Chapter No. 1

Introduction
1.1 Introduction
Children constitute an important target market segment and merit attention from a marketing perspective. The role that children play in making decisions concerning the entire family unit has prompted researchers to direct attention to the study of influence of children.¹

Children have come to constitute a very important consumer group that influences family purchases of various products in many ways. Thus, recognising children as a primary market, an influencing market, and a future market, children today are seen as different from past generations; especially the 8-14 year-old (called “tweens”, as they are neither children nor teens but something between). “They’ve grown up faster, are more connected, more direct and more informed. They have more personal power, more money, influence and attention than any other generation before them”.²

Family structures have changed, which influences family decision-making, and, as some authors argue, family communication has become more open and democratic, one consequence being that today parents pay more attention to their children and their opinions. These changes in family communication have made it possible for children to exert influence on family decision-making, a phenomenon called reciprocal socialisation, suggesting that children influence parents, just as parents influence children.³

A family has been identified as the most important decision making and consumption unit; therefore, how a family makes decisions as a consumption unit has attracted the interest of marketers and marketing research over the years. Usually, many studies examined family decision making by looking at the relative influence of husbands and wives in the different consumption decisions. Gradually, this has shifted to also include children’s influence.⁴

The increasing attention on children’s role was largely because of children’s increasing influence on family decisions and increasing spending power. Children attempt to and succeed in influencing family purchase decisions. Consequently, companies are making a conscious effort to direct their marketing campaigns toward children to attract their attention.
to advertised products and brands, acknowledging their influence, especially for products that they are the primary users. Numerous practitioners have offered insight on how children think and act as consumers along with advice regarding how to best market to this segment; indicative are some of the available titles: Creating Ever-Cool: A Marketer’s Guide to a Kid’s Heart, Marketing to and through Kids, or The Great Tween Buying Machine: Marketing to Today’s Tweens.\(^5\)

A number of different variables have been suggested for explaining children’s influence. For example, family-related variables include children’s age, parental attitudes toward advertising, and family type (modern or conservative); product-related variables include relevance of the products to the child, products’ colour, and brand names. Understanding family dynamics when it comes to making purchase decisions can provide meaningful insight to marketers regarding who to target with their marketing mix strategies: the father, the other, both parents, or the children.\(^6\)

The amount of influence exerted by children varies by product category and stage of the decision making process. For some products, they are active initiators, information seekers, and buyers; whereas for other product categories, they influence purchases made by the parents. The purchasing act is governed by how they have been socialized to act as consumers. Family, peers, and media are key socializing agents for children wherein family-specific characteristics such as parental style, family’s Sex Role Orientation (SRO), and patterns of communication play key roles. More so, changes taking place in the socio-cultural environment in India (such as emergence of dual-career, single parent families) entail that dimensions of children’s influence in family purchase decision making be investigated in a specific context. Indian society vastly differs from the West in terms of family composition and structure, values, norms, and behaviour, which affect the role that children play in purchase decision making in families.\(^7\)

There is a growing body of knowledge about the consumer behaviour of children around the world. While the majority of all consumer socialisation and development studies originate in the USA and focus on USA children (e.g., McNeal, 1964; Ward and Wackman, 1972; Ward, 1977; Moschis and Churchill, 1978; Moschis and Moore, 1979 and ; Moschis, 1985). There are also studies reported from other parts of globe, for example, Canada (Goldberg and Gom, 1978; Filiatrault and Ritchie, 1980, Goldberg, 1990), Europe (Antelo, 1992; Ferrari and
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Pescetti, 1992; Gunter and Furnham, 1998) and Asia (McNeal and Yeh, 1990, 1990 and 1997; McNeal, 1998). Hence, much of the evidence pertaining to socialisation and children's consumer behaviour comes from studies conducted in such countries as the USA, UK and Canada. There is a lack of empirical evidence on the topic in the context of children from developing countries, particularly in India.8

1.2 Theory of Cognitive Development

The Theory of Cognitive Development, first developed by Jean Piaget, proposes that there are four distinct, increasingly sophisticated stages of mental representation that children pass through on their way to an adult level of intelligence. The four stages, roughly correlated with age, are as follows:

- Sensorimotor period (years 0 to 2 - Infancy)
- Preoperational period (years 2 to 6 - Preschool)
- Concrete operational period (years 6 to 12 - Childhood)
- Formal operational period (years 12 and up - Adolescence)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-Stage</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Reflex scheme</td>
<td>Birth-1 month</td>
<td>Modification of reflexes</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Primary circular reactions phase</td>
<td>1-4 months</td>
<td>Development of coordination between vision and prehension (also known as, “hand-eye coordination”).</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Secondary circular reactions phase</td>
<td>4-8 months</td>
<td>Development of habits.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Co-ordination of secondary course round modest circular reactions stage</td>
<td>8-12 months</td>
<td>Tend to make the A not B error: Look for object where they first discovered it, not where they watch it placed anew.</td>
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<td>5. Tertiary circular reactions</td>
<td>12-18 months</td>
<td>New means through active experimentation and creativity in the actions of the “little scientist”.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Beginnings of symbolic representation</td>
<td>18-24 months</td>
<td>New means through mental combinations considering before doing provides the child with new ways of achieving a goal without resorting to trial-and-error experiments.</td>
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Jean Piaget's four stages

