family holidays compared to the minimal influence they have on the choice of grocery items (Foxman, Tansuhaj, and Ekstrom, 1989). Product knowledge and product importance are expected to affect the extent of child’s influence (Belch, Belch, & Ceresino, 1985; Foxman et al. 1989).

Table 4.1 shows how the teens (segmented by age group and their gender) spend their money on various products of their choice.

b) End usage - Ward and Wackman (1972) showed through their studies that parents are more likely to yield to children’s influence attempts when the purchase is for a product to be used by the child. The same is also confirmed by Bocker (1986), Foxman and Tansuhaj (1988) and Tinson and Nancarrow (2005) wherein they showed that children have more influence for children related products than those related to the family.

c) Price value - Past studies have reported high levels of yielding (about 70% of the time) for inexpensive products like snacks, cereals though there might be some gate keeping by the mothers with respect to a few acceptable brands (Ahuja, Capella, and Taylor, 1998; Robertson, 1979).
### Table 4.1: Personal Spending of Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Going Out</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-10 years old</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-14 years old</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tapes and CDs</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-10 years old</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-14 years old</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Computer and Video Games</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-10 years old</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-14 years old</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Clothes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-10 years old</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-14 years old</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Toys and Games</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-10 years old</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-14 years old</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Toiletries and Cosmetics</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-10 years old</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-14 years old</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: BMRB's UK Youth TGI. Adapted from Lindstrom and Seybold, 2004, *Brandchild*, p.53)

### Table 4.2: Product classification based on Price Value and End Usage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Products’ Price Value</th>
<th>End Usage of the Product for the child</th>
<th>End Usage of the Product for the family</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>High</strong></td>
<td>Bicycle, Clothes, Play-Station</td>
<td>Holidays, Computers, TV, Car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low</strong></td>
<td>Stationery, Ice-creams, Chocolates, Toys, Games, CDs/Cassettes</td>
<td>Toothpaste, Soaps, Ketchup, Cereals, Shampoo, Movie, Restaurants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Developed by the researcher)
Based on the End usage and Price value of the product, an apriori categorization of products is possible as shown in Table 4.2.

2) Family variables

Past studies in this area indicate that the extent of influence that the child has on the family is largely dependent on the family variables including family socialization, size of the family (small and large, nuclear or joint) and the structure of the family (single income or dual income, single parent family or dual parent family) and social class.

a) Parental socialization - Parental socialization is a major factor moderating the influence the child has on parents. If the parents are authoritarian, they are less likely to be influenced by their children (Cowell, 2001). In a study on the purchase behavior of a mother for a child’s preferred packaged cereals, it was seen that the influence was moderated by the child’s assertiveness and the mother’s child-centredness. However, in the study by Berey and Pollay (1968) contrary to the previously hypothesized correlation pattern, it was observed that although the association between child-centeredness and the purchase was significant at the 0.05 level, Spearman rank correlation was negative ($r = -.27$). This could be attributed to the child-centered mother’s tendency to favour healthy food more rather than that demanded by the child. Wells (1965) reports that when other family members have no special brand preferences (as cited by Moschis & Mitchell, 1986) and when the mother regards all brands as more or less the same, the preferences expressed by children are apt to determine what the whole family consumes.

b) Family structure - The number of working parents also plays an important role in the child’s personhood status. With mothers working, more kids are becoming the “Latchkey kids” as children take on greater household responsibilities because either their single or divorced parent or both parents are still at work when they return home from
school. Guber and Berry (1993, p.16) in their survey report that about half of them regularly purchased food for the family or at least participated in family purchases (as cited by Cook, 2000).

c) Social Class and Family Income - There are mixed reviews on the relationship between social class/family income and its effect on children’s purchase related influence. Moschis, Moore, and Stephens (1977) observed that middle-class adolescents appear to attain less independence in purchasing as they grow older than do adolescent consumers in lower and upper social classes. This might be due to adherence to class norms which is strictly followed by the middle-class stratum.

Table 4.3 shows the review of some of the important studies related to family variables.

Table 4.3 : Review of literature related to the family variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Variables</th>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parental style</td>
<td>If the parent is authoritarian, they are less likely to be influenced by their children.</td>
<td>Cowell (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mothers who interact frequently with their children received significantly more purchase requests than mothers who interacted on a less frequent basis.</td>
<td>Wiman (1985)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family structure</td>
<td>The importance of children in single parent families is relatively more than dual parent families. This is due to added household responsibility and more independent purchasing habits.</td>
<td>Ahuja, Capella, and Taylor, (1998); Darley and Lim (1986)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Single-parent families are one of the fastest growing family types and seem to be less inclined to shared decision making within the family.</td>
<td>Lee and Beatty (2002) and Lee and Collins (2000) as cited in Tinson and Nancarrow (2005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family income</strong></td>
<td>In large families, children are more likely to be involved in purchase decisions.</td>
<td>Nelson (1978)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>With both parents working, children enjoy more purchasing power as parents can’t spare much time explaining and hence fulfill their children’s demands.</td>
<td>Verma and Kapoor (2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children in the middle class and higher income families have more influence in purchase decisions than children in the low income, low social class families.</td>
<td>Atkin (1978), Moschis and Mitchell (1986), Nelson (1978)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In contrast to the earlier finding, pestering happens more in the lower income families due to higher proportion of divorces.</td>
<td>Brandweek (1998) as cited by Bridges and Briesch (2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family income plays an important role in the choice of the various responses by parents to their children’s purchase requests. With an increase in the family income, the chances of parents’ refusal tend to decrease.</td>
<td>Verma and Kapoor (2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>One moderating factor likely to mediate the child’s attitudinal and behavioural responses to television advertising is his income group and as such the level of expectancy of receiving what he sees advertised.</td>
<td>Gorn and Goldberg (1977)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children who earn income are more influential in family purchases than those who don’t.</td>
<td>Foxman, Tansuhaj, and Ekstrom(1989), Moschis and Mitchell (1986)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social class</strong></td>
<td>Children in the higher socio-economic strata understand advertising intent better than children from the lower strata.</td>
<td>Panwar and Agnihotri (2006)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Middle-class adolescents appear to attain less independence in purchasing as they grow older than do adolescent consumers in lower and upper social classes. This finding has been attributed to middle-class families' greater consciousness of the normative standards of their class, and their subsequent greater desire to closely supervise their children's activities in an effort to socialize them into the class norms.

3) Child related variables

Various child-related characteristics – both psychographic and demographic are crucial in determining the overall influence that children have in family purchases.

a) Personality Characteristics

Drawing on the vast literature available on growing children power, Cook (2000) comments that children have been increasingly portrayed as ‘individualized, autonomous consumers’. Martin Lindstrom and Patricia Seybold in their book ‘Brand Child’ (2006) have discussed various personality related issues of the kids through their global study. They reveal the growing power of children and peep into their lives to grant readers a closer look at the changing attitudes and beliefs that the present young generation is shaped by. The study considers tweenagers as all children spanning the pre-adolescent years through to the age of fourteen (p.1).

Some of the well known characteristics and attitudinal shifts in the personality of the kids from the reading can be summarized as follows.

- The awareness that the kids have makes them a ‘NOW’ generation as they impatiently want to attain all what they desire.
- Brands have become an integral part of their self-image.
They are old enough to have strong opinions about brands, can affect family purchases and are distinct enough to form a formidable segment for the marketers to target.

The kids today are as comfortable being online as being offline. Cyberspace is their new home.

This interactive generation also seeks instant gratification.

Since they have grown up in an environment thronged with multiple cues and information overload, they are comfortable with filtering processes to cope up with the building pressures without being enthralled.

b) Demographic Variables

A survey of the literature reveals contrasting views regarding the perceived homogeneity of children market. Some authors have reported that children can’t be treated as a homogeneous mass and hence simple segmentation based on age and gender may not be advisable (Panwar and Agnihotri, 2006). More sophisticated variables like attitude, culture and family environment may unfold new avenues of studies. Various studies at the national and international domains have tried to examine the relationship between the various demographic variables related to Pester power and Family Decision Making. However, the findings of the studies are not in harmony with each other as there exist bi-polar evidences for these examinations. On one hand, Moschis and Moore (1979) found no correlation between demographic characteristics (age, gender, birth order, number of siblings and social class) and family communication structures and patterns. This was further supported by (Carlson, Grossbart, and Tripp, 1990), who considered birth order of the child and number of children in the family. In confirmation of the same, Caruana and Vassallo (2003) reported no relationship between the perception of influence of children and the demographic variables investigated - gender of child, age and gender of parent, birth order of child and number of children in the family unit. In contrast, many past studies reveal that the demographic
variables related to the child like age, gender, birth order, number of siblings etc also affect the pester power.

