CHAPTER EIGHT

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The previous chapter shows the results of the data analysis using various descriptive and inferential statistics. In this chapter, findings based on data analysis are presented leading to various discussions in the light of former studies. The findings have been listed down according to the broad issues investigated for the purpose of this study.

8.1 Overview of the Sample Profile

The sample has been collected from Gujarat and its major cities with 50% of the respondents surveyed from Ahmedabad and other 50% collectively from Rajkot, Baroda and Surat. The sample consisted of 557 households with parents and children from each household interviewed for the survey. The children surveyed consisted of almost equal number of both gender categories – boys (53%) and girls (47%). In addition, the age group across 8-16 years was distributed normally across the three age categories of 8-10 years, 11-13 years and 14-16 years. Various key variables related to behavioural and attitudinal patterns related to parents and children have been investigated across these two major independent variables (gender and age to test the differences. Other demographic variables like birth order, number of children in the family, family income, working status of the parents and medium of instruction at school were also studied for the key variable of pester power.

8.2 Child’s Frequency Of Going Out

It has already been established in the past literature that children when exposed to greater stimuli try to pester their parents more than otherwise. While a few stimuli may be found in-the-home settings like TV commercials, other print ads, internet content,
products with other siblings etc., it is interesting to note that a large extent of exposure to external cues happens in out-of-home settings. These may include various occasions for outings like grocery shopping, movies/leisure activities, trips to malls and other retail outlets, restaurants and food joints or social visits. It may be suspected that gender based differences may be found in the frequency of various outings. However, for all activities except grocery shopping, no gender based differences had been reported for out-door trips like Shopping Malls, Eating Out, Movies/leisure activities and Social visits (H1). Proposition for gender based differences got support in case of grocery shopping behavior, as boys reported greater frequency of grocery shopping visits than the girls (H1). One cause for this observation may be attributed to the gender role orientation. Girls are often influenced to accompany their mothers on trips to grocery stores so as to socialize them on various nuances of purchase behavior for routine grocery purchases. Shopping for household items, especially grocery items, in Gujarat is largely considered a domestic chore and more assigned to a housewife’s role and as such boys shy out from this activity right from their early childhood days.

8.3 Children’s Perception about the Preference for various Parties in various Behavioural Patterns

Various parties are involved in the socialization process of children. Hence in this study related to children’s pestering influence, it becomes interesting to know how children are attached to various members in their reference groups with respect to various situational and behavioural aspects.

The following are the revelations of the survey with respect to various members of the reference groups which include children’s parents, siblings, friends and other members.

- 44% boys and 46% girls spend maximum time of the day with the mother. The second preference is siblings and the third, friends.
52.4% boys and 69.6% girls had highest preference for the mother during shopping followed by the second preferred member as the father. Both boys and girls reported that they hated shopping alone for their personal items. Children also reported less interest in shopping with friends unlike their foreign counterparts where children often accompany their friends while shopping.

Gender related bias for the preference for dressing style of parents was seen amongst the children with the majority of boys liking father’s dressing style and majority of girls liking mother’s dressing style. Maximum disliking for the peers’ dressing style was reported by the children surveyed.

A similar trend of the gender bias was also reported by the children as most of them wanted to be like the parent of the same sex as theirs.

Almost a half of the boys and two-thirds of the girls showed preference to consider mother’s opinions while making purchases followed by those of their fathers.

Most of the boys preferred to watch TV with their mothers followed by the siblings whereas the girls preferred siblings first followed by the mothers.

Both boys and girls received maximum gifts from the father followed by mother which shows that fathers yield in more to the child’s requests than other parties of the socialization group. In both the gender categories, friends gave minimum gifts to the surveyed children.

Most boys and girls showed mother as the greatest influencer in their lives followed by fathers while friends tended to have the least influence.

Most boys and girls revealed to share their maximum feelings with mothers with maximum girls feeling the highest discomfort with fathers.
8.4 Time spent by parents with their child

It has been reported in many past studies that fathers spend relatively less time than that by mothers. The findings of the present study collaborate with the previous results in reporting that mothers spend more time with children than that spent by fathers (H2). The main reasons for this may be attributed to job constraints or the working status of the father and even the primarily paternalistic framework of the socio-cultural society of Gujarat which leaves child-rearing and other household responsibilities to mothers. Even in families with dual working parents, it is expected that mother on an average spends more time with the child as compared to that spent by father.

