



An investigation into the influence of preadolescents on purchase decisions of households in middle income groups

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ABSTRACT

Children are reported to be taking on more influential roles in the decisions of household purchases. Some of the reasons cited for this are changes in family structures like smaller families and single headed households. Other reasons like enhanced technology and the influx of mass media has also been noted. The aim of this study was to examine the extent of the influence that children, in the pre-adolescent age group, have on purchases. The study further looked at the influence of peers, the influence of television programmes and televised advertisements and the types of techniques used by children to influence a purchase decisions. A survey questionnaire was administered to a sample of thirty households with children within the target age group of eight to twelve years. The sample was randomly selected from the Berea West Senior Primary School in Berea West, Durban. These families fell into the middle income group. The results confirmed the existence of children's influence on purchase decisions. The results also revealed that peer influence does play a significant role on children's choices. However the influence of television featured less prominently. Influence tactics and techniques used by children was also analysed to see which were more frequently used.

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Introduction

Household decision-making has traditionally been made by the parents however, with the advancement of technology, globalisation, changing of cultures and parental guilt of immense work pressures, decision-making is changing. Today, children play a major role in influencing purchase decisions.

Schor (2005:19) points out that a child is now immersed in the consumer marketplace to an extent never seen before. She gives the example of a one year old who watches "Teletubbies" while eating the food of their promotional partners, Burger King and McDonalds. It is therefore no surprise, Schor (2005: 19) argues, that by the time a child reaches 18 months, they are able to recognise logos and are even asking for products by brand names, before they turn two.

It is also little wonder that corporates are eager to target the child market. Linn (2005:1) describes children as the "darlings of corporate America". She states that the competitiveness of corporates racing to claim their share of this particular consumer group can be compared to the "California gold rush" and the children have become targets for marketers for almost everything from burgers to multi-purpose vehicles.

Linn (2005:1) also points out that, children in the United States (US) influence more than 600 billion dollars per year. One third of this is direct influences while the greater part is through indirect influence over family spending annually. The corporates therefore seek "cradle to grave" loyalty from their customers. Linn (2005:1) therefore argues that the result is that every aspect of children's lives, physically and mentally, is negatively affected by their involuntary status as consumers in the market place.

Gunter and Furnham (1998:7) maintain that the child consumer resembles all other consumers as children want to

purchase things that satisfy needs. This is true of items like foods, toys, clothes, books and magazines.

The child consumer however, differs from other consumers in that:

- They represent a primary market themselves i.e. through spending allowances (pocket money).
- They represent an influential market as they have the ability to influence the parental household purchases.
- They represent the future target market as adults.

The main focus of this study will be towards the important role children, pre-adolescents, play in influencing certain types of household purchases.

Aim of the Study

The aim of this study was to investigate the influence of children, between the ages of eight and twelve, on the purchasing decisions of households in middle income homes, in the Durban area. This study also considered whether peer pressure / influence affect the decisions of these children.

Research Problem

Changes in family structure, the need for both parents to work, increased independence of children and advanced technology are some of the reasons for children influencing the purchase decisions of households. Added to this is the influence of peers and the fact that children today are bombarded with mass media like television (TV) and the internet that influence them even more. In the past, many international research studies have examined the influence of children on household purchases and their findings have reflected high levels of children involvement. This is confirmed by Tustin, (2008:3).

The influence that children in the pre-adolescents age groups, namely: eight to twelve have on the purchase decisions of a household has not been explored in great detail in South

Africa. The aim is to see if this phenomenon also holds true in that age group as well. Children up to and including the age of seven are excluded from this study as Caruna and Vassallo (2003:56) have indicated that children under the age of seven lack cognitive abilities. The focus of this study is therefore on the child market which encompasses all children from eight years up to the age of twelve.

Objectives of the Study

The study aimed to achieve the following objectives:

- To determine if children between the ages of eight and twelve do in fact influence the purchase decisions of a household.
- To determine if peer pressure / influence impact on their choices.
- To establish the influence tactics children engage in to successfully influence a purchase.
- To determine if television serves as the main initiator of a purchase idea for a child.

Literature Review

This section reviews the literature, both local and international, on children's influence on purchases, the reasons behind why children's influence have become so prominent in recent times and peer influence on children's behaviour. The influence television has on children and the influence tactics that children use to influence purchase decision will also be reviewed.