**b.1) Age** - Age becomes the most important variable in defining pester power as the very definition of children or the tweenagers encapsulates age based segmentation. In addition, Piaget’s Child development theory which is the basic backbone of any research in child psychology gives an age-based classification of cognitive development. Age level is often used as a surrogate for stage of cognitive development (Miller and Busch, 1979). Also, behavioural variables, information processing abilities and persuasion strategies used by children are age-influenced. It is reported in several studies that older children have more sophisticated categorization abilities than younger children. While older children base classification on the use or the features/functions, younger ones just use visually salient features such as colour or size for category formation [Inhelder and Piaget (1964) as cited by John and Lakshmi-Ratan (1992) in their study].

**b.2) Gender** – Gender is one another personal variable which attains remarkable importance in the past studies related to Pester Power. The study of GRO (Gender Role Orientation) is the extent to which children as well as adults display gender stereotypic behaviour or state a preference for a particular type of gender role and has its root in sociology. Though some researchers report of the gender differences in pestering as gradually fading, others like Lee and Beatty (2002) noted that the female children are slightly more successful in influencing parents than the male children. In support of this, it was also concluded by Panwar and Agnihotri (2006) that girls in India enjoyed more freedom in prioritizing their daily activities than the boys. Also, a major contribution in the GRO is by Tinson and Nancarrow (2005) who have studied children and parents using a variety of research methods like the interviews, questionnaires and observations. They report significant differences in the influence of boys and girls in family purchases. They give a broader framework for analyzing the influence in family decision making and include also the situational factors like the extent of access to
media and retail outlets, presence and the absence of different members during the purchase decision making.

**b.3) Medium of Instruction at School** - In the accumulated research on demographics, it is interesting to refer to the study of Panwar and Agnihotri (2006) which states that Indian parents comparatively enjoy more control over children than their western counterparts for control of child’s activity prioritization. This study reveals that lower socio-economic strata send their children to vernacular medium instead of English medium schools, though, in terms of controls exercised over children, there is no significant difference between the two groups of parents.

A tabularized format for the literature review on various concerned demographic variables is presented in table 4.4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Authors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>As children get older they make fewer purchase requests anticipating that the fewer requests they make, the more they are likely to be accepted by their parents.</td>
<td>Jenkins (1979), John and Lakshmi-Ratan (1992), Robertson and Rossiter (1974), Ward and Wackman (1972)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The nature, frequency and success of requests may differ depending on the age of the child- i.e. there is a difference between smaller children and teenagers.</td>
<td>Bridges and Briesch (2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Older children make more requests at home while the younger ones made when the latter were shopping with their mothers.</td>
<td>Isler, Popper, and Ward (1987), Verma and Kapoor (2004)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Children at different stages of development react differently to various advertisements. Parents of children in the age group 12-14 years resort to responses such as asking opinion, setting price and logical reasoning since they consider the latter as being more mature. Parents resort to setting price and product boundaries, rewarding, negotiating with their 6-12 years old children. Also 6-12 years old children are more mature compared to 3-6 year old kids.

The relationship between age and influence attempts approaches significance (r=-0.13) and is negative. But a positive correlation is obtained between age and parental yielding to purchase influence attempts. This shows that while parents may receive more requests from the young children, they are more likely to act on them as the child grows older.

After viewing an advertisement, younger children chose the new product more frequently than did older children, even though both age groups had similar affective reactions to the new item.
| Children below six years of age like a product due to its appealing advertisement, jingle, music, famous celebrities even without understanding its functional use. Parents yield in more to younger children’s demand because the latter are not mature enough and often bulldoze them into buying. Another important reason found is that the younger children often demand for relatively inexpensive products than their older siblings. | Verma and Kapoor (2004) |
| Younger children watch TV for longer duration as compared to older children. | Panwar and Agnihotri (2006) |
| Major changes occur in the representation of self-concepts between early childhood and adolescence. | Chaplin and John (2005) |
| Children recognize brands at an early age, as young as 3-4 years of age, but by middle childhood (7-8 years), children can name multiple brands, and often request products by brand name. | Roedder (1999) |
| There is age-related increase in independent shopping behavior (alone or with friends) of children. | Moschis, Moore and Stephens (1977), Panwar and Agnihotri (2006) |

<p>| Gender | Parents yield in more to the requests made by girls than those by the boys. | Atkin (1978), Moschis and Mitchell (1986), Lee and Beatty (2002) |
| Gender | There is an observed differential in the spending patterns of male and female tweens. Girls spend heavily on clothes and shoes, hair accessories and makeup. As against this, boys spend heavily on video games, toys and games, clothing. | Soni and Upadhyaya (2007) |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>The sex of children is not related to parents’ yielding or response to requests.</th>
<th>Verma and Kapoor (2004)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boys are found to be less likely than girls to communicate overtly with parents about consumption.</td>
<td>Moschis, Moore, and Stephens (1977)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It was found that an average female child watches less TV as compared to a male child of her age may be due to her involvement in studies and household work.</td>
<td>Panwar and Agnihotri (2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium of Instruction at school</td>
<td>No significant difference was found in the TV watching habits as well as Parental control over prioritizing child’s routine activities for children between the vernacular and the English medium school children. Children from higher socio-economic strata go to English medium schools and others prefer vernacular medium schools.</td>
<td>Panwar and Agnihotri (2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of children in the family</td>
<td>As the number of children increases, so does the degree of influence.</td>
<td>Bocker (1986), Darley and Lim (1986), Jenkins (1979)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perceived influence of children in the family has no relationship with the number of children in the family.</td>
<td>Caruana and Vassallo (2003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In large families, children are likely to be involved in purchase decisions.</td>
<td>Nelson (1978)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth order</td>
<td>First born children benefit from less dilution of parental energies because they are a part of a smaller family.</td>
<td>Nancarrow et al., 2000 as cited by Tinson and Nancarrow (2005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Birth order of the child has no relationship with the perceived influence of the child in family decision making.</td>
<td>Caruana and Vassallo (2003)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.1.2 Children’s Role in Various Decision Stages and Areas

Most researchers of consumer behavior have, in the past, focused primarily upon the purchaser and to a lesser extent on the decider. But with the changing dynamics in the market, children are now playing an important role in decision making. Children have often been important segment for most marketers not only because of the direct purchases they make for the products of use to them but also because they often control and influence what the household buys for the family usage. Children are often consulted for their choices on the product to be purchased, brand related decisions, point of purchase and the retail outlet preferred, product variant and the model, etc.

Earlier studies posit that young children often get carried away by the advertising appeals and believe what they are shown, while quite often older children logically scan through the various sources of information like the magazines, newspapers, internet and also consult their peers to get additional cues on improving their purchase decisions. Children above eight years of age also play the buyer’s role for less expensive items like ice-creams, soft drinks, bathing soaps etc as these are quite often independently purchased by them. However, nowadays, they are also seen more as information gatherers and influencers for big ticket items like a majority of personal products, consumables, durables and even automobiles.

Furthering support to these views are the different studies which take account of various decision stages and decision areas.

a) Decision Stages - As mentioned by Philip Kotler (1997), the buying decision process is characterized by the five stages like the Problem recognition, Information search, Evaluation of Alternatives, Purchase decision and Post purchase behaviour. It is interesting to know that children depending on the involvement with the product have some role to play almost in all the decision stages. Children have different influence
levels during different stages of family decision making (E. Belch, A. Belch, and Ceresino, 1985). Various studies (Szybillo and Sosanie, 1977; Nelson 1978; Belch et al. 1985) on family decision making show that children exert the highest influence during problem recognition and search stages and the least influence in the product choice (as cited by Williams and Burns, 2000).

b) Decision Areas - Past studies (Szybillo and Sosanie 1977, Jenkins 1979, Belch et al. 1985) reveal that children exert little influence on the decisions of how much to spend, where to go, and transportation mode (as cited by Williams and Burns, 2000). Children influence varies according to the decision areas (e.g. where and when to go, the make, model, and the brand to buy). Findings of the study by Belch, Belch and Ceresino (1985) showed the strongest influence over aesthetic considerations like the style, colour, make and the weakest for allocation decisions such as where to purchase, when to purchase, and how much to spend. The least was related to ‘how much to spend’ or the financial decision.

4.2 Child Request Strategies and Parents’ Responses

Various request strategies are used by children to nag their parents into buying. These may range from pleading, asking, bargaining, coaxing or threatening to dumping products into the shopping carts in the stores. Past studies reveal that the request strategies used by the child and the response pattern showed by parents are often moderated by age and gender of the child. However, in contrast to this, Verma and Kapoor (2004) shows that gender of the child is not found to play a significant role in influencing children’s purchase requests though they feel age is one of the major moderators in explaining influence attempts and parents’ responses.
Verma and Kapoor (2004) in their study on parent-child interaction observed that parents of the children in the age group 12-14 years resort to responses such as asking opinion, setting price and product boundaries and reasoning with children. Parents consider them mature enough to discuss and explain them about the rational features like the price, value and functionality of the product. More or less the same response pattern is used by parents of the children in the age group 6-12 years with negotiation and rewarding in addition. Children below the age of six years are found by a majority of parents to be immature. They like the product just because they like the advertisement and demand them even without understanding their utility. To this, parents respond by rewarding, postponing purchase, setting the price and product boundaries, ignoring the request and even negotiating with the three-to-six years old children.

