CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

In the preceding chapter, the conceptual framework for the study is proposed and the hypotheses are formulated regarding the context of child’s influence in families’ buying decision making, however, the chapter discusses the steps involved in carrying research.

American Marketing Association formally defines the Marketing Research as, “Marketing Research is the function that links the consumer, customer, and public to the marketer through information – information used to identify and define marketing opportunities and problems; generate, refine, and evaluate marketing actions; monitor marketing performance; and improve understanding of marketing as a process.”

Malhotra and Das (2010) define Marketing Research as “Marketing Research is the systematic and objective identification, collection, analysis dissemination, and use of information for the purpose of improving decision making related to the identification and solution of problems and opportunities in marketing.”

Malhotra and Das (2010) define Marketing Research Process as “a set of six steps that defines the tasks to be accomplished in conducting a marketing research study”

4.2 Research Process

The following steps explain the research process for the study.

4.2.1 Purpose and Objective of Study

4.2.1.1 Purpose of Study

It is believed that the family is a central phenomenon as a purchasing unit, however, until 1960 the role of children’s influence in family decision making did not attract the attention of researcher, academician and marketer. Moreover, before then researcher were focusing on the spousal influence in family decision making, while
the role of children as an influencer in family decision making seemed to be neglected. (Davis, 1976; McDonald, 1980; Miller et al. 1982; Scanzoni, 1980).

Children have been defined as a specialized consumer market due to their growing population (Pecora, 1998). Children play an important role by influencing their parents’ buying either for the product used for the family or for the children themselves (Belech et. al., 1985; Foxman et. al., 1989). Children are now seen as a primary market, influencers and a future market.

It took a long time for researcher, academician and marketer to acknowledge children as one of the important actors in the family’s decision-making process. The previous studies were emphasized the role of husbands and wives, who have been considered the major decision maker for the family, whereas the role of children in family was ignored, overlooked and neglected (Jenkins 1979; Mangleburg 1990; Lee 1994). However, later on the researchers have discovered the greater importance of children in family buying decision is being placed. Now, there has been increasing recognition of the children’s importance and consideration in the family buying and consumption decision. They (children) are not only play a vital role in family decision but they are also are influencers in the situation where they exercised indirect influence with the agreement of the family members (Lee 1994).

With the development of India’s economy, in order to invest the market especially children’s market effectively, it is necessary to understand children’s influence in family decision making in Indian context. India’s culture is quite different from western culture in hundreds of areas, whether the distinct culture has impact on children’s influence in family decision making deserves to be investigated.

However, nearly most of the studies (as per available literature) are based on western context (as per chapter – 2, literature review). There are few studies focused on the Indian but fewer studies were carried out especially in the state of Gujarat (India) on the children’s influence in family decision making. Hence, the study is planned to examine and investigate the children’s influence in family’s buying decision making in Gujarat State of India.
4.2.1.2 Research Objective

The primary objective is to investigate the role of children’s influence in family buying decision making in the state of Gujarat which is subdivided and extended to the following secondary objective.

✔ To understand the role of children as a consumer / buyer.
✔ To analyze the role of child in buying process.
✔ To analyze the participation of child in decision stages and sub-decision areas.
✔ To compare and analyze the perception of parent and child with respect to
  i. Child’s general influence in family’s buying decision,
  ii. Child’s personal attributes / resources,
  iii. Child’s influence over specific product / product category and
  iv. Influencing Strategies used by Child.
✔ To investigate the relationship between Socio – Economic Status and Socio – Demographic Status of family with respect to
  i. Child’s general influence in family decision making.
  ii. Influence over specific product / product category
  iii. Influencing strategies used by child to yield their request

4.2.2 Research Design

Malhotra and Das (2010) defined research design as “a framework or blueprint for conducting the marketing research project”.

Research design may be broadly classified into two categories (Malhotra and Das, 2010)

Exploratory Research Design: one type of research design, which has its primary objective that provision of insights into and comprehension of the problem situation fronting the researcher.

Conclusive Research Design: Research designed to assist the decision maker in determining, evaluating, and seeking the best course of action take in a given situation.
Conclusive research design classify into two categories. The basic difference between descriptive and causal studies lies in their objective, however, if the researcher concerned with finding out who, what, where, or how much, then the study is descriptive. If it is concerned with learning why – that is, how one variable produces changes in another – is causal.