Analysis of international and local studies and their relevance to this study

Various international studies have been done on children's influence on purchases. The earliest of these studies date from the late 1960's to the present. Studies from the United States of America, India, China, United Kingdom (UK), Canada and Turkey have been reviewed. The focus of these studies varies between them. Whilst the earlier studies focussed on the actual influence children have on purchase decisions, the more recent studies have moved their emphasis to look at family type and structure and its role on the influence of children, Tustin (2008: 2-5)

Kaur and Singh (2006: 4) reveal in their study that earlier research on the influence of children focussed on the mother as the main respondent. It was only in studies from the late 1980's that children and fathers were also used as respondents in the study. However studies that focussed on the media affects on children, used children as the main or only respondent. The few SA studies that have been reviewed focus on adolescents that is, or namely: 13 to 18 age groups.

Reasons why the influence of children on purchases has become more prominent in recent times

A few studies analysed during the literature review have touched on the reasons why the influence of children has been on the increase.

One of the main reasons cited in some studies is the change in family structure. This appears to be a common trend amongst families throughout the world. Flurry (2006:322), states that over the past thirty years, the structure of the traditional American family has changed significantly. Patterns observed now include older parents, delayed marriages, post-poned child-bearing, single parent families and stepfamilies. These changes have had a significant impact on the lives of children. The American scenario is confirmed by Kraak and Pelletier (1998:16), who add that in American families, family structure and women's work patterns have led to the independence of children and the teenage youth.

Harper, Dewar and Diack (2003:197) whose study was conducted in the United Kingdom (UK), state that there is a greater need for both parents to work today, which results in children having a greater input into certain tasks like household shopping. Sener (2011: 747) also confirms from a Turkish perspective that demographic and structural changes in households have changed the roles of children in family purchasing activities. He states that as both parents now work, parents have limited time for shopping and hence allow and encourage their children to participate in decision making. Moore-Shay and Wilkie (1988) cited in a Canadian study by Labrecque and Ricard (1999: 173) also lists the decrease in family size, more women working and an increase in single families as reasons for changes in family decision making on purchases.

Applying the above observations to a South African context, Tustin (2008) in his study focused on South African adolescents, also discussed the changing structure of South African households. His study also mentions more working women, older but wealthier parents, delayed marriages, postponed childbearing, increased divorce rate, more single parent families and fewer children per family. Tustin (2008) confirms that in the "new" family structures, children encounter decision making at an earlier age and take on more roles and responsibilities in family purchases.

Tustin (2008:10) further discusses technology as another reason for the increase in the influence of children on purchases. He terms this the "evolution of the internet age" and feels this gives children an advantage over their parents in terms of the speed at which they can obtain information. Statistics provided by Tustin (2008: 11) shows that internet usage in SA has more than doubled from 2.4 million users in 2000 to 5.1 million in 2006. Tustin (2008:11) is of the opinion that children's exposure to information via technology and mass media has made them key decision makers, even in products not relevant to children. He further points out that this has clear implications for marketers who realise that children constitute an important target market and hence they need more attention from a marketing perspective.

Marshall (2010: 43) points to other reasons why the influence of children has grown. He cites Mead (1970) who refers to the development of our society into a "prefigurative culture" a culture in which adults not only learn from adults, but from their children as well. This basically means that as a parent teaches their child, they also learn from their growing child. Marshall (2010: 43) states that this influence may not always be noticeable and direct. He gives the example of a mother who buys food that her child likes without being told or asked to do so. Marshall gives another example of indirect influence in the form of learning by observing. He describes how parents are becoming more fashion conscious by watching their children's choice of clothes, although at times this happens subconsciously.

Effects of peer influence and peer pressure

Lashbrook (2000) cited in Kao and Zhang (2008: 2) describe peer pressure as an instance of social influence, which typically produces conformity to a specific way of acting or thinking. Campbell (1969) cited in Gunter and Furnham (1998: 28) states that peers have a significant source of influence on children's behaviour. Gunter and Furnham (1998:28) also point out that consumer related attitudes and values of even younger children, of age's five to ten can be shaped by peer group

influence. As this study evaluates the influence of children aged eight to twelve, peer influence is one of the objectives of this study.