1. Sensorimotor period

Infants are born with a set of congenital reflexes that allow them to float in the heavily dense world, according to Piaget, in addition to a drive to explore their world. Their initial schemes are formed through differentiation of the congenital reflexes. The Sensorimotor period is the first of the four periods. According to Piaget, this stage marks the development of essential spatial abilities and understanding of the world in six sub-stages:

2. Preoperational Period

The Preoperational stage is the second of four stages of cognitive development. By observing sequences of play, Piaget was able to demonstrate that towards the end of the second year a qualitatively new kind of psychological functioning occurs.

(Pre)Operatory Thought in Piagetian theory is any procedure for mentally acting on objects. The hallmark of the preoperational stage is sparse and logically inadequate mental operations. During this stage the child learns to use and to represent objects by images and words, in other words they learn to use symbolic thinking. Thinking is still egocentric: The child has difficulty taking the viewpoint of others.

The child can classify objects by a single feature: e.g. groups together all the red blocks regardless of shape or all the square blocks regardless of colour. According to Piaget, the Pre-Operational stage of development follows the Sensorimotor stage and occurs between 2-7 years of age. In this stage, children develop their language skills. They begin representing things with words and images. However, they still use intuitive rather than logical reasoning. At the beginning of this stage, they tend to be egocentric, that is, they are not aware that other people do not think, know and perceive the same as them. Children have highly imaginative minds at this time and actually assign emotions to inanimate objects. The theory of mind is also critical to this stage.

The Preoperational Stage can be further broken down into the Pre-conceptual Stage and the Intuitive Stage. The Pre-conceptual stage (2-4 years) is marked by egocentric thinking and animistic thought. A child who displays animistic thought tends to assign living attributes to inanimate objects, for example that a glass would feel pain if it were broken.
The Intuitive (4-6 years) stage is when children start employing mental activities to solve problems and obtain goals but they are unaware of how they came to their conclusions. For example a child is shown 7 dogs and 3 cats and asked if there are more dogs than cats. The child would respond positively. However when asked if there are more dogs than animals the child would once again respond positively. Such fundamental errors in logic show the transition between intuitiveness in solving problems and true logical reasoning acquired in later years when the child grows up. Piaget considered that children primarily learn through imitation and play throughout these first two stages, as they build up symbolic images through internalized activity.\textsuperscript{11}

3. Concrete operational stage

The Concrete operational stage is the third of four stages of cognitive development in Piaget's theory. This stage, which follows the Preoperational stage, occurs between the ages of 7 and 11 years and is characterized by the appropriate use of logic. Important processes during this stage are:

- **Seriation**- the ability to sort objects in an order according to size, shape, or any other characteristic. For example, if given different-shaded objects they may make a colour gradient.

- **Transitivity**- The ability to recognize logical relationships among elements in a serial order (for example, If A is taller than B, and B is taller than C, then A must be taller than C).

- **Classification**- the ability to name and identify sets of objects according to appearance, size or other characteristic, including the idea that one set of objects can include another.

- **Decentering**- where the child takes into account multiple aspects of a problem to solve it. For example, the child will no longer perceive an exceptionally wide but short cup to contain less than a normally-wide, taller cup.

- **Reversibility**- the child understands that numbers or objects can be changed then returned to their original state. For this reason, a child will be able to rapidly determine that if 4+4 equals 8, 8−4 will equal 4, the original quantity.

- **Conservation**- understanding that quantity, length or number of items is unrelated to the arrangement or appearance of the object or items.
• **Elimination of Egocentrism** - the ability to view things from another's perspective (even if they think incorrectly). For instance, show a child a comic in which Jane puts a doll under a box leaves the room, and then Melissa moves the doll to a drawer, and Jane comes back. A child in the concrete operations stage will say that Jane will still think it's under the box even though the child knows it is in the drawer. Children in this stage can, however, only solve problems that apply to actual (concrete) objects or events, and not abstract concepts or hypothetical tasks.

