REFERENCES


CHAPTER NINE

SUGGESTIONS, LIMITATIONS AND SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

9.1 Introduction
Pester power is now gaining phenomenal impact as the demographic, social, psychological, cultural and commercial facets of the society are undergoing a revolutionary change. In order to understand inter-relationships between the key variables pertaining to the study of pester power effect in the society, empirical research and its inferential nature helps to unfold various issues related to child's development as an individual customer.

9.2 SUGGESTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY
It is important to note that the since the tender minds of the children are at stake, some sensitivity is warranted in this area to encourage responsible marketing on the side of the marketers and advertisers and careful upbringing on the part of parents and school authorities. This study produces many insights which are useful for various parties directly or indirectly like parents, school authorities, advertisers, marketers, academicians and researchers. Various suggestions and implications of the study have been produced based on the inferences drawn from the study and also by amalgamating the observations made by former studies.

9.2.1 Implications Of The Study For Parents
It is important to register the fact that parents are the most influential agents in the overall socialization process of children with a heavy weightage given to the mother’s
role. Mothers play an important role in the basic orientation of the child towards the external world in the early stage of adulthood. These conditioning also plays an important role in child’s reactions to various marketing cues and commercial stimuli like her reactions to television advertisements, perception about models in the ads, her pestering habits and the use of influence strategy, anticipation of fulfillment of demands, and influence from media and other peers. Hence it is suggested that since the mother plays the role model for child in her orientation towards marketplace activities, any dissonance found in her behavior results in confusion and distrust in the child. Pестering habits of the child can be hardly controlled by parents if they themselves display heavy consumption habits and impulse buying for less required products.

In India, with growing number of nuclear families and increasing affluence levels more children visit the shopping outlets with their parents. Children learn to demand for the products when they are exposed to shopping trips more frequently. Hence it is advisable to put restrictions on the child’s shopping trips. Also, parents must learn to have overt communication with their children so as give better knowledge about consumption habits and thereby socialize them.

Television has a massive impact on the tender minds of children and is their arena towards various commercial stimuli in terms of marketing messages and promotional schemes. In some households, television is comfortably used as a baby-sitter for the child while the parents are busy with their work. Their early exposure to media influences can be restricted by controlled viewing or atleast co-viewing. Healthy communication encompassing clarity about the difference between television commercials and program content, intent of various advertising messages, credibility of celebrity endorsers and puffery used in advertising should be explained and reinforced to reduce the vulnerability of their innocent minds.
Also, parents in the higher income groups should be particularly meticulous in explaining to the child the concept of value-for-money and develop more conscious buying behavior instead of impulse purchases in the early stage of child’s development into customers.

In households where parents are not able to spend quality time with kids either due to job pressures and other household responsibilities or due to dual-parents working status, parents must not fall prey to their tendencies to compensate for their lack of time with buying various gifts for their children as this develops a platform for future pesterering. Parents must realize that spending time together and not just money helps in building stronger relationships.

Further, parents must include their children in purchase related discussions to help them develop a thorough understanding of overall evaluation process before buying a big-ticket item like durables, electronics or other valuables.

Parents should monitor independent purchase behavior of children by controlling their pocket money allowance and also conducting regular audits for the same. Expensive items requested by children should be budgeted properly from their pocket money allowances by postponing purchases or shared expending.

Parents should understand the influence strategies frequently employed by children to buy the products of their choice and any negative influence strategy like use of power games, flattery, manipulation, throwing tantrums in public etc. should be either controlled through counseling or if necessary through penalties.

Parents should try to control their own desire to pamper children and expose them to unnecessary and excessive consumption habits under the guise of offering a better standard of living. Such guilt feelings can be put at bay by offering value education and rational thought processes.
9.2.2 Implications Of The Study For School Authorities

While for younger children, parents have the highest influence, it is found that for the older children, other socializing agents hold a lot of importance. One such agent of primary importance is the school where the child spends considerable time and also gets into the interaction with peers. Therefore, the school should impart the much required consumer education in the classroom which should orient the class for various stages of product purchases, evaluation techniques through comparisons and discussion, use of alternate media like internet for gathering more information and post purchase satisfaction.

More focus should be given to spreading awareness about the Consumer Protection Act and its implications through real-life examples and active discussions.

Teachers should play an active role in counseling children against the psychological pressures of peer groups, compulsive materialism, group conformity dynamics, etc. An alternate arrangement can be made by appointing a full-time child psychologist to deal with various pressing issues of children and educating parents for the same.

No commercial activity which, in any way, could exploit the gullible minds of children should be allowed like promotional schemes, and financial aids in lieu of advertising in the campus, prize sponsorships for kids-related items for contests and competitions and any kind of on-campus display of merchandise.

9.2.3 Implications Of The Study For Advertisers And Marketers

Advertisers should bear in mind the legal and ethical aspects of targeting kids and advertising to children or else they might not only bring bad repute and controversies for the client company but also end up paying a heavy penalty for the same.
Advertisers should be well acquainted with codes of ABC (Advertising Bureau Council) which regulates the advertising industry in India and should respect the ethical code of conduct laid therein.