8.4.1 Time spent by parents: Based on gender of the child

It is interesting to note that parents (father and mother) had no gender specific biases with respect to spending time with their child. The inference of the result shows that gender of the child has no significant bearing on the time mother and father spend with their child (H3).

8.5 Satisfaction of the child with the Pocket Money allowance

Parents showed mixed responses towards their attitudes for pocket money allowance. Almost one-fourth of the total number of parents did not give any pocket money to the child so as to monitor their purchase requirements and curb independent spending habits. 35% of them gave a fixed amount of pocket money to the child which ranged from as low as Rs. 10 to as high as Rs. 2000. Mothers reported that by giving a fixed sum of pocket money, they tried to cultivate sensible and calculative spending habits in the children and encouraged independent priority setting for various demands to be fulfilled. About 41% of the total number of parents surveyed gave pocket money to the child as and when the child demanded.
8.5.1 Gender based differences for satisfaction level with pocket money allowance

It was found that for the children surveyed, there was no significant difference between the boys and girls in their satisfaction level with the pocket money allowance (H4). Both the groups reported that they were overall satisfied with the pocket money they received from their parents.

8.6 Spending Habits of the child

The three product categories where the boys spend the maximum are chocolates/biscuits/cakes, Stationery Items and Toys while girls mostly spend on stationery items, chocolates/biscuits/cakes and toys (in the given order). Lowest spending for girls is on Soft Drinks and Game Parlours while for the boys, minimum spending was on fashion accessories and cosmetics. Apart from birthdays and festivals like Diwali and Christmas, parents and children have also reported various other occasions like academic result declaration, winning of contests/competitions, summer/winter vacations, during specific festivals like Rakshabandhan, Navratri and ‘Gaurivrat’ and also during weddings and celebrations in the family.

8.7 Children’s influence on various key decision areas

Former studies lead to believe that influence on key purchase-related decision areas may differ in intensities (from high to low) across various issues like where to buy from, when to buy and type of the product variant to buy. More responses showed moderate influence level for the decisions related to ‘Where to buy from’ and ‘when to buy’. However, for the decision related to the ‘type of the product variant to buy’, very few responses showed high intensity level as compared to the expected responses (H 5).
8.8 Importance of child’s influence in decision making for purchase of selected products

Children and parents were surveyed to understand their importance in influencing purchase-related decision for three child-related (Toys, Chocolates, and Stationery Items) and three family-related products (PC, TV and Car). These products have been selected as the first three vary from the rest three in terms of product involvement, frequency of buying, cost structure, point of sale and purchase behaviour process.

8.8.1 Parents’ and Children’s perceptual differences with respect to child’s influence in product purchase decisions

Former studies (Belch, Belch, & Ceresino, 1985; Foxman, Tansuhaj, & Ekstrom, 1989) point at the fact that children often over-estimate their influence related to purchase decision while parents tend to underestimate the same. The past proposition is not supported by the findings of this study for most of the products considered (H6). Paired comparisons of the responses for parents and children show that in case of toys, parents attach more importance to the children’s influence than the latter perceive. However, for all other five products (Chocolates, Stationery items, PC, TV and Car), parents’ perceptions and children’s perceptions do not differ significantly.

8.8.2 Gender based differences in child’s influence in decision related to product purchases

Former studies (Atkin, 1978; Moschis and Mitchell, 1986) report about the gender-based differences in child’s influence in family decisions. Lee and Beatty (2002) report that girls are slightly more influential than boys in such purchase related decisions. Panwar and Agnihotri (2006) also supported this finding. However, in this study, for two product categories, gender based differences were reported (H7). In case of toys, boys seemed to be more influential in purchase related decisions as compared to girls.
However, in case of chocolates/biscuits, girls seemed to exert more influential power on their parents as compared to boys. One thing worth-remarking is that both these products – toys and chocolates/biscuits for which the gender based differences were noted are basically child-major products. Another, child-major product- Stationery items did not report any differences in product purchase related influence across the boys and girls. Similarly, for all the three family-major products studied i.e. PC, TV and Car, there was no significant difference found between the boys and the girls with respect to purchase influence.