Past studies report a negative correlation between age and purchase requests. Ward and Wackman (1972) report that while parents receive more requests from their young children, they are more likely to act on them when the child grows older. An important reason for declining purchase requests with age could be that older children accompany their parents on shopping trips less than younger children do and hence are less exposed to the buying environment to make impulsive purchase requests (Isler, Popper, and Ward, 1987). Also, they sometimes strategically ask for fewer products with anticipation that those are fulfilled more often (Panwar and Agnihotri, 2006; Ward and Wackman, 1972). In agreement with this, Verma and Kapoor (2004) observe that parents often find it difficult to say ‘no’ to their younger children because of their immaturity levels shown through constant nagging and also because their demands are for mostly inexpensive products. The same is not true with the older ones as they demand for expensive items like the household durables, digitals etc.

One of the propositions laid by Moschis (1985) suggests that parents may treat their children differently based on their gender. In contradiction to this, Verma and Kapoor
(2004) argued that gender is not found to affect parents’ response, though they consider the girls slightly more mature compared to the boys as the former generally understand the financial constraints of the family. Hence the response to the girls is more based on bargaining, setting price boundaries and reasoning while for the boys, parents respond more by ignoring or postponing requests.

Isler, Popper, and Ward (1987) explored the frequency and the nature of the child’s requests for products and services and the inter-family processes involved in such product requesting behaviour. It was found that the most frequently used request strategy was “just asking” and the most common response was “to accede to children’s requests” though it also depended on the price of the product demanded. The most common refuse-to-buy response was “discussion or stalling” (Mohankumar, P.K.Sinha, and Krishna, 2003). Some parents had laid down conditions (like homework completion, restriction over purchase frequencies) for the indulgence goods. Wiman (1985) found that mothers who interact frequently with their children received significantly more purchase requests than mothers who interacted on a less frequent basis.

Findings of the US studies on the impact of child influence show that tweens admit that they nag when they want something (as cited by Soni and Upadhyaya, 2007). Thirty percent of them report that they promise ‘academic improvement’ to influence parents into yielding. Parents inform that they influence by various strategies like – offering to pay part of the cost (60%), doing extra chores (62%) as well as more aggressive tactics – keep on asking repeatedly (70%) and ‘begging’ (70%). For both younger and older children, not every request for a product leads to a purchase. Atkin found that when parents denied children’s requests, heavy viewers of television nagged more (21% of the time) than the light viewers (9% of the time) [as cited by Calvert, 2008].
The location of children’s requests also varies by age as younger children more often accompany their mothers in shopping and hence request for products in the retail outlets while the older ones make more requests at home (Isler, Popper, and Ward, 1987). Mohankumar, P.K.Sinha, and Krishna (2003) in the exit interviews conducted for their study noted that the location for the request making was the home, on the way to the kirana store, or at the actual store itself.

Ward and Wackman (1972) hypothesized that there is a significant positive relationship between conflict and influence attempts ($r = .18$), suggesting that purchase influence attempts may be a part of general pattern of disagreement and conflict between parents and children – perhaps even a cause of them. It was also reported that few parents ‘punish’ their child by failing to yield to her requests. Their data also indicate positive relationship between mothers’ time spent watching television and influence attempts and yielding as the mothers are more available to children during the coviewing. Also a weak positive relationship was obtained between mothers’ attitudes toward advertising and yielding to child’s demands.

Isler, Popper, and Ward (1987) produced the model of children’s requests and parental responses encapsulating various issues like past asking patterns, product category, child’s age and request location which clearly depicts that mother’s response may further trigger child’s response and subsequently mother’s response. Family income plays an important role in parents’ refusal to children’s purchase request as with an increase in the family income, parents’ yielding also increases (Verma and Kapoor, 2004). This is more rampant in dual income families where parents frequently tend to fulfill the child’s demands more often so as to compensate for their lack of time through such indulgence.
4.3 Child Socialization

The term ‘socialization’ as defined by Goslin in 1969 refers to the process by which young people acquire various patterns of cognitions and behaviours (Moschis and Moore, 1979). Consumer socialization refers to the process by which young people obtain skill, knowledge, and attitudes relevant to their functioning as consumers in the market place (Ward, 1974. p-2).

For research in this domain, it becomes important to analyze the child’s consumer behavior as many of the consumption habits are highly influenced by the child’s socialization patterns. Empirical data is now available on children’s consumer socialization, including their knowledge of products, brands, influence of the socialization agents, decision-making strategies, behavior in a retail outlet etc (Panwar and Agnihotri, 2006).

![Figure 4-2: Components of Child’s Consumer Socialization](image-url)
Several past theories suggest that socialization is largely based on three components (see: Figure 4-2).

a) **Socialization Agents** – Family, Peers, School and Mass Media

b) **Learning processes** – Modeling (Observational learning), Reinforcement (Positive / Negative rewards) and Social Interaction.

c) **Demographic Variables** - Social class, age, gender, birth order etc.

A child’s early spending habit develops as parents often take their infants shopping where the child is exposed to the shopping environment. In the formative stages of socialization, the child expresses her choice through gesturing, fussing, or crying, which later is replaced with requesting, selecting, threatening, reasoning and negotiating and still at a certain age, the child makes independent purchases (McNeal and Yeah, 1993). These activities comprise children socialization. Often, through consumer socialization, children develop their preferences for products based on the values they are adopting from various sources (i.e. family, friends, school, the media, etc.)

A search of literature has identified that there are four main socializing agents which directly impact child development and specifically upon their consumer socialization (Cowell, 2001) through transmission of norms, attitudes, motivations and behaviours (Moschis and Churchill, 1978). The socialization agents may be any agency/person directly involved in socialization due to the interaction with the child, primacy over the child and capability of giving positive or negative reinforcement (rewards or punishment) to the child (as cited by Moschis and Churchill, 1978).

These socializing agents are parents and school which mainly thrust on the educational development, and in the social context, peers and the mass media. These agents have been selected based on the previous research and are largely responsible for the child’s socialization (Ward, 1974). Cowell (2001) also affirms that parents, schools, peers, and television are the primary factors that impact a child’s consumer socialization. Story et
al. (2002) proposed that individual (e.g. cognitive), social (e.g. family and friends), environmental (e.g. school), and cultural (e.g. social norms and mass media) factors shape a child’s consumer socialization (as cited by Drenten, Peters, and Thomas, 2008). Though there may be other remote agents who have influence and importance in child’s life like the relatives, celebrities (film actors and sports celebrities), teachers, other social groups, community etc., not enough research has been done on these socializing agents and hence these are excluded from the scope of this study.

Several studies indicate that parents are the most influential agents in the socialization process until children reach adolescence, at which peers become the favoured source of information (Ward, 1974; Moschis and Moore, 1979). Hence Parents are regarded as a rational source of socialization (Moschis and Churchill, 1978) whereas peers and television are often seen as the irrational sources.

Socialization agents like the family, peers, Mass media especially internet and television and last but not the least, the schools play an important role in overall consumer socialization.

4.3.1 Family

Socialization researchers agree that the family unit is the primary agent for socialization in children, more so in pre-adolescent children (Caruana and Vassallo, 2003; Dotson and Hyatt, 2000; Ward, Robertson, Klees, and Gatignon, 1986). Parents’ socialization is an adult-initiated process by which children learn behavior through insight, training and observation so that it is in sync with their culture. Most research on communication effects on consumer behaviour mainly focuses on the effects of mass media, causing a dearth for empirical research on ‘interpersonal communication’. Although informal interpersonal communication could entail various patterns of communication as between siblings, peers, etc., family communication processes have the largest effect on moulding children’s consumer behaviour.
‘Family communication’ is broadly defined as parent-child overt and cognitive communication processes and patterns of interaction. One of the most reviewed works in this domain is of George Moshcis (1985) who documents that family members may communicate certain information to other members through various mechanisms. First, by performing certain acts, a family member consciously or unconsciously communicates certain norms and expectations to others which in turn are learned by children through observation or imitation. Secondly, a member in the family may influence the consumer behaviour by reinforcement mechanisms, both positive (rewards) and negative (punishment). Thirdly, family members may also influence through overt communication processes, often referred to as the ‘social interaction’ mechanism – a blend of modeling and reinforcement.