While designing advertisements, advertisers should try to put relevant statutory warnings or disclaimers and avoid any undue exaggeration or puffery related to child-related products as a part of ethical responsibility. Marketers could use more creative promotional schemes like slogan completion, discount coupons, freebies, celebrity endorsements, etc rather than promote the product through undue exaggerations and puffery which the tender minds of children find difficult to process.

Advertisers should also take into consideration the gatekeeping role of mothers who can often influence how the children perceive the advertising messages.

Advertisers should not advertise for products which could directly affect the health of children and promote unhealthy living practices leading to diseases like obesity, etc.

Advertisers should strictly restrain from using advertising plots based on peer pressure or enhancement of social acceptability by owning of certain items which may develop feelings of inferiority complex among the swayable young children.

Marketers can even use non-traditional advertising media like the ‘Stealth Marketing tactics’ like advertising in the shopping cart or baby prams in retail malls, announcing meal time gifts to children, using various festive celebrations to attract children rather than relying on the traditional media of television and radio.

### 9.2.4 Implications Of The Study For Academicians And Researchers

This study unfolds various avenues for academicians and researchers to foray into with a different perspective and scope as defined for the current research. Such studies could be conducted for other states of India having different environmental framework than Gujarat to understand the regional differences related to the topic. Also, various
relationships studied for this research might be further investigated to draw concrete inferences for the same. The study offers useful insights and recommendations for future research work which are elaborated further in the same chapter.

\section*{9.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY}

This study is subject to many of the caveats and problems associated with the studies conducted with young children. Children often are fickle-minded and may give different responses than actually felt. Since the age group covered for the sample ranged from eight to sixteen years, it was found that the youngest in the group could not give proper answers for many of the attitudinal measures because of their limited cognitive skills. Though it is recommended that the scaling technique for the children survey could include ‘Smiley Scale’ or ‘Happy face scale’, it was found to be more confusing for the children during the questionnaire pretesting and hence has been removed. In-home interviews often award the comfort to the respondents but may also suffer from social desirability response bias. Self administered questionnaires by the older children may lack control of the interviewer. Looking at the spread of the research objectives across attitudes, behavior and lifestyle measures, it was impossible to employ observational approach which often promises realistic and natural results especially with children as the subjects.

Moreover, only mothers have been chosen for the survey for several logical reasons. This may lead to gender bias for some responses like parental control, communication pattern and attitudes towards parenting. A few major demographic variables have been studied to develop their relationships with the child pesterng. However, on closure observation, it may be noted that many uncovered demographic and sociopsychographic variables might also be working towards the genesis of pester power like the ethnic group, family culture, parents’ educational background and their occupation, neighbourhoods, and pattern of upbringing of siblings.
As the study was restricted to the four major cities of Gujarat (Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Surat and Rajkot), the generalization of the results may be limited to that extent, inspite of the fact that these cities represent a good heterogeneity of the urban population of the state. Also, the sample size though large enough is still considerably small to be able to comment on the state of Gujarat. However, some results found already show convergence with those of the past studies of similar kind.

Influence of the child’s decision making has been studied only for a few selected product categories for better results and avoiding confusion. However, the results may differ for other child-centric products and services like certain electronic and digital items, sports and hobby related items, soft drinks and other addictives.

### 9.4 DIRECTION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The findings and the scope of the study offer rich insights and recommendations for more fruitful and in-depth research in different avenues pertaining to this subject.

The study has concentrated on the four cities of Gujarat considering the distribution of the urban population. Future research may study the diverse social classes and its impact on child pestering. The researcher recommends the study to be replicated in other geographical areas of India as each state is characteristically different in demographic, socio-cultural and psychographic outlook in this sub-continent. Replication would evaluate the external validity of the study’s findings. Different methods of investigation like creating simulated market conditions and giving pocket money to the children to spend, mall intercept interviews, use of projective techniques like thematic apperception test and cartoon tests may further add more insights to the knowledge of this area.

Child influence on purchases have been investigated for a few select product categories which may be extended further and also studied in terms of frequency of purchases and brand loyalty. More empirical research is needed to understand how product request
strategies get translated into actual purchases especially for big-ticket items and high involvement products.

Future research may also foray into unveiled areas of how peer groups and other socializing agents affect child’s information sources thereby affecting pester power. Also, an important consideration here is that mothers have been studied for representing the parental relationships with the child. This provides a fertile area for future research as more probing even from the ‘paternal’ angle is now needed with more fathers playing an active role in child rearing and socialization. Also, future research can concentrate on disturbed families like single parent family, separated families due to divorce or other reasons, families with adopted kids etc to give a holistic picture of overall issues related to child pester ing in different family setups. In India, with joint families still being an important family structure, research can embark on the impact of the grandparents on pester power. This could probably give new horizons to the study of marketing to children and use of grandparents as endorsers for major child-centric brands.

Pestering in families with very high income levels and elite social status have not been studied which could be an interesting area for investigation in future with the kith and kin of film celebrities, sports person, politicians, top business magnates and other influential personalities facing a set of different dynamics than the children studied in the present context.

Other moderating variables which are beyond the scope of the study can also be studied in greater detail like the pester ing for products which grant extended personality to the child, impact of symbolic interactionism with the products, influence of ownership of certain products on peer relationships, defense mechanisms employed to overcome deprivation of such requested products and impact of parents’ materialistic and consumption behavior on child’s demands for various products.