4. **Formal operational stage**

The formal operational period is the fourth and final of the periods of cognitive development in Piaget's theory. This stage, which follows the Concrete Operational stage, commences at around 12 years of age (puberty) and continues into adulthood. It is characterized by acquisition of the ability to think abstractly, reason logically and draw conclusions from the information available, as well as apply all these processes to hypothetical situations. During this stage the young adult is able to understand such things as love, "shades of gray", logical proofs, and values.

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<tr>
<th>Table 1.2</th>
<th>Stages of Cognitive Development</th>
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<td><strong>Stage</strong></td>
<td><strong>Characterised by</strong></td>
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| Sensori-motor (Birth-2 yrs) | • Differentiates self from objects  
• Recognises self as agent of action and begins to act intentionally: e.g. pulls a string to set mobile in motion or shakes a rattle to make a noise  
• Achieves object permanence: realises that things continue to exist even when no longer present to the sense (pace Bishop Berkeley) |
| Pre-operational (2-7 years) | • Learns to use language and to represent objects by images and words  
• Thinking is still egocentric: has difficulty taking the viewpoint of others  
• Classifies objects by a single feature: e.g. groups together all the red blocks regardless of shape or all the square blocks regardless of colour |
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Concrete operational (7-11 years)
• Can think logically about objects and events
• Achieves conservation of number (age 6), mass (age 7), and weight (age 9)
• Classifies objects according to several features and can order them in series along a single dimension such as size.

Formal operational (11 years and up)
• Can think logically about abstract propositions and test hypotheses systematically
• Becomes concerned with the hypothetical, the future, and ideological problems

1.2.1 Genetic Epistemology
According to Jean Piaget, genetic epistemology “attempts to explain knowledge, and in particular scientific knowledge, on the basis of its history, its sociogenesis, and especially the psychological origins of the notions and operations upon which it is based”. Piaget believed he could test epistemological questions by studying the development of thought and action in children. As a result Piaget created a field known as genetic epistemology with its own methods and problems. He defined this field as the study of child development as a means of answering epistemological questions. His exploration of genetic epistemology is divided into four different stages: 15

1. The sociological model of development,
2. The biological model of intellectual development,
3. The elaboration of the logical model of intellectual development, and
4. The study of figurative thought.

Stage 1: The Sociological Model of Development
Piaget first developed this stage in the 1920’s. He investigated the hidden side of children’s minds. Piaget proposed that children moved from a position of egocentrism to sociocentrism. For this explanation he combined the use of psychological and clinical methods to create what he called a semi-clinical interview. He began the interview by asking children standardized questions and depending on how they answered, he would ask them a series of nonstandard questions. Piaget was looking for what he called “spontaneous conviction” so he often asked questions the children neither expected nor anticipated. In his studies, he noticed there was a gradual progression from intuitive to scientific and socially acceptable responses.
Piaget theorized children did this because of the social interaction and the challenge to younger children's ideas by the ideas of those children who were more advanced.

**Stage 2: The Biological Model of Intellectual Development**

In this stage, Piaget described intelligence as having two closely interrelated parts. The first part, which is from the first stage, was the content of children's thinking. The second part was the process of intellectual activity. He believed this process of thinking could be regarded as an extension of the biological process of adaptation. Adaptation has two pieces: assimilation and accommodation. To test his theory, Piaget observed the habits in his own children. He argued infants were engaging in an act of assimilation when they sucked on everything in their reach.

He claimed infants transform all objects into an object to be sucked. The children were assimilating the objects to conform to their own mental structures. Piaget then made the assumption whenever one transforms the world to meet individual needs or conceptions; one is, in a way, assimilating it. Piaget also observed his children not only assimilating objects to fit their needs, but also modifying some of their mental structures to meet the demands of the environment. This is the second division of adaptation known as accommodation. To start out, the infants only engaged in primarily reflex actions such as sucking, but not long after, they would pick up actual objects and put them in their mouths. When they do this, they modify their reflex response to accommodate the external objects into reflex actions. Because the two are often in conflict, they provide the impetus for intellectual development. The constant need to balance the two, triggers intellectual growth.16

**Stage 3: The Elaboration of the Logical Model of Intellectual Development**

In the model Piaget developed in stage three, he argued the idea that intelligence develops in a series of stages that are related to age and are progressive because one stage must be accomplished before the next can occur. For each stage of development the child forms a view of reality for that age period. At the next stage, the child must keep up with earlier level of mental abilities to reconstruct concepts. Piaget concluded intellectual development as an upward expanding spiral in which children must constantly reconstruct the ideas formed at earlier levels with new, higher order concepts acquired at the next level.
Stage 4: The Study of Figurative thought

Piaget studied areas of intelligence like perception and memory that aren't entirely logical. Logical concepts are described as being completely reversible because they can always get back to the starting point. The perceptual concepts Piaget studied could not be manipulated. To describe the figurative process, Piaget uses pictures as examples. Pictures can’t be separated because contours cannot be separated from the forms they outline. Memory is the same way. It is never completely reversible. During this last period of work, Piaget and his colleague Inhelder also published books on perception, memory, and other figurative processes such as learning during this last period.