Parents put in limited efforts to teach their children about consumer behavior directly through several communication processes (education and purposive training) as more consumer skills are learned indirectly by children through observation or ‘social learning’ norms. This signifies their position as the role models for children consumer socialization. An extension of this finding can be found in the study of Marshall and Magruder (1960) where they demonstrate that children learn about savings and money management not only through discussions and experience but also through observation of parents’ spending styles (as cited by Moschis, 1985) though Moschis and Moore (1979) clarify that such purposive training focuses more on the female child than the male child. In their study, Moore and Moschis (1978) report that parents often encourage their children to save money for anticipatory consumption, usually for big-budget items. Family communication processes mediate the influence of other non-family sources (like television) though it is more often situation-specific based on the type of product, stage in the decision making process, and consumer characteristics (Moschis, 1985).
The major parental consumer oriented goals are money related skills, price bargain skills, product skills and information source use skills (Reid, 1979). Often, parents are pestered by their young children when they visit a retail outlet. Since influence may travel either ways between the parent and the children (Bridges and Briesch, 2006), it is often essential to understand the mother’s ‘gatekeeping’ role (Ward et al, 1986) in the family purchases as she might superimpose her preferences over the child’s. Hence marketers while targeting children to evoke pester power should not ignore the mother’s covert influence. In line with the earlier study, Rust (1994) described this as the ‘nag and gate-keeper model’ emphasizing the gate-keeping role of parents (as cited by Mohankumar, P.K.Sinha, and Krishna, 2003). He also uses the metaphor ‘invisible rubber band’ to describe the non-verbal interaction between the parent and the child which stretches and contract as they move through the store.

Past literature on family socialization processes reveal that family group consumer teaching orientation can be explained as how, intentionally or unintentionally, a particular family teaches its children the knowledge, attitudes, and skills relevant to their functioning in the marketplace, especially those related to television advertising (Reid, 1979). Reid cites the various Parental Consumer Teaching Modes as described by Ward et al. (1986).

- Prohibiting certain consumer related behaviours (i.e. restricted watching of television, etc).
- Giving lectures on Consumer related activities (i.e. one-way lectures).
- Holding discussions about consumer decisions (related to advertising content and intention, savings, choices).
- Acting as an example (i.e. taking the child shopping, demonstrating consumer behaviour, etc).
- Allowing the child to learn from experience (Encouraging independent purchases from pocket money).
Wackman posits (as cited by Moschis and Churchill, 1978) that parents play a variety of roles like – consumer educator (explaining consumption habits), information-mediator (e.g. processing about advertising claims), gate-keeper, countervailing force (e.g. responding positively to purchase requests). Carlson and Grossbart (1988) cited Becker's 1964 three-dimensional model to explain eight different parental socialization styles based on restrictiveness-persuasiveness and warmth-hostility like Indulgent, Democratic, Overprotective, Organized Effective, Anxious, Neglecting, Authoritarian, and Controlling.

Researchers believe that the method of communication between parent and child has a stronger and more significant impact on consumer socialization than frequency or amount of interaction between them (Carlson et al., 1990; Moschis and Moore, 1979). Following Newcomb’s model, McLeod and Chaffee (1972) developed a typology
characterizing parent-child communication structure and consequent socialization as a combination of two communication patterns - :

a. Socio-oriented communication environment wherein the child shows conformity to avoid controversy or arguments and to foster harmonious relations at home and;

b. Concept-oriented communication environment wherein the child is encouraged to develop his or her own ideas about the world.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.5: Typology of Parent-Child Communication structure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low Concept-orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Concept-orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laissez faire</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Adapted from McLeod and Chaffee, 1972, The Construction of Social Reality)

Socio-oriented parents monitor and control children’s consumer learning and seek to promote obedience while concept-oriented parents support children develop their own decision making skills based on their competencies and self-learning (Carlson et al., 1990; Moschis et al., 1986; Moschis and Moore, 1979a). Based on this typology, Foxman et al. (1989) concluded that children in a concept-oriented family have greater influence relative to parents in family purchase decisions than children in a highly socio-oriented family. Also, children tend to request more frequently when parents yield in more, while parents who promote open communication through discussions encourage children to develop skills in selecting and interpreting product information (Ward et al., 1986).

Different family communication patterns help to understand intra-family dynamics as explained by Moschis (1985). Laissez-faire families lack emphasis on both kinds of communication as there is little parent-child communication. Protective families stress obedience and social harmony in their communication with their child and there is little
focus on conceptual matters. Pluralistic families encourage open communication and discussion of ideas and express them without fear of retaliation based on mutual respect. Consensual families encourage their child to develop his/her own ideas without disturbing the family’s hierarchy of opinion and internal harmony.

The study by Rose, Bush and Kahle (1998) in United States and Japan based on the above classification of parents (mothers) shows evidence for stating that consensual and pluralistic mothers discuss television advertising with their children more frequently during co-viewing as compared to laissez-faire mothers. Wackman concluded that in most cases, children initiated the discussion about consumption by making a purchase request (as cited by Wiman, 1983). Besides, Wiman (1983) concluded that higher the parent-child interaction, more are the requests made by children. Moschis (1987) added an interesting facet to this as the case of Reverse Socialization whereby parents get resocialized through requests and suggestions given by children (as cited by Foxman et al., 1989).

Parents can develop three patterns of television viewing in their households (Verma and Kapoor, 2004; Khatibi, Haque, and Ismail, 2004; Walsh, Lacznia, and Carlson, 1998).

a. **Co-viewing** - When parents and children watch television together, parents can encourage children to evaluate programs and advertised products, develop understanding about marketing actions and develop consumer choices through open discussions thereby becoming ‘active participants’ in television viewing.

b. **Controlled viewing / Restricted viewing** - Here, restricted viewing happens for a child which is guided through parents’ control. Parents mediate the effects of television and advertising through controlling either in timings, channel or content.

c. **Uncontrolled viewing / Independent viewing** - Here children watch television independently without parental guidance and supervision thereby developing inadequate interpersonal communication.
Though most studies referred to are in foreign context, one of the greater contributions is from Panwar and Agnihotri (2006) who have studied in Indian context. Projecting on the typicality of most parents in India, Panwar and Agnihotri (2006) report that parental say in holding children’s lives is far superior than in the West. They have cross tabulated parental control in priority setting for children with various demographic variables like the medium of schooling, gender and socio-economic class. Their study reveals that most children from higher socio-economic strata attended English medium schooling as against the lower strata preferring vernacular medium. However, there was no significant difference in terms of control between parents from both the strata. The study concluded that parents in India control television viewing among children more because of three possible reasons—content not child-friendly, diverting children towards more physical exertion like playing, outdoor sports or constructive activities (academics, music, dance) and lastly, most Indian household still own only single television set. This is in sharp contrast with Western lifestyles where most children have their own independent television set in their bedrooms.

4.3.2 Peers

According to Pilgrim and Lawrence (2001), Peers include friends and siblings both, and have substantial effect on children, especially adolescents. A majority of marketing literature on children that has been published prior to 2000 focuses on individual (i.e. cognitive) factors as they impact children and their behavior (Roedder, 1999). Only recently have researchers begun to consider a wider set of factors that can directly impact the development and socialization of children as consumers (Drenten, Peters, and Thomas, 2008). While existing literature heavily focuses on the parental communication patterns, Panwar and Agnihotri (2006) have highlighted the fact that in India, many could accompany the child to the retail outlet like grand parents, siblings, relatives and peers. However, issues of peer relationships and influences have not been optimally explored or studied, especially in Indian context though contemporary
research work now entails various facets of child development and the increasing role of peers in the process.

Peers are often seen as non-rational and additional source of influence affecting child’s socialization starting early in life and continuing through adolescence (Dholakia, 1984; Moschis and Churchill, 1978). Cowell (2001) reviews influence of peers on pre-school children to state that while parents provide reasoning and rationale behind the purchase decision, peers’ influence is more impulsive and instinctive. Festinger (1954) states in the ‘Social comparison theory’ that adolescents often evaluate the learning developed by parental socialization by discussing it with their peers likely to hold the same perspectives (as cited by Moschis, 1985). Infact, Roseborough (1955) mentions about the “retroactive socialization” - wherein children, after confirming to their peers, decide to convey the same information to their parents so as to influence their decision making (as cited by Cowell, 2001).

Smith et al. (1999) suggest that parents influence more in decisions related to the education and future life goals of their child, but it is the peers who shape the extended self-image of the child thereby influencing their decisions related to fashion and style (as cited by Cowell, 2001). Lindstrom and Seybold (2004) reflect on this phenomenon as to “the hunt for the cool stuff”. This has also led to the popularity of the ‘alpha pup’ – a child who is fully armed with the latest and the coolest brand (Soni and Upadhyaya, 2007) who consequently enjoys more status in the group. According to Moschis and Churchill (1978), children place a great deal of importance on the social aspects of consumption which they use as the basis of interactive communication with their peers. This also is related to conformity norms for social acceptance in their groups or sub-cultures. Knowledge about the brand or its advertising content is often used for ritualistic interactions within the group and also the development of ‘social self’ and the ‘pecking order’ within social groups (Ritson and Elliott, 1999). Lindstorm and Seybold (2004, p. 5) observe that children often indulge in ‘fish streaming’ wherein one tween can influence other peers through instant communication devices. Thus, early
materialistic attitudes are developed through interactions with the peers as children often develop the importance of social status and group affiliation (Chaplin and John, 2005).