8.8.3 Age based differences in child’s influence in decision related to product purchases

Past studies (Atkin, 1978; Bridges & Briesch, 2006; John & Lakshmi-Ratan, 1992; Moschis, Moore, & Stephens, 1977; Robertson & Rossiter, 1974; Verma & Kapoor, 2004 and Ward & Wackman, 1972) hold considerable importance for the age differences in product purchase related decisions. Findings of the current study report age based differences with respect to products Toys, Chocolates/Biscuits and PC (H8). Each of the three age groups (8-10 years, 11-13 years and 14-16 years) differed significantly from one another with its influence related to toys. For the chocolates/Biscuits, the children in the age group of 8-10 years significantly differed with both the age groups of 11-13 years and 14-16 years. This may be the case because the younger most children in the group have considerably higher influence on the purchase decision of chocolates than the middle-aged and the eldest group of children. However, for buying PC, a family-major product and also a big ticket item, the oldest of the age groups i.e. 14-16 years had the highest influence amongst its younger counterparts. One reason for this observation might be due to the fact that for high-involvement products like PC, parents do consider the preferences of the older group more seriously. This trend is also seen as children have access to more sophisticated media like newspaper, magazines and internet and are active in information search. For the remaining three products,
Stationery items, Car and TV, there was no difference found in the influential capacities of the three age groups of children.

Other variables like children of different birth order, different family structures (joint and nuclear families) and different income levels may also be considered for finding children’s purchase related influence for future research as is beyond the scope of the present study.

8.9 Influence strategies used by the child

Past literature on the use of influence strategies has already clarified that children use various strategies to influence their parents to yield into their demands (Isler, Popper, & Ward, 1987; Verma & Kapoor, 2004). Findings of the study with respect to the use of influence strategies by the child reveal that parents’ and children’s responses differ significantly for influence strategies like asking, pleading and threatening (H9). Parents feel that their children use ‘pleading’ and ‘threatening’ more often than what their children report. Children report the use of ‘asking’ as a strategy more often than what parents observe. However, both parents and children report similar frequencies for the child’s use of other influence strategies like negotiating, persuading, explaining, reminding and power games (H9).

It becomes interesting to examine gender-based and age-based differences for the use of different influence strategies.

8.9.1 Gender based differences with the use of influence strategies by the child

The results of the study show that boys use power tactics (flattery, bullying and manipulation, giving ultimatums) and threatening more often as an influence strategy as compared to the girls (H 10). There is no difference between boys and girls with respect
to the frequency of use of other influence strategies like asking, pleading, negotiating, persuading, explaining and reminding (H 10).

8.9.2 Age based differences with the use of influence strategies by the child

For different age groups, there was no significant difference with respect to the use of various influence strategies related to Asking, Negotiating and Power tactics (H 11). The youngest group (8-10 years) pleaded the most frequently as kids often made their parents yield in to their demands by constantly imploring until their wishes are fulfilled. This group also used persuasion more than others by telling their parents that their siblings/friends had the products they demanded for. Children of the youngest (8-10 years) group and the eldest group (14-16 years) differed the most with respect to the use of explaining as an influence strategy with the eldest group showing maximum frequency of explaining the product’s significance and use. This can be attributed to the difference in cognitive skills and logical reasoning capacities amongst children of different age groups. The youngest group also used threatening more often than other age groups while the eldest group mostly used reminders about the TV ads /Print ads to reinforce their demands.

8.10 Parents’ response strategies to children’s requests

Parents’ responses to the demands of children may range from softer options of ‘not responding’ or ‘explaining’ to more harsh ones like that of ‘punishing the child’. It becomes interesting to examine differences in parents’ responses based on the gender and age of the child.
8.10.1 Parents’ response strategies: Based on gender of the child

Past literature shows that parents may often respond differently with different children based on the gender of the child. While different strategies from intense one to mild ones may be used by the parents, this study produces mixed responses. Parents do not differentiate between boys and girls in responses like giving strict explanations, budget constraints, absence of any reactions, justifications about the non-suitability of the product or its uselessness and buying some less expensive substitute of the product demanded (H12).