1.3 Child Development

It is important that people who are actively researching the child and youth market should be aware of the latest thinking from psychologists about what children are capable of as well as what their limitations are. Unfortunately the inadequacies of children and childhood are often emphasised when the role of the child in the commercial and economic world is under discussion. Buying, spending, saving and managing both money and desire are pleasurable as well as educative experiences. This world will not go away and learning how to appreciate and enjoy it as well as cope with it are essential aspects of growing up. The hedonistic aspects of consumption are often discussed by consumer researchers in various journal articles and there is no reason to restrict the debate to adults only.

Brian Young (child psychologist, 2004) has examined that how children develop and change their thoughts, feelings, and behaviour as they grow through middle childhood into adolescence and young adulthood. There are some theories which guide and inform research on kids and the commercial world. There are several to choose from and they tend to emphasise or even favour two different kinds of approach.

The first approach borrows heavily from biology and views change as very much determined by an almost inevitable growth toward a mature state – the grownup. These changes are in the way we think about the world. The very young child before school age sees changes in shapes and colours and is dominated by the world of the senses. The older child can make deeper inferences about the way the world really is and start to reason more like an adult. The great Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget is often identified with this approach.
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The other approach emphasises culture and recognises that the mental sign systems the child acquires as a member of that culture are the greatest influences on the child’s understanding - a position first promoted by the Russian psychologist Vygotsky in the 1920s and 1930s. But some North American psychologists such as Jerome Bruner and Michael Cole argue their case using similar ideas and anyone who claims for example that computers provide children with immensely powerful extensions of their thought processes giving them a whole new world of ideas and styles of thought, owes a debt to Vygotsky.

Both these approaches can be used and have been used in the literature on young consumers and it is interesting to note that the more optimistic writings that envisage ‘a brave new world’ tend to use the latter approach, whereas the more gloomy and cautious material on the perils of exposing children to the world of glittering consumables tends to rely heavily on theories from Piaget. The theoretical position found most agreeable however is derived from ecology and can be called the ‘natural history’ approach to children and childhood. Just like we observe birds and animals in their natural habitats so we can look at and record what’s going on in the world of children. And of course the school and the home are developmental niches with behaviours appropriate to each place. But the mall and the supermarket and the toyshop are also appropriate places to watch and learn how children behave in these sites of consumption. Each affords different kinds of behaviour with different scripts and norms that guide what is appropriate and where the boundaries are. Who remembers what it was like to have the intimacy of home accidentally invade the world of one’s friends when you forgot and called the teacher ‘Mummy’? Or when the hedonistic norms of the world of the mall are in conflict with the more prudent world of school or home?

As the child grows up he or she explores a wider range of contexts and learns that different and appropriate behaviours are expected. Everyday problems arise and are solved sometimes partially and often collectively. And the levels of skill found there can be far greater than in a setting where different behaviours are expected. Children in Zimbabwe, for example, are adept at mental arithmetic and can compute costs and calculate change to be given at an instant because the demands of their role as traders by the roadside and being good at maths has instant survival value. Kids in the UK cannot do mental arithmetic anymore because they do not need to, much to the disappointment of their parents who see that as yet one more step in the dumbing down of Britain. They have calculators to do that for them. Kids survive and adapt within their own ecological or environmental niche.
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Many of us are unwilling to abandon Piaget altogether because of his wonderful insights into children’s thinking, with such useful ideas as growing up occurring in stages, and younger children’s judgements being dominated by what they see. And yet, we also know that a stage development approach to the issue of children’s comprehension of advertising and marketing does not really do justice to advertising literacy with all its constituent skills developing at different rates, not just for each stream of development but for each child as well. In addition, we know that children show competence with tasks that they are familiar with and which their culture sees as important, but they will display limited abilities in other situations. Exploring how children cope in different situations with the problems that emerge and cataloguing how this is done seemed to be the best way to get into the world of children and consumption.

1.3.1 Middle childhood

Middle childhood starts about six years of age. The entry into middle childhood is not just caused by changes in development so that children are more active and able to explore their environment and can start to reason about life and display the rudiments of social intelligence. That is certainly true but it is also driven by the expectations of parents about what sort of things children are capable of and these parental expectations partly reflect the needs and expectations of the culture. Harkness and Super (1983) looked at a non-technological group of people in Kenya and found that six years was about the age when children could be trusted to carry out tasks on their own such as taking a message to a neighbour or doing errands with small amounts of money. This responsibility was recognised by the culture and transmitted through the parents to the child. It coincided with a general recognition by adults that the child was now responsible and the focus should now be on what needs to be done by the child, not what the child feels like doing. However in infancy, for this group, the child is indulged and looked after by others and allowed to have an individual personality.