Lindstrom (2004:52) however points out that the pre-teen ages of eight to twelve, are more subjected to pressure from their peers than adults and teenagers. He points out that this age group tends to “follow the herd” rather than their own instincts. According to research by Lindstrom (2004: 52), peer pressure diminishes as kids move from pre-teens to teenagers as they become more rational and emotionally developed. Lindstrom points out that with age, a child develops an increased sense of individuality and autonomy and the need to “fit in” drops.

Wilson and Wood (2004:329) found that in their study on the influence of children in the UK, the influence of peers and celebrities such as sports stars was found to be very important. Heitmeyer, Grise and Readick (2003), cited in Wilson and Wood (2004:329), argue that growing up can be a period of great insecurity and may require changing of a child’s behaviour to fit in with that of the peer group to get a sense of “belonging” and acceptance.

Cheng (1993) cited in the Chinese study of McNeal and Chyon- Hwa Yeh (1997: 47), points out that in China, dress amongst primary school children follows fashion trends. He also points out that these fashion followers pay high prices without hesitation, in an attempt to “fit in”

Sethi (2011: 1) highlights that in India, car companies have discovered that buying decisions are quicker when children are involved and are trying to win them over. He adds that in India, style and status is important to children who want to be seen in the “biggest and best” cars. Stemming from this, Childers and Rao (1992) cited in Kao and Zhang (2008: 3), indicate that peer pressure is most likely to be experienced for “public luxuries” such as branded fashion items.

This study tests whether a symbolic product for example cell phone, is affected by peer pressure.

Influence of Television (TV) on children

Gunter and Furnham (1998:58), describe advertising, especially those seen on TV as one of the most significant stimuli linked to children “pestering” their parents to buy things for them. According to a survey by Lindstrom (2004: 64), TV was still by far, around 85 percent of the source of brand information for children. The next highest i.e. magazines was just below 50 percent, clearly indicating the power of TV and TV advertising. Lindstrom (2004: 65) attributes the success of TV as a medium to its advantages like the fact that it can combine the visual elements of an advert with sounds and music that appeal to children. TV can also be a shared experience, where children can watch with their friends and comment on what they see. TV also can reach adults and children with the same communication channel.

Flurry (2006:322) confirms the influence of TV, by stating that 47 percent of children aged two to eighteen have a TV in their bedroom and such children are taking in an average of 5.5 hours of media a day in the form of TV, print and computers.

Kaur and Singh (2006: 8), point out that 80 percent of all advertising targeted to children falls within four product categories i.e. toys, cereals, sweets and fast food restaurants. They further cite Jensen (1995) who also found that requests by American children are strongly stimulated by TV advertisements or by friends who have purchased the product.

When comparing the Western world with India, Kaur and Singh (2006: 9) found that children in India prefer watching TV to reading and they as well, were found to be strongly stimulated by adverts. These authors also noted that the retention of adverts was very high amongst children in the five to fifteen age groups.

Influence tactics and techniques used by children to influence a purchase

Tustin (2008:93) highlights various influence tactics used by South African children to persuade parents to purchase products they usually do not want to buy. His study lists these as negotiating, persistence, begging, shouting and using guilt. Tustin’s study found that “direct requests without reason” was the tactic used most often by children (73.5 percent of the time). His study found that the tactic least used was shouting, anger and guilt trips.

In comparison with a UK study, Wilson and Wood (2004: 333), in their study, found that children used “trolley loading,” namely: hiding items in the trolley with hope that it will go through unseen by the parent, as a common tactic. Their study further reports “pester power” or nagging and whining as a common technique. Children are reported to do this until the parent gives in. Wilson and Wood (2004:333) describe “discussion” and bribery as other successful techniques used.

Wilson and Wood (2004:333) also interviewed children in their study and found that children were conscious of their influence on purchases and sometimes planned when they would ask for an item. Many children interviewed by them stated that they would make requests when their parents were in a rush knowing that their success was more likely.

Lee and Collins (1999) cited in Kaur and Singh (2006:11), indicate that children can manipulate their parents by taking advantage of a particular situation. They found that when family members are in conflict during a purchase decision process, children may form alliances to aid one side against the other.