Parents comply easily for the demands of the boys compared to girls as boys are perceived to be relatively more obstinate. In addition, parents’ use of response strategies with respect to initially complying and then negating, expressing stern dislike for the demands made, negotiating in return of yielding to demands and making comparisons with other less-privileged kids is also found more frequently for the boys than the girls (H12).

8.10.2 Parents’ response strategies: Based on age of the child

Parents’ response strategies, in accordance with the findings of the data, do not show any differences in intensity of use across the various age groups of children in most cases (H13). However, the only divergence from this finding is found with respect to using explanations of ‘budget constraints’ across different age groups (H13). Parents use this option more frequently for the oldest of the age groups i.e. 14-16 years assuming that they are more matured and hence might understand financial constraints of the family.
8.11 Influence on Pester Power

Pester power of the child is the major focus of the current study. Past literature has presented various propositions based on key demographic variables to explain different facets related to pester power of children. This study attempts to investigate these variables and its relationship in the state of Gujarat. Pestering level (measured on a frequency scale) has been studied with respect to various demographic variables like gender and age of the child, number of children in the family, medium of instruction at school, family type and family income.

8.11.1 Pester Power based On Gender Of The Child

Many studies in the past have specifically put thrust on the study of gender differences with respect to various issues of pester power and children influence. The results of the present survey reveal that there are significant gender differences with respect to the frequency of pestering amongst children (H14). Boys, as per the survey, were found to be more pestering than the girls.

8.11.2 Pester Power based on the Age Group of the child.

The results of the study confirm the propositions laid in the past literature which denotes that younger children pestered more often than the older ones (H15). The reason for this observation could be that younger children are often softer target for various marketing promotions like advertising messages, media exposure and peer pressure. In addition, most demands made by this group are for less expensive items and hence parents don’t mind yielding into their demands which in turn leads to more pestering and indulgence. The oldest age group shows least frequency of pestering and that too mostly for relatively expensive items so that they can be fulfilled by parents.
8.11.3 Pester Power based on Number of Children in the Family

The findings of the study negate any differences between the one-child families and more than one-child families with respect to child’s pester level (H16). This finding adds useful insight to erode the popular belief that parents with a single child try to pamper their only child more often.

8.11.4 Pester power based on Medium of Instruction at school

The findings of the present study converge with those of the previous study by (Panwar & Agnihotri, 2006) which shows that English medium children belong to the higher socio-economic strata of the society and hence might show more pester than their Gujarati medium counterparts (H17). The reasons to explain this observation could be that English medium students are more exposed to a cosmopolitan class of society with higher exposure to different media types and hence larger peer pressure for the sake of status conformity. However, this finding might be used with caveat for further generalization as the sample represented only the urban population of Gujarat.

8.11.5 Pester Power based on Family Type

Two major types of family structures: Nuclear and Joint families have been studied for the purpose of the current research. Though a popular belief is that joint families tend to have more pampered children who get the affection and attention from various members like grandparents and others, the findings of the present study contradict this belief. The inference drawn shows that there was no difference between children in the nuclear and joint families in terms of their pester level (H18).

8.11.6 Pester power based on Family Income

Income is an important descriptor in measuring the pester power of the child as shown in various past studies with mixed results. The present study shows that children falling
in the lower income group (less than Rs 20,000) pestered less than those from the higher income strata of the society (H19). The reasons for the same could be attributed to low disposable income of the parents and lower expectations by children of fulfillment of demands based on low affordability of the family.

8.11.7 Pester Power based on Number of Working Parents

Households with dual working parents and single working parent pose different responsibilities for the child and hence have been widely studied in the past literature. A popular belief with respect to child development is that children having both the parents working often suffer from lack of attention from parents and hence compel their parents to yield into their demands, who try to compensate for their lack of quality time with the latest products in the markets. However, research findings diverge from this thought as it was found that both the groups of parents were pestered on the same level by their children irrespective of the number of working parents (H20). This finding throws light on the fact that it is the income that is a better predictor of child’s pesting rather than the number of working parents as even with a single parent earning (as is the case with most fathers in Gujarat) the gross income of the family might be higher. Another reason could be that with both the parents in the family working the child instead of being more pampered might be more conscious of her spending and better realize the value for money.