What the culture expects from children at different ages will affect what the child believes she or she is capable of and tries to do. But there are also profound changes occurring during middle childhood that come from within the child’s developing mind and influence how children think. They become less focused on the appearance of things and start to make deeper inferences about how the world really is. They are also capable of seeing things from
another person's point of view. Of course there are other changes happening that psychologists have catalogued but children can get quite far with just these two. So to understand advertising, for example, children have to be able to go beyond the information given in the message and realise that there is someone behind it all who is deliberately trying to get you to do something. They have to understand that their interests and another person's interests do not coincide. Interestingly in one of the rare studies on children's bargaining behaviour, Murnighan et al (1998) found that quite strategic bargaining with money in ultimatum games emerged in older children with even nine-year-old showing an extremely strong sense of fairness. 17

Children can also gain an advantage over others by using what is called in adults, 'impression management'. Banerjee and Yuille found that eight and nine year old could explain why other children hide their emotions so as not to convey a weak or unfavourable impression to others. Aloise-Young showed that children in middle-childhood were able to self-promote and convey a favourable impression to get selected in a team game whereas the younger six-year-olds simply told the selector about themselves, 'warts and all'. Strategic thinking seems to be a key development in middle childhood. Crowley and Siegler looked at the strategies involved in noughts and crosses. Most grown-ups know that the way to win is to create a situation where there are two rows that can be completed so that your opponent can only block one but not the other.

There are other skills apart from using plans and strategies that children in middle childhood acquire. They have a deeper and much wider range of language skills. For example, Anglin reckoned that whereas six to seven yearolds can understand about 10,000 words, this number has doubled by eight to nine years of age and the average 10 to 11-year-old has a vocabulary of about 40,000 words. And what children can do with words changes as well. Younger children have a sense of humour that is limited to laughing at slapstick and 'knockknock' jokes and it is driven by simple understandings like incongruity and basic word play. But round about seven years of age, as they enter middle childhood, their sense of humour starts to change as they start making deeper and more subtle inferences. An understanding of irony and sarcasm seems to emerge a bit later. Several researchers in the 1980s (e.g. Demorest et al, 1983) used a technique where children of different ages were given a story which has a punch-line designed to reflect various types of figurative use of language. 18
They can pay attention. Young children, before they go to school, as driven by what they see and hear. They are buffeted by what is interesting at that moment and at that time and distracted by other more interesting and different sights and sounds. They can be taught at that age but it is difficult because their strategies for attention are poorly developed and are largely determined by what is going on out there. By the time children are in middle childhood they can take charge by thinking at the same time about a goal and the ways of achieving that goal. As well as being able to plan their attention they can also think about their thinking and learning and organise themselves. So they are beginning to become independent and autonomous learners.

All of these changes are part of growing up and psychologists sometimes call that cognitive development — how strategies of thinking become more like those of adults. What about the world of people? Children in middle childhood spend much of their time with other children and can be different people — maybe they are loud and assertive at home but are quiet and fade into the background at school. Parents will recognise this when they talk with teachers and sometimes wonder if that is really my child they are talking about! When children live and work together, often at school, they develop social structures and often learn lessons about relationships that will affect their behaviour later in life. Bullying used to be seen as a problem in social relationships that affected only boys but more recent research (Simmons, 2002) has recognised its existence in girls.

Girls have pecking orders just like boys and those girls who are at the top of the dominance hierarchy will use ‘relational aggression’ to maintain their position of authority and popularity by spreading rumours and gossip about others. But some children are also neglected or rejected by the group — the two processes are distinct and different — and this can affect the way they will turn out as adults and how they form adult relationships. But the picture is not all gloom, and many friendships are instigated and nourished in middle childhood. Psychologists have studied friendship and it is no surprise to find that children tend to pick friends that are similar to themselves in a variety of ways. But why do some children have an easier time than others in making and keeping their friends. One skill appears to be key here and it is what Selman et al (1997) called social perspective taking, or being able to understand and empathise with another’s point of view. Having this skill is important in other areas including enabling a child to understand and evaluate advertising.
Children have to grasp that the television set is more than just moving wallpaper or that the goods on sale in supermarkets and shops are not just there but that there's someone or some group of people who are behind all this and they have different interests and motives than the consumers. In other words they are part of an economic and commercial world where making a profit by selling is vital. Selman sees friendship skills as a developing strand in growing up and it is not until later childhood and adolescence that children are able to mentally adopt a perspective where they can evaluate the friendship by looking at it objectively, outside day-to-day conflicts and jealousies.