Research Methodology

The research strategy guiding this exploratory study was that of a descriptive research. The target population of this study comprised of 418 households that made up the parents and guardians of pupils of Berea West Senior Primary School, Durban. Using a simple random sample approach, 30 respondents were chosen from a list of households provided by the school. A survey instrument, in the form of a questionnaire, was used. The questionnaire consisted of close-ended questions. A pilot study was conducted amongst five respondents whose children fell in the 8 to 12 age group. The final questionnaire was administered telephonically. The data was analysed using the SPSS.

Results and Discussion

This section presents analyses and discusses the results of the survey carried out as part of the research. The questions asked during the survey will be presented graphically and analysed in terms of the aims and objectives of this study. The analysis of the data is done so in three sections that corresponds with the sections of the questionnaire.

Demographics

Occupation

Table 7.1 reveals that 53.3 % of respondents and 50 % of their spouses were professionals. A total of 26.7 % of respondents and 30 % of their spouses were self-employed or in business.

Table 7.1 Occupation of Respondent and Spouse

	Respondent		Spouse		Cumulative %
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	
Professional	16	53.3	15	50	51.7
Business	8	26.7	9	30	28.4
Other	1	3.3	5	16.7	10
Not in labour force	5	16.7	0	0	8.4
No spouse			1	3.3	3.3
Total	30	100	30	100	200

The above table hence reveals that 80 % of the respondent couples were professionals or in business. The above results are relevant in that Kaur and Singh (2006:6) indicated that children of professionals and successful business persons in India had a significant influence on the purchase decisions of households. This was reiterated by Wilson and Wood (2004:330) who found that working parents spend less time with their children and compensate by allowing them more "consumer power, especially with food".

Educational status

Table 7.2 reveals that 83 % of respondents and their spouses held a Matric plus a diploma or degree. Interestingly, a larger percentage of respondents and spouses i.e. 56.7 % and 53.3 % held degrees and diplomas than a Matric only.

Table 7.2: Educational Status of Respondent and Spouse.

	Respondent		Spouse		Cumulative %
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	
Matric	8	26.7	9	30	56.7
Diploma / Degree	17	56.7	16	53.3	110
Honours & higher	4	13.3	2	6.7	20
Masters & higher	1	3.3	2	6.7	10
No spouse			1	3.3	3.3
Total	30	100	30	100	200

The significance of the parents educational levels was highlighted by Moschis and Mitchell (1986) cited in Flurry (2006:326) where they stated that the higher the parents educational attainment, the more their children influenced their purchased decisions.

Number of children

Table 7.3 reveals that 50 % of the households had two children. This appears to be by far the greatest number of children per household.

Table 7.3: Number of Children

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative %
1	5	16.7	16.7
2	15	50	66.7
3	8	26.6	93.3
4	2	6.7	100
More than 4	0	0	100
Total	30	100	

It is also worth noting that a significant number of households have opted for one child, possibly due to economic pressures and focus on career advancement. This is relevant as Flurry (2006:326) pointed out that children's influence on purchase decisions increases with the number of children in the household. Nelson (1978) cited in Flurry (2006:326), also indicated that children had more involvement in decision making in larger families. This would imply more influence as well. This observation is also confirmed by Tustin (2008:50), from a South African context.

Ranking of respondents child in the family

A total of 43.3 % of the respondents had their eldest child at Berea West Senior Primary (BWSP) while 33.3 % had their youngest child at Berea West Senior Primary. The smallest percentage, 6.7 % was a child that was neither the eldest nor the youngest.

Table 7.4: Ranking of Respondents child in the family

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative %
Eldest	13	43.3	43.3
In-between	2	6.7	50
Youngest	10	33.3	83.3
Only child	5	16.7	100
Total	30	100	

Gender of respondents child

A total of 60 % of the respondent's children were boys while the remaining 40 % were girls. Further testing revealed that gender did not have an influence on purchase decisions.

Table 7.5 a: Gender of Respondents child.

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative %
Boy	18	60	60
Girl	12	40	100
Total	30	100	

Table 7.5 b: Comparison of Son and Daughters influence

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative %
Son	5	16.7	16.7
Daughter	3	10	26.7
Not Applicable	22	73.3	100
Total	30	100	

The question "If you have a son and daughter in the same age group, 8 to 12, whose influence do you consider to be stronger", did not apply to most of the respondents, 73.3 %. Therefore no firm deductions can be made from the table 7.5b.