8.12 Location of Requests made by the child

Location of requests plays an important role in understanding the overall process of pestering. It was found that maximum requests were made at home (57%) followed by the number of requests in the store (30%). Home setting offers a child convenient environment to express her wish list to her parents as they are more available for dialogues or product-related conversations. However, it is worth reporting that many children often pester in the store often being victimized by the attractive display of the
merchandise (mostly placed near the billing counters or at the most eye-catching location) and heavy use of point-of-purchase display material. One another reason for in-store pestering is also to take the advantage of the situation of parents who are either trying to concentrate on shopping for personal items or want to avoid any embarrassment caused by child’s tantrums in public (22%).

Children also expressed their requests on the way to store in anticipation of instant gratification of their demands on reaching the store. Some also used to pester while watching TV which shows the impact of TV commercials as a strong influence. Very few children (6%) make requests inspired by internet based content or advertisements as internet usage amongst children is still in the nascent stage in India as compared to their western counterparts. The little usage of internet reported is mostly for playing online games or social networking or downloading entertainment related to content.

8.13 Influence Of Advertising Media On Children

Various advertising media like TV, radio, newspaper, Magazines, Internet, Outdoor and Movies may have impact on the tender minds of children as shown by popular literature. The findings of the study are in tandem with the earlier studies which report that Television as a medium has the highest influence on children (Huston, Watkins, & Kunkel, 1989; Gorn & Florsheim, 1985). This could be due to the fact that in terms of exposure to media, television receives maximum attention as children in this age group devote maximum indoor time to watching television and also because of its audio-visual appeal. Another reason is also the alluring caused by not only the programme content (animation, cartoon, etc.,) but also by the large number of commercials aired during children programme.
8.14 Impact of Festivals / Occasions on Child’s Pестering

Children often pester more aggressively during some festivals/occasions as reviewed in the past studies. It was found that children pester the most during their Birthdays anticipating that most of their demands would be fulfilled then as most parents tend to give different gifts to the child on the Birthday. Children also seemed to pester more during Diwali as shopping is customary amongst most Hindu families concentrated in the state of Gujarat. Another reason for high pesteri is the “Bakshish”- a monetary gift received by the child during these two occasions as per the Hindu cultural and social values which directly increases the child’s purchase power or the disposable income. This is followed by pesteri during Christmas when the child expects some gifts and hence pesters in advance. This has been reported as a recent trend as the socio-cultural values are fast being Westernised and also due to the proliferation of festive offers/discounts in various retail outlets during the years’ end. Children of Gujarat’s urban families also reported a slow creeping of occasions like Freindship’s Day or Valentine’s Day in their modern lifestyles attributed mainly to English medium schools, cosmopolitan societies, media influence and peer pressure, though any generalization of this finding for the whole of Gujarat (with people from different social classes) may be used with caution.

The findings for the open-ended question probing for other occasions when the child pestered were found to be during Anniversaries/Birthdays of the parents, good academic progress, winning of contests/competitions, during Rakshabandhan and ‘Gaurivrat’ (specifically for the girl-child) and also Navratri. Other occasions reported were when the working parents were put on special projects, outdoor assignments or delegations and wanted to compensate for their lack of quality time.
8.15 Behaviour and Attitudinal Scales

It is interesting to test the propositions held by the past researchers to find the gender based differences in various behavioural and attitudinal measures across the respondents surveyed. These statements encompass several demographic and psychographic variables useful to understand the overall environment in which pestering operates.

For statements related to watching television, there was no difference between the boys and girls with respect to watching TV with parents; enjoying TV advertisements; Control from parents for restricted viewing of TV and discussion about the ad content with the parents. Both boys and girls feel uncertain about the knowledge of the models of the ad. Girls feel more strongly than the boys that their parents don’t spend quality time with them. While boys are neutral on this attitude, girls disagree to the fact that they try to possess the same products as their friends have.

Both boys and girls agree that they always accompany their parents while shopping and also that they enjoy malls and arcades more than smaller shops and convenience stores. Also, boys and girls are similar in their attitudes towards using internet for seeking information for family purchases. They even show agreement in thinking that their family is rich enough to afford their demands.