1.3.2 Tweens
Marketers use a term – 'tweens' to cover an age range from about eight to nine years to around 13 years. To some extent this is a culturally created term to identify a new and growing market of younger people and is not a developmental stage that child psychologists would recognise. But one could argue that any way of carving up groups of people into age bands is culturally determined and the history of adolescence for example is marked by the sudden discovery of 'teenagers' in the mid-20th century and the creation of a stereotype of rebellious, misunderstood youth.

Very young children very quickly realise that there is a world of difference between a part of their environment that stops at their skin and accompanies them wherever they go. For example, putting your finger in the fire hurts dreadfully but that piece of wood does not hurt you if it is burning out there. So the boundary between the body and the rest is important and acts as a foundation for the self. Fast forward to middle childhood (what happens between infancy and then is another story). Then the important question emerges: 'how am I doing?'

To answer this question you need to compare yourself with others and benchmark yourself with regard to others. This is known as social comparison. It emerges in middle childhood and is part of a more general process known as social referencing that is ongoing throughout development. Whereas younger children at this time will do this up front and maybe boast that they are best, they soon learn that this is not the best way to win friends and influence people. So interpersonal skills such as creating a good impression and other skills of managing the impressions and image you present to others will start to emerge too. Their understanding of others extends to attributing stable traits to others – 'you can trust her'; 'don't tell her anything because she'll tell on you'.
Children’s own understanding of others—their own lay psychology of other people—extends to what they wear and consume. So by middle childhood they know what sort of kid wears branded jeans or rides that kind of bike. They understand consumption symbolism. This consumption symbolism becomes an integral part of their own individual and group identities. For example Elliott showed that children would prefer to talk to someone wearing branded trainers than unbranded trainers. The children also felt pressure to wear the trainers that their friends wear, partly to make friends and fit in and partly because of the teasing experienced if they are wearing unbranded clothes or are clearly from a poor home. As well as benchmarking themselves against others, children can match themselves against an ideal self—what they really would like to be. What happens when these expectations are too high or they feel inferior to what others expect of them?

There is, however, a good case that children in middle childhood are sensitive to changing identities as they are growing up and that the picture painted in Western culture of the pleasures of adolescence is vivid and attractive—especially in media. In addition children in middle childhood often aspire to be older and enjoy playing roles. So yes, in as much as marketing, promotion, and the advertising of branded goods and services is part of that culture then ‘tweens’ will want and desire a piece of that action. Parents are also sensitive to their child’s changing identity and the concern expressed at tween culture reflects this ambiguity. The child is not yet an adult or a teenager and playing at being one and seeing representations of kids as teenagers on TV accentuates and emphasises this state of not being one or the other. Many mums and dads see children as extensions of themselves and find difficulty in abandoning the traditional protective role.  

1.3.3 Youth
The last stage of adolescence is youth. Puberty occurs at this time and there are significant changes occurring in the teenager, both in boys and girls. For example, it has been estimated that during adolescence the average girl gains about 11kg in the form of body fat (Bogin, 1999). Adolescence is also seen in many cultures as a time of transition and there are many rites of passage and dispensations that cultures afford to this group, ranging from initiation into the world of drinking to adult sexuality. These create demands on developing adolescents to find themselves. So the search is still on for ‘how am I doing?’ but the big questions such as ‘who am I really?’ and ‘what do I want from my life?’ begin to emerge in adolescent thought. In fact mental understanding, in the sense of thinking and reasoning about the world
in which they now have an active quasi-adult role, is still developing as children progress through adolescence. As teenagers they are cognitively capable of thinking through these issues and working out an adult conception of self with goals and ideals that will guide them through their lives. In addition modern society provides us as grown-ups with a bewildering range of roles and relationships which we can adopt—at least in Western developed societies and often these are contradictory. The modern woman, for example, has to juggle the competing images of mother, professional decision-maker, housekeeper and lover to name but a few and manage them all.

One of the ways of coping with changing identities is to identify with others and adolescence is characterised by groups—whether they are called cliques, gangs or crowds. Although they are very visible in buses, trains, malls and communicate with each other by SMS texting, older people rarely gain entry to these exclusive clubs. However looking inside them can be an illuminating experience as a lot of identity work is being done ranging from displays using clothes, jargon, music preferences to establishing friendship pairs that can lead to sexual and longer term exclusive relationships. All this activity like so much in the growing child's life serves two functions. One is to resolve problems and challenges that change poses now and the other is to prepare for the future which is early adulthood and the life cycle changes that employment and new family life bring.20

Figure 1.1
A Family Buying model from Buying Perspective

Source: Jensen (1990)
1.4 Family Decision Making Process:
In the study of consumer buying behaviour the family is considered a crucial decision making unit as the interaction and influence between family members are likely to be greater and more significant than those within the other smaller groups, such as friends or colleagues. According to Cart Wright, “Influence has been defined as something that is inferred when one person acts in such a way as to change the behaviour of another in some intended manner”. Thus influence involves actions by family members that make a difference during the decision making process. The decision making process follows a number of stages:

- Problem recognition
- Search for information
- Evaluation of alternatives
- Final choice

The decision to purchase a commodity or service by family or household depends on the various roles played by a household member in the purchase, consumption and influence of products. The stages in the decision making process are usually linked to the decision making roles. These roles are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initiator</td>
<td>Family member(s) who recognizes the problem or need for an item.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influencers</td>
<td>Family member(s) who provide information to other member about a product or service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gate keepers</td>
<td>Family member(s) who control the flow of information about a product or service into the family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deciders</td>
<td>Family member(s) with the power to determine unilaterally or jointly whether to shop for, purchase, use consume, or dispose of a specific product or service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buyers</td>
<td>Family member(s) who make the actual purchase of a particular product or service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparers</td>
<td>Family member(s) who transform the product into a form suitable for consumption by other family members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Users</td>
<td>Family member(s) who use or consume a particular product or service.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Maintainers
Family member(s) who service or repair the product so that it will provide continued satisfaction.

Disposers
Family member(s) who initiate or carry out the disposal or discontinuation of a particular product or service.

(Source: "Consumer Behaviour: Reference Groups and Family Influences" by Schiffman, Leon G. and Kanuk, L.L.P. 359)

The number and identity of the family members who perform these roles vary from family to family and from product to product. In some cases, a single family member will independently assume a number of roles; in other cases, a single role will be performed jointly by two or more family members. In certain other cases, one or more of these basic roles may not be required.

However, in general, people might play five roles in a buying decision as initiator, influencer, decider, buyer and user. Traditionally household decision making or family decision making has been categorized as husband dominant, wife dominant or joint and autonomous (either husband or wife is equally likely to make an individual decision). Until recently, most studies have ignored the influence of children. Today children exert a substantial influence on household buying decisions. Thus we need to recognize the new category of household decision making that is "child dominant".

Studies of family and domestic consumption have tended to neglect the role played by children but today children are emerging as the most powerful influencers in household buying decisions. Gone are the days when a child was thought to be adjunct of parents, an amorphous piece of clay, but in present times a child might be identified as a protagonist in the buying decision making process in this changed environment. He/She is so choosy, at times raises tantrums, being attracted by new concepts, refuses to be taken for granted and executes a greater degree of freedom in choosing the products for himself/herself. The changing socio-economic, political and economic orders have transformed the child into a sophisticated consumer. They can dominate household buying and can influence their parents' purchase of all kinds from cars to toys to groceries as well as determine their households' television and entertainment choices. Thus children's impact on household spending adds up to billions of dollars every year.
Today's kids have more autonomy and decision making power which is an indication that if adults are living in a consumerist society, the juniors are not far behind from pester power to direct consumption. "Pester Power" refers to children's ability to nag their parents into purchasing an item they may not otherwise buy. The teens and pre-teens segment is driving consumption and forcing product lines and service offerings. Marketers are targeting the consumers by using children not only in case of a product meant for them but also for the product used or purchased in the household sector. The amount of influence exerted by children differs in product category and stage of decision making process. For some products they are active initiators, information seekers and buyers, but for other products they influence purchases made by their parents. Parents find themselves under pressure from "Pester Power" as they face growing demand from their children. Table 1.4 enumerates some of the tactics used by children to influence their parents.22

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pressure Tactics</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Upward Appeal</td>
<td>The child seeks to persuade parents, saying that the request was approved or supported by an older member of the family, a teacher or even a family friend.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exchange Tactics</td>
<td>The child makes an explicit or implicit promise to give some sort of service such as washing the car, cleaning the house or taking care of the baby, in return for a favour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalition Tactics</td>
<td>The child seeks the aid of others to persuade parents to comply with his/her request or uses the support of others as an agreement to agree with him/her.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingratiating Tactics</td>
<td>The child seeks to get parents in a good mood or think favourably of him or her before asking them to comply with a request.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rational Persuasion</td>
<td>The child uses logical arguments and factual evidence to persuade parents to agree with his/her request.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspirational Appeals</td>
<td>The child makes an emotional appeal or proposal that arouses enthusiasm by appealing to parental values and ideals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation Tactics</td>
<td>The child seeks parent's involvement in making a decision.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source "Consumer behaviour: Reference groups and family influences" by Schiffman, Lean G. And Kanuk, L.L.P. 361)
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1.5 Tactics Used by Children to Influence Their Parents

Children have acquired dominating influence in purchase decision making. They have become powerful influencers as customers on various product categories even on such products, which they don’t use directly. Though the degree of influence varies from product to product, but certainly their influence is seen on household buying decisions. This shift in influence has occurred as a result of changes in a family’s structure and environment in which children are brought up these days. The major changes in a family’s structure are:

- More women working.
- More dual income households.
- More divorces and remarriages.
- More single parent households.
- Grandparents raising children.
- Postponing children until later in life.
- Kids more exposed to information through technology and mass media.