Descriptive research design further classify either cross-sectional or longitudinal. Cross-sectional study are carried out once and represent a snapshot of one point of time, whereas, Longitudinal studies are repeated over an extended period.

Cross-sectional can be classify into two category, namely, single cross-sectional and multi cross-sectional. A cross-sectional design in which one sample of respondents is drawn from the target population and information is obtained from this sample once. In multiple cross-sectional there are two or more samples of respondents, and information from each sample is obtained only once.

Figure 4.1 – A Classification of Research Design

![Classification of Research Design](image-url)
The aim of researcher is to discover the new insight in the area of research through surveying the respondent, thus, researcher has adopted the conclusive – Descriptive – Cross Sectional – Single cross-sectional design, for this study.

4.2.2.1 Data source

The research design also includes the decision about how one would go about collecting the data, however, the researcher can collected the marketing research data via two sources (c.f. Figure 4.2) namely Secondary data and Primary data source. The researcher can gather data through secondary, primary and both. Secondary data are the data that were collected for another specific purpose and already exists somewhere. Primary data are firstly gathered for a specific purpose or for specific project (Kotler et. al., 2007)

The primary data can be classified into two category as indicated in Figure 4.2. Basic objective of Qualitative Research is to gain a qualitative understanding of underlying reasons and motivations, whereas the objective of Quantitative Research is to quantify the data and generalize the result from the sample to the population of interest.

Figure 4.2 – A Classification of Marketing Research Data

![Figure 4.2 – A Classification of Marketing Research Data]

Source: Malhotra and Dash (2019, p.109)
The researcher has started this study by investigating the role of child in their families’ decision by examining the previous studies which have been carried to examine the influence of child in their families’ decision making. The previous studies were accessed through google.com, EBSCO and the other referred journals’ web site. Majority of the study (as per chapter 2 – literature review) have been conducted and published in western countries, however, researcher ensured that the context for the study is different but the content was relevant.

The primary data is collected from child and his/her parent (either Mother or Father) to study the children’s influence in family decision making in Gujarat, India.

4.2.2.2 Research Approach (Data Collection Method)

Several methods could be applied for data collection to analyze the children’s influence in their family decision process, including personal interview, field observation and survey approach.

*Personal interview* uncovers children’s influence in family consumption decision through one-on-one depth interview (e.g Palan and Wilkes, 1997).

*Field observation* involves recording the parent and child interaction in natural settings, such as, at the supermarket and at the home (Atkin 1978; Isler, Topper, and Ward 1987).

*Survey research* obtains the information about children's influence through asking subjects (either children, parents or both) with a variety of structured questions (e.g., Beatty and Talpade 1994; Kim, Lee, and Hall 1991). Obtained information through survey method is based on the questioning to respondent through structure data collection. The survey is widely used method to analyze the influence of children (as per Ch – 2 literature review). The method is easy to administer and reach large number of samples.

Hence, the **structured – direct survey** method was used for this study and the data were collected from the children and their parents through structured questionnaire.
4.2.2.3 Research Instrument

A Questionnaire is a formalized set of questions for obtaining information from the respondent (Malhotra, 2006). Designing a questionnaire implies deciding what information is needed from respondent and how it will be obtained, the content and phrasing of each question, the response format, the organization and sequencing of questions, the physical design and pre-testing (Green, Tull and Albaum, 2000). Hence, there are vital operational aspects have to be decided carefully at this stage to get an advantage of getting proper response. The main issue is to develop an instrument which must be clear, easy to understand and administer, therefore, the questionnaire were used as a research instrument for collecting primary data for this study.

Two questionnaires were developed to get the responses from the child and parent having little change in the formation of questions, demographic details of the respondent, etc…

4.2.2.3.1 Child’s Questionnaire

The child’s questionnaire was divided into 4 sections as follows.

Section I labeled as Personal Information which assessed the demographic details of the respondent child which are gender, age, number of sibling’s, Child order (elder/younger), living with, language they speak in family, average rank in previous examination, number of working parents (single/both). The demographic information is used to analyze various context of the child’s influence in family buying decision process.