Boys have a higher tendency of seeing latest products from their schools as compared to the girls. Boys are more inclined to buy products because of the free gifts associated with it as compared to the girls. Both girls and boys felt that their fathers accept their demands more than their mothers. It was also found that both of them also disagreed to the fact that they pester more when the mother was working. Again, no gender related differences were reported with the child’s attitude of seeking additional information from newspaper/magazines. Both boys and girls were also uncertain about their attitudes related to the ads they saw.
8.15.1 Findings from the Factor Analysis

A factor analysis was conducted on these twenty attitudinal statements to derive useful factors. Seven factors were extracted after the use of this technique as shown in table 8.1. These factors provide a good base for any further investigation by future researchers or for gathering deeper inference based on the data of the primary survey.

Table 8.1 : List of Factors Extracted from the variables

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<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Factor Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Factor 1</td>
<td>Externally Stimulated</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Factor 2</td>
<td>Parent Governed</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Factor 3</td>
<td>Life-Style Enhancers</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Factor 4</td>
<td>Conspicuous Banters</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>Guilt Bashers</td>
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<td>Factor 6</td>
<td>Information Hunters</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>Family Followers</td>
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CONCLUSIONS

Pestering, as a phenomenon, has been largely studied in the past literature in discrete episodes. This study attempts to draw coherence amongst various of these issues such as demographic, social and psychographic variables related to the household, child’s spending habits, child’s pestering intensity and influence strategies, parents’ responses, and various other attitudinal and behavioural measures related to pester power as examined in the state of Gujarat. While generalizations based on the study conducted in
the four cities of Ahmedabad, Surat, Baroda and Rajkot may be used with caution for the state as a whole, these findings are true for most urban households of Gujarat.

Mother for most children was the most influential agent in the product choice and overall socialization process, which magnifies the role of mother in the study of child development in otherwise highly male dominated societal framework like in India. Other socialization agents like father, siblings and friends had an overall mixed influence in the child’s preferences for various issues. Television was considered as the strongest source of media influence for children as is documented in major literary works related to the study. Parents showed an overall mixed response towards their attitudes for pocket money allowance.

Maximum requests by the children were made at home, followed by the stores which shows the overall impact of the indoor-media and commercial stimuli on the tender minds of children. Birthdays, followed by Diwali were seen as the occasion when the child pesters the maximum which helps to believe that child’s pestering is also a function of social values, traditions and cultural norms. Pestering (though in low intensity) during other occasions like Christmas, Valentine’s Day etc. shows the impact of westernization on children.

Many of the dependent variables like purchase influence of children with respect to several product categories, child’s influence strategies, parents response strategies and children’s attitudinal and behavioural measures have been studied in context of two major demographic variables namely Age and Gender as most past studies have drawn major inferences based on these. However, for all activities like Shopping Malls, Eating Out, Movies/leisure activities and Social visits except grocery shopping, no gender based differences had been reported. Girls showed higher frequencies of visits for grocery
shopping. Boys and girls showed different preference levels for purchase of different products out of their pocket money. Also, it can be concluded that gender and age played an important role with respect to the purchase-related influence in decision making for few product categories. Different key areas of purchase decisions showed difference in the overall intensity of influence from the children. Different age and gender groups showed different behavior with respect to the use of strategies to influence their parents to buy the product demanded by them. Parents’ responses also differed across the boys and girls, though it reported same trends across the various age groups for most cases. It was also found that boys pester more often than girls and that the youngest group (8-10 years) pestered the maximum as compared to other age groups. Thus, it can be concluded that pestering declined as the age of the child increased.

Thus, this study examines the overall context in which pester power of the child operates, throwing light on the importance of not only the socialization agents (family, friends and media) but also commercial environment which constantly bombards children psyche with messages that their vulnerable minds often fail to process. The effect of children’s influence in six product categories helps marketers to understand the overall marketing scenario with respect to these and hence devise more responsible marketing strategies targeting children.

The next chapter discusses the implications of the study for various parties who are directly or indirectly related with pester power and gives important suggestions to them. It further shows the limitations of the study and also gives directions for future researchers to bridge these gaps.
REFERENCES