One of the first studies to have experimented with peer influence in an environment free from direct adult interaction and influence is made by Drenten, Peters, and Thomas, (2008). This study used not only the case study approach trying to investigate a pre-school located within a major metropolitan area in the Southeastern USA but also two qualitative data collection methods: Observation of the behaviour of children in a dramatic play as they engage in a grocery store learning center within the classroom and also Interviews of the teachers of the preschool children who created the grocery store learning center. The findings showed that not only the adolescents but also the very young children (ages three to six years) demonstrated peer-to-peer consumer socialization strategies, directing each other on how to perform appropriate shopping scripts in a grocery store. The young children that participated in the study did in fact teach, influence, and socialize one another with respect to grocery store shopping behaviours. In contrast to the findings of previous research, this study concluded that even at early ages (i.e. age three) peers can influence the socialization of consumer behavior. Infact, it extends Roeddar John’s previous theory (1999) that proposed that it is not until the later stages of child development (7-11 years) that peer influence becomes important in children’s socialization process.

Gunter and McAleer (1997) suggest that sometimes children, restricted by their parents to view certain material, will still continue to view it under peer pressure. As documented in the book ‘BrandChild’, (p. 52) by Lindstorm and Seybold (2004), table 4.5 shows how peers put pressure for the purchase of certain products on young children of different age groups.
Table 4.6: Survey Results for Peer Pressure
Do you sometimes feel pressure to buy certain products such as clothes, shoes, CDs, or anything else, because your friends have them?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>12-13 years</th>
<th>14-15 years</th>
<th>16-18 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


4.3.3 Mass Media

Mass Media is those means of communication that reach and influence a large number of people, especially newspapers, popular magazines, radio, and television (http://www.thefreedictionary.com). However, this definition seems to be inadequate in the current times with growing importance of other media which also helps in transmitting mass communication. Hence, we can define mass media as any communication vehicle like newspapers, magazines, radio, television, internet, movies, hoardings etc which are exposed to a mass of audience.

Parents who are anxiously and emotionally involved in child-rearing ‘tend to be most concerned about other socialization agents’ and have the most negative attitudes about mass media/advertising (Carlson and Grossbart 1988, p.86). Steinberg in his recent contribution to the published book ‘Kinderculture: The Corporate Construction of Childhood’ strongly asserts the fact that censoring mass media will not protect children from the new found cultural bombardment, the only solution to this lies in healthy and open parent-child communication (Sherley and Dr. Kincheloe, 1997).

Consumer learning theories show that repetitive use of weaker stimuli often strengthens the overall impact of the stimuli in the learning process. ‘Mere Exposure’ theory suggests that repeated, simple stimuli may also often lead to greater positive affect for the object portrayed (as cited by Moschis and Moore, 1979a). Previous research related to children and media exposure indicates that children’s response to
advertising on radio and print media (magazines) is similar to television commercials. (Soldow, 1983). However, they spend more time watching television than listening to radio or reading magazines. Kline (1993) believes that the television often considered as a weaker socialization agent must be reconsidered looking at the huge impact of the medium and the growing number of hours a child watches television (as cited by Dotson and Hyatt, 2000). The influence of this mass medium stems from mainly two main aspects - programming and advertising. They in turn, often lead to pester power, as programming may exert direct or indirect influence on consumer learning when children aspire for the possessions same as their television characters or animated characters have. Also, advertising directly upgrades their aspiration levels.

While the mass media may include many media as mentioned above, more popular media having a remarkable impact on the lives of children are television and the internet. Past studies on influence of media over consumption habits of children encompass research related to these two media, though it cannot be proved that other media may have no role to influence children’s purchase behavior. Another reason for special attention to this media is due to the magnitude of influence that television and internet have over the daily lives of children.

### 4.3.3.1 Growing Popularity Of Internet

Kids today have more exposure to internet than in the past since they have grown up in the environment with advanced technologies. As reported in the book ‘Brand child’ by Martin Lindstrom and Patricia Seybold (2004, p.2), today’s kids are the first generation of teenagers and tweens to be born with a mouse in their hands (p. 2). They are as comfortable being online as they are when offline. Research company TNS’s CAPI Kids Study found that over half (57%) of the 991 people aged between 10 and 19 surveyed reported that they used the Internet to research their purchases. They were also aware of the shopping comparison sites. Online shopping was more popular with boys among
the 10-19 year olds surveyed (www.tns-global.com). This generation has growing passion for a medium which is both ‘interactive’ and ‘instant’. Today, because of plethora of social working sites, kids have virtual presence in sites like Facebook, Orkut and others, which gives them broader avenues of self expression.

Lindstorm and Seybold (2004, Brand Child, p. 7) express that “Personal websites are like detailed electronic business cards. URLs are exchanged in chat rooms, parties and on school playgrounds. Most kids have global address books and are constantly exchanging information. They not only surf the net with unprecendented speed and ease but also think in terms of megabytes and screen resolutions. Due to the advent of technology in the 1990s, electronic and digital media offer such comfort zones to the kids that they often see themselves as cyber kids”.

One of the marketing gimmicks to target such children using internet is through the Advergames, a recent development in web promotion used to entice adults and children to play branded entertainment (as cited by Mallinckrodt & Mizerski, 2007). Advergames are a form of branded entertainment that feature advertising messages, logos, and trade character in a game format. Although advergames can refer to any game format, the use of electronic games is the most prevalent (Moore, 2006). A blend of advertising and computer games is advergames which embed product-related items from companies in the form of game pieces, hidden treasures and other parts of the games. These are also used for viral marketing as the companies encourage children to further provide their friends’ lists and send them requests to join the games. Allegations have also been made about brands creating ‘false’ sites with chat rooms and initiating conversations endorsing the brand, and using viral marketing tactics.

This has a growing influence on children as children often take the rescue of their virtual self as defense mechanism to satisfy their innate needs. With more external pressure on their tender minds, children often get absorbed in this cyber world which virtually presents them with their demanded gadgets, dolls, accessories, sports items and sportswear, toys etc and help them attain an unrealistic personality. Many marketers
allow kids to become online members for their company sites and create kids’ club thereby using their personal information for marketing purpose (Austin and Reed, 1999). This often becomes a nightmare for parents when children start pestering them for the physical possession of the same items.

However, in spite of the enormity of messages and external cues and stimuli, this generation is well equipped to cope up with information overload and can filter and decipher important information selectively.

### 4.3.4 Television

Because of its mammoth influence on children, television is given special attention and so has been dealt with separately from other mass media. While Mass media may include many different media, more research on ‘Pester Power’ and ‘Children Socialization is more related to television compared to other media. The reasons are obvious, first, the growing importance of television in children’s life and second, research on the influence of television helps in the understanding of socialization process of children.

Studies devoted to television viewing and children mainly focus on following crucial issues which are discussed further:-

- Television as a strong socialization agent
- Impact of television viewing on children and their behaviour
- Influence of television commercials on children of different age groups
- Parental reactions to television viewing by children
- Critical evaluation of television commercials and its overall impact on the society
a) Television as a strong socialization agent

Huston and Wright (1994, p.1.) in their Report by the Center for Research on the ‘Influences of Television on Children’ have indicated that children spend more time watching television than in any other activity except sleep (as cited by Dotson and Hyatt, 2000). International studies show that children under 12 years of age watch a great deal of adult television. Six to eleven year olds do the largest amount of their viewing (33%) during prime time (7:30 p.m. – 11 p.m.), followed by the late afternoon and early evening hours. Even children under six years do approximately 24% of their viewing during prime time (Adler, et al. 1980). TV viewing has even replaced dinning table conversations. Working parents, nuclear or single parent families and latch-key kids often lead to children who spend more time in front of television sets than conversing with their parents (Bhattacharyya and Kohli, 2007, April 8-10). The consequence is that with greater exposure to adult television, there is increased exposure to advertisements for adult-oriented products too. Infact, television is potentially more influential than peers and parents (Huston et al., (1989) as they are more exposed to television than any other stimuli (Schramm, Lyle, and Parker, 1961).