Therefore, parent today are willing to buy more for their kids because they have:

- More disposable income.
- Lesser time with family.
- More stress in life.
- Guilt for not spending enough time with their children.

So parents today substitute material goods for the time spent with their children. Hence, children have a higher say in household buying decisions.

Young Indians are the cash cows of the Indian Corporate who like to roll around in their mouth, savour and smack their lips over. They are so important that channels like MTV belt out their favourite shows at hours convenient to this segment, multiplexes shy away from screening blockbusters during exam time, consumer giants like UniLever draws upon kid power to position a detergent as “dirt is good” or “daag acche hain”.

Today’s children are overloaded with information and entertainment options. Media, Internet and Television advertising have a strong impact on children. Children may not pay attention to a programme but will necessarily pay attention to the advertisements, as advertising for a child is largely colourful, vital, alive and fascinating. The 30 second advertisement spot on television adheres completely to the child’s short attention span and therefore marketers are
featuring children and children movement in their campaign. LG golden eye television, mobile phone connections (Vodafone, Reliance, Airtel etc.), Godrej washing machines, Nerolac colours, Money investment plans like mutual funds and even advertisement of banks like Allahabad Bank, State Bank of India, Kotak Mahindra Bank are some of the examples in which children are the main features of the advertisement.

1.6 Tools Used to Target Kids
Marketers use some strategies to target children:

(a) Building Brand Name Loyalty
In her book No Logo, Naomi Klein says that the mid-1980’s saw the birth of a new kind of corporation - Nike, Calvin Klein, Tommy Hilfiger, to name a few - which changed their primary corporate focus from producing products to create an image for their brand name. Marketers plant the seeds of brand recognition in very young children, with the hope that the seeds will grow into life time relationships. According to the centre for a New American Dream, babies as young as six months of age can form mental images of corporate logos and mascots. Brand loyalties can be established as early as age two, and by the time children head off to school, most can recognize hundreds of brand logos.

(b) Buzz or Street Marketing
Many companies are using “buzz marketing” a new twist on the tried-and-true “word of mouth” method. The idea is to find the coolest kids in a community and have them use or wear your product in order to create a buzz around it. Buzz, or “Street Marketing” can help a company to successfully connect with the savvy and elusive teen market by using trendsetters to give their products “cool” status.

(c) Commercialization in Education
A school used to be a place where children were protected from the advertising and consumer messages that permeated their world but not anymore. Corporations realize the power of the school environment for promoting their names and products. A school setting delivers a captive youth audience and implies the endorsement of teachers and educational system. Marketers are eagerly exploiting this medium in a number of ways, including:
• Supplying schools with technology in exchange for high company visibility.
• Exclusive deals with fast food or soft drink companies to offer their products in a school.
• Advertising posted in class rooms, school buses, on computer etc. in exchange for funds.
• Sponsoring school events.

(d) The Internet
The internet is an extremely desirable medium for marketers to target children:
• It's part of youth culture. This generation of young people is growing up with the internet as a daily and routine part of their lives.
• Parents generally do not understand the extent to which children are being marketed to online.
• Kids are often online alone, without parental supervision.
• Sophisticated technologies make it easy to collect information from young people for marketing research and to target individual children with personalized advertising.
• By creating, engaging, interactive environments based on product and brand names companies can build brand loyalties at an early age.

Kids represent important demographics to marketers because they have their own purchasing power, exercise greater influence over family purchase decisions and they are the adult consumers of the future.

Figure 1.2
Children as Influencers
(Source: Kaur and Singh, 2006. 25)
1.7 Three Markets in One

- Children constitute the most lucrative market for many businesses because they represent three markets in one. Children are a current market because they have their own money to spend. They are viewed as having needs, having money to spend on items that satisfy their needs and having a willingness to spend money. Not only producers of soft drinks, toys, cereals etc. treat them as a current market but outlets such as video game parlours and movie houses also treat children as a ready market.

- Children also constitute a market of influencers that cause billions of dollars of purchase among their parents. Marketers advertise the product to children on television which directly or indirectly encourage them to persuade their parents to buy those products.

- Children are a future market for most goods and services. Manufacturers and retailers respond to them as future consumers to be cultivated now. Manufacturers of branded products (Nike, Adidas, Reebok etc.) try to attract the children because they know that today's child is consumer of tomorrow.
References:


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