Section II labeled as Resources/Attributes which assessed the information related to child’s personal attributes/resources and money spending of child. 6 statements were asked to the respondent for their personal resource/attributes on a five point scale ranging from ‘Strongly Agree’ to ‘Strongly Disagree’. The responses have been recorded for money spending of a child by providing 8 options.

Section III labeled as Buying Process which assessed the information related to buying decision process. Total 13 questions have been asked to record the responses
for family buying decision process, which includes the questions about planner, organizer, responsible and decider about the family buying. Apart from this, the question related to information sources, factors consider before buying was included. Moreover, the section included the post-purchase behavior of the respondent.

Different options have been provided to the responded to get the desired details for buying process.

Section IV labeled as Product Specific and Strategies which assessed the information related child’s decisional role for selected product category and the strategy used by the child. This section was framed asking four question which are as follows.

First, (Q-24) question of the section (annexure) collected the information about the child’s decisional role for 22 products which was subdivided into 6 categories through five point scale which ranging from “I Decide” to “My Parent/s Decide”

Second, (Q-25) question of the section collected the information about the strategies used by child to yield their request. The responses have been recorded on a five point scale which ranging from “Always” to “Never” framing 8 statements for different strategies used by the child like ask, plead, negotiate, persuade etc…

Third, (Q-26) question of the section was divided into two parts which assessed the information related to decisional area and sub-decisional area for selected 22 products. Responses related to decision have been recorded on a three point scale which are 1) Initiate for product, 2) Search the relevant information and evaluate for product and 3) take the final decision. The responses for sub-decision are were recorded through providing five options like Where to buy, how much to buy, which brand, deciding to buy and actual purchase.

Fourth, (Q-27) question assessed the information related to overall influence of child in their family’s decision making employing five point scales ranging from “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree”

4.2.2.3.2 Parents Questionnaire

The questionnaires for both respondents were same except section I which assessed the personal information (socio-economic and socio-demographic details of the
family). The section I of the parents’ questionnaire were assessed the information like Age of the respondent parent, Gender of the respondent parent, no of child, age of reference child, Qualification of husband and wife, Occupation of husband and wife, language speak in family, working parent in family (single or dual) and family income per month.

4.2.2.3 Questionnaire Design to Distribution

To check the reliability of the result, a questionnaire was prepared for testing purpose and was distributed among the 29 respondent child and parent. The responses were comparing and analyzed to validate the responses of the child responded. On the bases of the suggestion of the senior academician, researcher and other experts the modification in the questions took place.

Once the questionnaires were designed in English Language, it was translated to Gujarati and was computerized by professional. The computerized questionnaires were screen printed which was distributed among the child and parent respondent. The child questionnaires were personally administered by the teacher in the school and the questionnaire for parent respondents were sent through child respondent.

4.2.2.4 Sampling Plan

For following three decisions researcher must design sampling plan after deciding about research approach and instrument.

4.2.2.4.1 Sampling Unit? Who is to be surveyed?

A family living in Gujarat state of India is the sampling unit for this study. Family Decision making studies that focus on family roles require the collection of data from both the parent and child (Szybillo & Sosanie, 1977; Darley & Kim, 1986; Ekstrom et. al., 1987; Kim & Lee, 1997). For this study, the data is collected through the parent-child dyad questionnaire which included the child and either of the parent which allow researcher to compare the perception in influence and which gives more detailed, accurate and bi-dimensional picture of family decision making process.
Why Child aged 10-13?

All ages child have certain influence in their families’ buying decision. In most of the studies child’s age was found to be qualifying factor to select the sample to analyze the child’s influence families decision making. For this study also the age was qualifying ground to select the samples, therefore, child’s age ranged from 10 to 13 were selected for this study. The reason for choosing these age group as samples were that child of the same ages were expected to be mature enough and have been found in previous studies to be:

- Active, independent shopper (McNeal, 1992)
- Highly cognitive of their consumption choice (Belk et. al., 1992); and
- Knowledgeable about products and brands (Ward et. al., 1977)

Thus, child aged 10-13 years of age were included as one of the respondent in this research.

Why Parent?