In sharp contradiction to Piaget’s cognitive theory of child development, Vygotsky (1978) who focuses more on the role of external agents in the child’s socialization process, argues that television provides important learning for children about the world around them (as cited by Cowell, 2001). As Livingstone (2009) produces her commentary on the debate – ‘Whether Television advertising is fair or otherwise’, she documents the acceptance of the fact by few researchers that Piaget’s theory is no longer valid, for, despite its support for the linkage of literacy and huge influence in consumer socialization theory, contemporary developmental psychology is fast becoming popular in understanding child psychology.
b) Impact of television viewing on children and their behaviour

Crosier’s (1999) definition of ‘micro audience’ as ‘the deliberate target upon which advertising messages are intended to have a positive effect’ and the ‘macro audience’ as those who are indirectly targeted and whose brand attitudes are considered by the advertiser explains the impact of television advertising on children. As per this definition, children are included in the latter segment of ‘macro-audience’ (as cited by Preston, 2006). Walsh, Laczniak and Carlson (1999) found that television has a stronger impact on the younger children because they are more vulnerable and lack cognitive processing skills. According to The Popcorn Report (Kotler, 1997) ‘Today’s weaned on television kids have been imprinted at an early age’. Moreover, with the growing magnitude of independence awarded to these kids at an early age, many of them have an important say in the family decision-making. There are also some who are called the ‘latchkey kids’ who come home from school to an empty house and have to do the shopping for groceries and other household items. Gilleran (1993) believes that television is their window onto the world which they think gives them all the necessary information they want about a variety of products and services (as cited by Cowell, 2001).

Some proponents of television believe that children’s knowledge horizon expands as they watch various programmes on the television. A conflicting view registered by Unnikrishnan and Bajpai (1996) suggest that television viewing adversely affects the reading, writing and concentration skills of children as the child consciously or unconsciously imbibes and imitates what he sees on television.

c) Influence of television commercials on children of different age groups

No topic related to pester power has seen such a debatable position in the past research as the television advertising directed towards young children. Though there are other forms of advertising too, most kids are highly exposed to television advertising which
calls for maximum attention in research related to socialization. Many past studies find that television advertisements contribute significantly towards children’s socialization (Verma and Kapoor, 2004). Kids are more vulnerable to advertising that uses exaggeration, puffery or promises popularity or evokes fantasies. Also, advertising may use misrepresentation of facts, size or functional features that their tender minds may not be easily able to wrestle with. Advertising often uses techniques to hook kids by tapping into their emotions, insecurities, fantasies by endorsing through celebrities, cute pets, pop music, fast action, animation, joy or subtle sex appeals. Also, younger children, unlike the adult, are not able to efficiently discriminate between puffery and fact.

Before starting with more critical discussion on the impact of television, it helps to understand the magnitude of this powerful medium based on statistical data of US provided as cited by Soni and Upadhyaya (2007).

- An estimated $12 billion a year was spent on advertising and marketing to children (McNeal, 1999).
- Young children are not able to distinguish between commercials and television programs. They do not recognize that commercials are trying to sell something (Television and the American Child; Comstock, George, 1991; Academic Press Inc).
- Children as young as three recognize brand logos (Fischer, 1991), with brand loyalty influence starting at age two (McNeal, 1992).

Television, in isolation, would not have been much powerful had it not been clubbed to the commercials. Infact, television encompassing the programmes or the content might be largely regarded as informative or educating or entertaining if it had not been for the highly enticing advertisements that it airs. But the fact is, that without these commercials, there would be no stream of revenues generated and hence no
programme content also. Hence, television has to be naturally accepted with the plethora of commercials that it exposes children to.

Earlier studies on this topic clearly demonstrate that children’s information processing skills depend on their developmental stage (Brucks, Armstrong and Goldberg, 1988; Ward, Wackman and Wartella, 1977). Often, due to lack of knowledge and cognitive skills, they are easily misled and confused by advertisers or any other mass media vehicle (Weisskoff, 1985). Children often lack the information processing abilities (Hite and Eck, 1987; Mindy and Lacziak, 2007) that adults have and tend to believe what the advertisers say and show (Dr. Khatibi, et al. 2004). Smith (1995) shows that while children and adults are different in their attitudes towards advertising, even within the segment of children, there could be various stages of cognitive development which are different and hence warrant different treatments in terms of targeting them as an audience.

Galst and White (1976) conducted an important study titled ‘The Unhealthy Persuader: The Reinforcing Value Of Television And Children’s Purchase Influence Attempts At Supermarkets’. They found that children who are most exposed to advertisements at home and who were most attentive to laboratory setting made the most requests for the advertised products. Charles Atkin (1978) undertook a similar study, entitled ‘Observations of Parent-child interaction in Supermarket Decision making’. Gorn and Florsheim (1985) while studying the effect on children of exposure to television commercials for adult products in an experiment concluded that even if children are not using brands, exposure to television advertising may influence their future purchase intentions. The researchers used commercials for lipstick and diet drinks for the sample of girls selected for the experiment and found advertisements for lipsticks to be more influential than those of diet drinks thereby proving the product category as a crucial moderator in the influence process. Both these studies have used the techniques of
operant conditioning and direct observation to study the impact of television commercials. Atkin observed the behavior of 3-12 years old in a natural super-market setting. He concluded that television advertising provided familiarity with the available brands of cereals and thus led young children to pester their parents.

Apart from the age based cognitive development which affects the information processing abilities, Panwar and Agnihotri (2006) also found that social and personal environments of children also play an important role. They found that social norms related to acceptability and appropriateness of gender behaviour also influence the processing of ad messages by children of both sexes. Also, peripheral factors like the likeability of the model, story line, character, music and slogan affect the liking or disliking for a particular advertisement and hence, consequentially the message decoding outcome.

Two other issues studied in the context of advertising to children relate to Disclaimers and Advertising Literacy. Most children do not understand the implications of the disclaimers used in the ad. Stern and Harmon (1984) define a disclaimer as a statement or disclosure made with the purpose of clarifying or qualifying potentially misleading or deceptive statements made within an advertisement. Common examples of disclaimers include “each sold separately”, “batteries not included” etc (Stutts and Hunnicutt, 1987). Further, they also cite Liebert, et al. (1977) who explain that Standard television disclaimers in children’s advertising are totally ineffective in communicating to children in the age range (6-8 years). Simpler wordings in the messages are more meaningful to younger children. Earlier accounts by advertising practitioners explain the concept of advertising literacy as consumer sophistication in decoding advertising messages (as cited by Bartholomew and O’Donohoe, 2003). Children often watch ads to use them further for discussions or interactions with their peers, thereby trying to get conformity
in their aspired peer group. There is also some evidence to show that in this process, the child develops social power (Ritson and Elliott, 1999).

Available evidence suggests that advertising has a significant impact on children and the product choices that they make (Gorn and Florsheim, 1985; Robertson and Rossister, 1974). Rossister (1979) shows through his study that advertising has effect on the cognitive skills, attitudes and the behaviours of children. As laid in the consumer behaviour theories, weaker stimuli may become stronger if repeated. The same is practised by many advertisers to lure the kids by repeating various commercials and sometimes, even in the same break. Bandura (1977) links this to the implication of behaviour modeling through repetition as described in the social learning theory.

Age or the developmental stage is an important variable to understand the impact that advertising has on children. Stephens and Stutts (1982), with a sample of 109 children of three to five years, investigated the age at which children have the ability to understand the difference between a television program and a commercial. The findings show that young children in the age group of 3-5 years are not able to discriminate between the program content and the commercial. The study by Khatibi, et al. 2004 replicating the earlier findings reported that majority of children aged between five and eight have some understanding of TV advertising i.e. they are capable to differentiate program and commercials especially if this understanding is measured by non-verbal rather than verbal measure. In extension to this proposition, Panwar and Agnihotri (2006) report that understanding of advertising messages is a function of age, socio-economic background of the family, medium of instruction at the school and children’s attitudes towards the advertisements.

Many researchers like Robbertson and Rossister (1974) are some of the earliest contributors to the study of children’s understanding of ‘persuasive intent’ of advertising. Robbertson and Rossister concluded from their studies that children can
understand the persuasive intent of the advertising only when they possess the abilities to discriminate between programming and commercials; the ability to recognize external sources; the ability to perceive an intended audience; an awareness of the symbolic nature of commercials and the ability to detect discrepancies between the advertised and the actual product. They also showed that children who don’t possess such abilities are more likely to associate advertising with only ‘assistive intent’ and hence are more vulnerable to advertising cues. Further, they concluded that when a child attributes persuasive intent to commercials, he believes them less and is less likely to want the products advertised.

Moses and Baldwin (2005) demonstrate that prior research on children and advertising draws heavily on Piaget’s developmental theory but it holds more fruitful to focus on the development of children’s ‘theories of mind’ and ‘executive functioning’ skills. On the basis of theories-of-mind literature, the authors expect that children have well-informed conceptions of intentions underlying advertising by seven or eight years of age. In addition to this, the authors also indicate that children are not able to deploy these concepts effectively in their everyday lives until much later in development.

Gorn and Florsheim (1985) while studying the effect on children of exposure to television commercials for adult products in an experiment concluded that even if children are not using brands, exposure to television advertising may influence their future purchase intentions. The researchers used commercials for lipstick and diet drinks for the sample of girls selected for the experiment and found advertisements for lipsticks to be more influential than those of diet drinks thereby proving the product category as a crucial moderator in the influence process.