Past studies shown that child tends to overestimate his/her influence which parent tend to underestimate child’s influence (Belch, Belch & Ceresino, 1985; Foxman, Tansuhaj & Ekstrom, 1989a, Kim & Lee, 1997). Kim & Lee (1997) suggested that multi-respondent and multi-item measures be used to improve the reliability and validity of child’s influence, therefore, the responses are collected from either mother or father as the literature revealed that responses of mother and father are very similar when compared on an aggregate bases (Darley & Lim, 1986l Guneri et. al., 2009). Therefore, the study inquires the parents’ perception about child’s influence in family buying decision which was gathered from one parent (either mother or father)

4.2.2.4.2 Sampling Size? How many should be surveyed?

Large sample size gives more reliable results than small sample size (Kotler et. al., 2007). Based on experts’ guidance, past studies carried out on the same field, access of household of Gujarat, population distribution, time and budget constraint the Gujarat was divided in four zones. 500 dyad (500 each for child and parent respondent) questionnaire were distributed to the schools of major cities of the
respective zone, which comes to total 2000 dyad (2000 each for child and parent respondent) questionnaire within Gujarat (500 dyad questionnaire to Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Surat and Rajkot).

Researcher has received total 1790 (89.5%) questionnaires, out of which 258 questionnaires have been discarded due to erroneous entries and non-responses for the desired questions, rest 1532 (76.6%) have been used for further inference.

4.2.2.4.3 Sampling Procedure? How should the respondent be chosen?

The samples can be chosen adopting either Probability Sampling Method or Non Probability Sampling Method. Non-Probability sampling relies on the judgment of the researcher rather than chance to select the sample element. The researcher can consciously or arbitrarily decide what elements to include in the sample. Commonly used non-probability sampling techniques are convenience sampling, judgmental sampling, snowball sampling and quota sampling. As far as the probability sampling is concerned the sampling units are selected by chance. The choice between nonprobability and probability samples should be based on consideration such as the nature of the research, relative magnitude of non-sampling versus sampling errors, variability in the population, as well as the statistical and operational consideration such as cost and time (Malhotra and Das, 2010).

Figure – 4.3 A Classification of Sampling Techniques

Source: Malhotra and Das (2010, p. 334)
The researcher has used Non-Probability Judgmental sampling for this study, which is a form of convenience sampling wherein the population elements are purposely selected on the judgment of researcher. The researcher chooses the elements to be included in the sample on the bases of judgment, expertise and knowledge developed through past studies and theoretical reviews. As the elements are to be selected on the bases of judgment, expertise and knowledge because the researcher believes that they (selected elements) are representative of the population and are appropriate otherwise.

On the bases of literature review the respondents were selected from the school wherein elements are found in group which is very good sign for the researcher to undergo the data collection process.

**4.2.3 Collect the Information**

Cross sectional representation were taken, wherein, data was collected once and over a period of time, allowing a snap-shot view. The data was collected during the month of April – July, 2014.

The school authorities were contacted and teachers were asked to help to get it filled from the students and their parents. Two sets of questionnaire were given to the students having same identification mark (number) on both the questionnaire. The Child’s questionnaire were filled within school which ensures the spontaneous answer of child respondents and without parental intervention, however, the second questionnaire were sent with the child to be filled by parent (either mother or father). The filled questionnaires were returned back within 2-7 days. The returned parents’ questionnaires were collected by the school teacher and then by the researcher form school authority and merge the same with the child’s questionnaire with the help of identification mark (number).

**4.2.4 Data Preparation and Analysis**

At this stage of the research process, the data are compiled, analyzed and interpreted so as to understand their full meaning and implications (Green, Tull and Albaun, 2000).
To interpret and understand the raw data must be compiled and analyzed, therefore, the process of data preparation for this study followed the seven steps of it which are as follows:

- Questionnaire Checking → Editing → Coding → Transcribing → Cleaning the data → Statistically adjusting the data → Selecting a data analysis strategy

The stage of **Editing** involves the task of reviewing the Child and Parent’s Questionnaire with an objective to increase accuracy and precision by way of identifying illegible, inconsistent, ambiguous and incomplete questionnaires. **Coding** involved the coding the variable / responses of the respondent by way of assigning a specific number to it. Then the stage **Transcribing** involves the task of transferring the coded data from the questionnaire / coded sheet to Computer (Microsoft Excel 2010 → SPSS 21). **Data Cleaning and Adjusting a data** includes the consistency checks of missing responses. SPSS 21 was used for used to analyze the data.