Almost all previous studies on advertising to children are equivocal on the finding that the ability of a child to understand an advertisement and the intention behind it improves with age. However, there is a wide discrepancy with respect to judgements
about age at which children understand advertising messages. Unlike earlier researches reviewed, Moses and Baldwin (2005) conclude that pre-schoolers and possibly infants can discriminate between programming and advertising and by age three, they understand advertisers’ persuasive intent behind advertising and later on, also the informative and the deceptive intent behind advertising. The difference in the findings, as they explore, may be also attributable to difference in methodologies, the issue being studied and the definitions of advertising concepts and its verbal or nonverbal implications. Informative intents like those related to product availability, price, promotional schemes, features etc may not be so hazardous as the persuasive intents which lead the child to believe that the products are desirable and later result in ‘pester power’. Also, advertising engendered requests are more intense than requests which are not bred through advertising exposure.

d) Parental reactions to television viewing by children

As already cited earlier, parents show three types of behavioural differences with television viewing. The impact of the same is described as follows:-

i) **Co-viewing** means– discussion based interaction between the child and the parent while television watching which enhances the conceptual clarity of the real world and the marketing tactics. However, it is important to note that more than the presence of parents, what impacts more is the intensity and the quantum of communication they have with the kids.

ii) **Restricted viewing** – wherein parents try to control some aspects of television viewing which may be the channel, content or the timings.

iii) **Independent viewing**- With growing affluence and multiple sets in family homes, independent viewing is increasing. Due to this, fragmented viewing is increasing rather than co-viewing as most children have their television set in the bedroom and hence can view independently without parents intervention. Independent viewing also becomes the norm for children in nuclear families where both parents are working.
Reid (1979), based on his observation of television viewing behaviour of children under a variety of conditions, concluded that his subjects’ potential level of understanding of TV advertising was mediated by parental influences. Wiman in his study in 1983 tried to study Parental influence on third and fourth graders’ cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioural responses to TV advertising through structured personal interviews with 222 children and their parents. It was found that parents who restricted TV viewing among children and carried negative attitudes for advertisements were able to give a better understanding of the misleading intent of advertisements and thereby control child’s request frequencies. In Indian context, Panwar and Agnihotri (2006) have studied 250 students in the age group of seven to twelve years to understand the involvement of children with advertising in their day-to-day communications and interactions and also the degree of parental control. The factor analysis results of their study reveals that based on attitudes toward parental control on media usage, children can be grouped into five different typologies- impressed by the endorsers, impressed by the execution style, dependent on parents’ decisions, rational decision makers with independent opinions and the confused ones.

e) Critical evaluation of television commercials and its impact on the society

The debatable issue of whether the television commercials are a boon or a bane is indeed very interesting for most marketers, manufacturers, parents, policy makers, educators and various stakeholders of the society. Some important contributions in this field have been made by Enis, Spencer, and Webb (1980), Hite and Eck (1987), Isler, et al. (1987), Miller and Busch (1979), Verma and Kapoor (2004), etc. Each country has its own code for advertising especially, one which targets children. Considering the frequency and the quantum of the commercials, children are exposed to during the week days (and more so during the weekends), more studies highlighting different faces of advertising are warranted. Even amidst such controversies over television commercials, more recent works envisage that children will be important target audience for the ads in the years to come (as cited by Mindy and Laczniak, 2007).
e.1) Proponents Of Television Advertising - Some researchers (as cited by Hite and Eck, 1987) have also been liberal in evaluating television advertising and its impact by stating that today’s adults have been bombarded with thousands of advertisements throughout their childhood with no apparent negative effects. An individual’s norms and values are constantly shaped in their lifetime through experiences and not just advertising. Proponents of this medium believe that advertising serves as an information dispenser (Hite and Eck, 1987; Verma and Kapoor, 2004) and an important socializing agent to teach the child basic consumption skills. Some also argue that parents should play a more responsible role to moderate the effects of advertising on children. Manufacturers of products should involve with the informative and persuasive function of advertising and leave the filtering process of such messages to parents. Some defenders of advertising justify that since children have limited purchasing power and infrequent opportunities for independent shopping, they necessarily have to put forth their demands in front of parents whose responsibility is to then filter the effect of advertising on children (Isler, et al. 1987).

Many advertisers rationalize that children today are exposed to many in-film product placements, Advergames, POP displays, comic strips, etc which are equally engaging and enticing. Therefore giving undue negative attributions to the television advertising for increasing consumerism in children is unreasonable. Enis, Spencer, and Webb (1980) in their article ‘Television Advertising and Children: Regulatory vs. Competitive Perspectives’ while commenting on the advertiser’s viewpoints elucidate that without television advertising to children, there would be no children’s programming and entertainment. Also, a major argument put forth by the advertising fraternity is that there is no concrete evidence suggesting that television advertising is harmful to children (as cited by Miller and Busch, 1979).

Verma and Kapoor (2004) in their study examined the possible effects of television advertising on children’s buying response from early childhood to early adolescence and the role of parent-child interaction in this process. Though both children and parents
felt that television commercials did have a significant impact, it was discovered that as the child grew, parents’ perception of the influence of television advertising tended to decrease. Their results implied parent-child interaction plays an important role in children’s learning positive consumer values and hence instead of criticizing television advertisements, it would be desirable for parents to adopt more of co-viewing and develop healthy communication patterns with their children.

**e.2) Opponents Of Television Advertising** - Critics of television advertising have stated that advertising often creates materialism, stifles creativity, creates conflicts over demands with parents and spoils healthy communication patterns of the family (Hite and Eck, 1987). This happens mainly because television advertising stimulates children to make demands to parents as most kids are not financially independent (Bocker, 1986; Isler, et al. 1987). Such recurrent asking leads to dysfunctional conflict between the parent and the child. Sometimes, this also results in screaming, throwing tantrums in public and other defensive behaviours. (Soni and Upadhyaya, 2007) This becomes more difficult with younger children who can’t be logically explained about the potential misconceptions related to advertised products.

Panwar and Agnithotri (2006) observe that when parents control television viewing, children often have a mixed feeling – positive as it is for the benefit of their academic performance and eyesight care and negative as they force them to excel in studies so that parents may fulfill their sense of accomplishment in close social relations. Some children, as shown by them, have also complained that parents themselves see a lot of television but impose restrictions on their children for the same.

As cited by Enis et al. (1980), advertisers quote opinion polls which show that many parents do not attempt to monitor the behavior of their children. In response, they also reassert the fact that advertisers can’t abdicate their responsibility on the ground of others’ shirking theirs. Many countries have taken regulatory steps against the growing
effect of television in children’s life. Governments, particularly those in the European Union, have placed tighter restrictions on advertising aimed at children. Countries like Sweden, Norway, Belgium, Australia and Austria have imposed ban on advertising during children’s television programs. In Britain, the Independent Television Commission’ code on advertising clearly specifies, “No method of advertising may be employed which takes advantage of the natural credulity and sense of loyalty of children.”

In US, the industry has developed *Children’s Advertising Review Unit* (CARU) whose main activities include the reviewing and evaluating of children’s advertising in all media (www.caru.org). It may help to know that CARU just has the ‘guiding’ authority and not ‘binding’ or ‘legal powers’. Internationally, Public Interest Groups such as the Center For Science in the Public Interest and Action For Children’s Television have presented arguments to the Federal Trade Commission and the National Association Of Broadcasters that would ban or severely limit commercial on child-oriented programs (Enis, Spencer, and Webb, 1980).

In India, Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI-1985), the advertising industry’s self regulatory voluntary organization, has come out with campaign encouraging viewers to communicate if they find any advertisement offensive, vulgar or misleading in any way (http://www.ascionline.org).

Many researchers have given rich insights related to the study of mass media, especially television, in relation to its influence on children and their buying habits. Some of the important findings of a few studies are enlisted in table 4.7
Table 4.7: Findings of major studies related to Mass Media

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Findings</th>
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<tr>
<td>Bever, Smith, Bengen, and Johnson (1975)</td>
<td>Young Viewers’ Troubling Response to TV Ads</td>
<td>The attitudes that children have toward advertising become more negative with age and their anger toward misleading advertising also increases.</td>
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<td>Calvert (2008)</td>
<td>Children as Consumers: Advertising and Marketing</td>
<td>Children are unaware of the persuasive intent of the commercials.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Galst and White (1976)</td>
<td>The Unhealthy Persuader : The Reinforcing Value of Television and Children's Purchase Influence Attempts at Supermarkets</td>
<td>The amount of television commercials viewed at home was significantly related to the total number of purchase influence attempts (PIAs) made at the supermarket.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gorn and Florsheim (1985)</td>
<td>The Effects of Commercials for Adult Products on Children</td>
<td>Advertising effects are a function of the product category advertised and exposure to television commercials for adult products has its influence on future preferences of young children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hendon, McGann and Hendon (1978)</td>
<td>Children's Age, Intelligence, and Sex as Variables Mediating Reaction to TV Commercials: Repetition and Content Complexity</td>
<td>The ability of children to remember a television commercial was related significantly to age and intelligence.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reference</td>
<td>Implications for Advertisers.</td>
<td>Summary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Khatibi, Haque, and Ismail, (2004)</td>
<td><strong>Gaining A Competitive Advantage from Advertising (Study on Children's Understanding of TV Advertising)</strong></td>
<td>The study examined effect of age, gender and parental influence on understanding of television advertising. Research found that majority of children aged between five and eight have some understanding of TV advertising, they are capable to differentiate program and commercials especially if this understanding is measured by non-verbal rather than verbal measure. The study also finds a small but significant negative effect of parental control of TV viewing. Most children surveyed recognized that commercials and programs have difference in characters and are of different lengths. There is substantial evidence that by approximately eight years of age, most children have at least a preliminary understanding of this intent.</td>
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<td>Liebert, et. al (1977)</td>
<td><strong>Effects of Television Commercial Disclaimers on the product expectations of children</strong></td>
<td>Standard television disclaimers in children’s advertising are totally ineffective in communicating to children in the age range (6-8 years). Simpler wordings in the messages are more meaningful to younger children.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Macklin (1994)</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Impact of Audiovisual Information on Children's Product-related Recall</strong></td>
<td><strong>The critical element in children’s processing is the comprehensibility of the information presented, rather than the modality per se as both the children groups exposed to only audio and only visual stimuli performed equally well.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Moses and Baldwin (2005)</strong></td>
<td><strong>What Can the Study of Cognitive Development Reveal About Children’s Ability to Appreciate and Cope with Advertising?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Younger children are more susceptible to advertising cues as they associate advertising with only ‘informative intent’ as against their well informed elder counterparts who know advertising also has ‘persuasive intent’. Under the right circumstances, even preschoolers would have little difficulty distinguishing between advertising and surrounding program content. Provided that children have sufficient exposure to advertising and that the contrast between advertisements and programs is maximized.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Oates, Blades and Gunter (2000)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Children and Television Advertising</strong></td>
<td><strong>The concept of advertising literacy is useful to understand advertising to children.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Title</td>
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<td>Panwar and Agnihotri (2006)</td>
<td>Advertising message processing amongst urban children: An Indian experience — with special reference to TV advertising.</td>
<td>Children’s ability to decode and process advertising messages and to understand their intents is influenced not only by their cognitive abilities at different ages but also by their social and personal environments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resnik and Stern (1977)</td>
<td>Children's Television Advertising and Brand Choice: A Laboratory Experiment</td>
<td>Children’s brand choice may be influenced by television advertising.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robertson and Rossister (1974)</td>
<td>Children and Commercial Persuasion: An Attribution Theory Analysis</td>
<td>They investigated the extent to which children are capable of understanding the intents of the television commercials and its effect on attitudes and purchase requests. Attribution theory with its focus on perception of intent is the framework used.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roedder (1999)</td>
<td>Consumer Socialization of Children: A Retrospective look at Twenty-five years of Research</td>
<td>Children from the lower socio-economic strata are not able to understand the advertising intents properly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephens and Stutts (1982)</td>
<td>Preschoolers Ability to Distinguish Between Television Programming and Commercials</td>
<td>Younger children (under the age of five years) are not able to understand the difference between the commercial and the program content.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stutts, Vance and Hudleson (1981)</td>
<td>Program Commercial Separators in Children's Television: Do They Help a Child Tell the Difference Between Bugs Bunny and the Quik Rabbit?</td>
<td>Child’s age significantly influences the speed in which they could recognize the commercial material within a cartoon segment.</td>
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4.3.5 Schools

Previous studies on consumer socialization of children mostly deal with the other three socialization agents like family, peers and mass media which creates a dearth of existing literature related to influence of schools. But it is worth noting that a child formally learns socialization skills at school where young children spend considerable portion of their time. The school, according to Campbell (1969), usually is charged with the responsibility for “preparing the youth to function as adults by giving them the skill, attitude, and knowledge bases necessary for good citizenship and economic self-sufficiency” (as cited by Moschis and Churchill, 1978). Perhaps, schools are not just included in socialization studies for their educative function alone, but also because many marketers view schools with captive audience as an important way to tip-toe into the lives of children.

There is reasonable evidence to project that even schools are not free of commercial information as many of their artifacts are company sponsored. Companies give financially strained schools aids like free equipments, learning devices, books and other stationery items, calendars, wall clocks etc to be able to connect to children. Some companies also take educative programs like blood donation, or general awareness on personal hygiene through sanitary items, personal and oral care products, nutrition and health drinks and milk additives etc to route their advertising campaigns to children.

Though substantial contribution in this area is missing, especially in India, in a study conducted in Gujarat by Panwar and Agnihotri (2006), it was observed that children from higher socio-economic strata attend English medium schools, while children from lower socio-economic strata attend vernacular medium schooling. Though the study did not find any significant differences between the television viewing habits and parental control for both – English medium and vernacular medium children, they found that the medium of instruction at the school played an important role in understanding
advertising intent. They recommended that children should be segmented on the basis of more sophisticated variables like medium of schooling and cultural environment rather than treating them as one mass or segmenting them based on only age and gender.

Some advocates of consumer socialization believe schools to be suitable for formal consumer education and suggest that advertising literacy could be imparted in schools. Gray (2002) has mentioned about one such initiative has already been started in Europe with the launch of Media Smart, a recent advertising industry undertaking to address critics of advertising to children by launching educational programmes on advertising literacy in schools (as cited by Oates, Blades, and Gunter, 2000).

Another reason for the schools to be included in the socialization process is due to the proliferation of media channels which has reduced the average audience size for children’s programs, technically defined as ‘narrowcasting’ (Calvert, 2008). This had led marketers to turn to schools as a way to maximize their audience size.

Many schools also use report cards to advertise for their products. One such case was reported by McDonalds’ in US where the company gave financial benefits to a school in lieu of its advertisements on the report card and also some promotional activities. This has led to the genesis of commercialization of schools. (http://www.commercialfreechildhood.org) . Such actions not only bring marketing battlefields to the school campus but also target the school children directly.

Thus the above reading clarifies that all the above mentioned socialization agents have substantial contribution in overall child consumer socialization.
SUMMARY

Literature review is basically encapsulated in three broad dimensions relevant to the subject of study – Children’s influence in Family Decision Making, Children’s Request strategies and Parent’s Response Strategies and Child’s Consumer Socialization.

The first part of the review shows that the extent to which children affect the purchasing decision is determined by the factors - mainly being Product, Family and the Child’s Characteristics. The main product related characteristics like Product type, end usage and price value determine whether the children influence in family decision making will be high or nominal. Family characteristics like Family structure, family income, parental socialization and social class further influence child’s overall pester power. The last determinant of pester power is the Child’s characteristics - personality and demographic characteristics like age, gender, birth order, number of siblings, medium of schooling.

The second part of literature review focuses on the use of various influence strategies by children and the effect of gender and age on the same. Studies showing parents’ responses are also reviewed and their gender-based and age-based effects are examined.

The third and the last part of the review deals with child consumer socialization. Consumer socialization does not happen in vacuum as different persons and institutions are responsible for shaping the child’s behaviour as a consumer. Though various agents are responsible in this process, most research studies on child socialization hover over five main socialization agents- Family, Peers, Mass Media, Television and School. Amongst this, parents are seen as the most influential as they not only use directive approach in teaching the child various consumer skills but become illustrative of various consumer related behaviours through their own behaviour. Also, the method of family
communication plays a larger role in socialization of child than the frequency and quantum of interaction in the family. However, peer influences play a major role as the child grows and seeks peer group conformity and social status. While mass media includes various different media including television, more studies deal with television and hence it is given separate attention for better understanding. For many years, television advertising targeted at children has continued to arouse serious contemplation from policy makers, public groups, consumer advocates, advertisers, business houses, media houses given the growing importance of this important mass media form. There has been increasing controversy regarding whether these commercials are fair or educative in nature or whether they mislead and lure children who are unaware of the intentions of the advertisers. While, the conclusion has not been still arrived at, most researchers are equivocal on the point that young children are not able to understand the persuasive intent of advertising due to their limited information processing skills. Impact of schools in the socialization process of children has still not received its due attention in the research arena though based on an Indian study, it may be concluded that schools with their captive audiences are soon becoming extended marketplaces. It may be beneficial to start consumer education programmes in the school in future to make marketers more responsible in their overall approach.

The literature review chapter unfolds many insights that are valuable for the conceptual development of the model presented in the next chapter. It also helps to find the research gap and conduct research study in that particular area to avoid redundancy.

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