However in other studies like that of Sener (2011: 750), respondents felt that the influence of boys were stronger than the influence of girls in purchase decisions. However the findings of Flurry (2006: 324) differ in that her study found female children more influential. Flurry's view is supported by Kaur and Singh (2006: 8) who felt that females were generally the initiators for a purchase.

Influence on purchase decision

My child has the ability to influence my household purchase decisions

An overwhelming total of 70 % of respondents found that their children had the ability to influence the purchases of their household. It is noted that only five respondents or 16.7 % of respondents disagreed with statement. This is a clear indication that parents have at some point considered the extent of this influence.

Table 7.6: Ability of child to influence purchases

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative %
Strongly agree	6	20	20
Agree	15	50	70
Neutral	4	13.3	83.3
Disagree	4	13.3	96.6
Strongly disagree	1	3.4	100
Total	30	100	

The above results have been confirmed by various studies. Hunter (2002) cited in Sener (2011: 751) stated that the influence of children on purchase decisions of parents had increased by 54 % since 1997. McNeal and Yeh (1997: 45) also confirm that children have enormous market potential as they can influence a substantial amount of their parents spending. Flurry's study (2006: 322) shows that nine out of ten parents

said their children's brand preferences for products carried significant weight. That study also indicated that 30 % of the respondents indicated that their children's opinions were given "major importance". This correlates with this study which indicated that 20 % of the respondents strongly agreed that their children influenced their decisions.

My child's choices are often influenced by his / her peers or friends

A total of 56.7 % found that their children were influenced by peers. A total of 23.3% of the respondents disagreed with the assumption, while a substantial six respondents or 20 % remained neutral.

Table 7.7: Influence of peers and friends

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative %
Strongly agree	2	6.7	6.7
Agree	15	50	56.7
Neutral	6	20	76.7
Disagree	6	20	96.7
Strongly disagree	1	3.3	100
Total	30	100	

The above findings correspond with various other studies that confirmed the existence of peer influence. Wilson and Wood (2004: 329) stated that as peer influence on children increases, it caused parental influence to decrease. They further stated that children modify their purchasing behaviour to fit in with peers so as to get a sense of "belonging and acceptance". The results above also match the findings of Harper, Dewar and Diack (2003: 196) who found that the importance of branding to children was closely correlated to peer pressure and the need to be accepted.

My child's choices are influenced by television (TV) advertisements and television programmes he / she watches.

Table 6.8 reveals an interesting scenario. It shows that 43.3 % of respondents disagreed with the statement, "my child's choices are influenced by television (TV) advertisements and television programmes he/she watches", while 40 % agreed with it. This creates the impression that parents seem to be split on the actual influence of TV on children's choices. It appears that the TV viewing habits of South African children differs from international trends. The above figures differ from the results of other studies. Gunter and Furnham (1998:59) state that their studies found that children's exposure to TV made a difference to the volume of their purchase requests. They found that the more TV children watched, the more advertisements they saw, resulting in more purchase requests.

Table 7.8: Influence of TV and TV advertisements.

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative %
Strongly agree	2	6.7	6.7
Agree	10	33.3	40
Neutral	5	16.7	56.7
Disagree	11	36.6	93.3
Strongly disagree	2	6.7	100
Total	30	100	

A similar opinion was expressed by Ward and Wackman (1972:316) whose study revealed that mothers interviewed, felt that TV advertisements caused a desire in their children for products. Jensen (1995) cited in Kaur and Singh (2006: 9) also found that purchase requests by children were strongly stimulated by TV advertisements and programmes.

My child shops with me

An overwhelming 93.4 % of respondents indicated that their children shopped with them at some time or other. Only two respondents responded to seldomly.

Table 7.9: My child shops with me

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative %
Always	8	26.7	26.7
Most of the time	8	26.7	53.4
Sometimes	12	40	93.4
Seldom	2	6.6	100
Never	0	0	100
Total	30	100	

Authors Kraak and Pelletier (1998:20) states that children that shop with their parents, undergo a process of "consumer socialisation", which is a process in which they develop skills and attitudes of consumers. This process helps children select, evaluate and use information to request purchases. The above results are confirmed by Sener (2011:748) whose study found that 82 % of families shop together with their children. The affects of shopping with parents is revealed in the study by Wilson and Wood (2004: 332-334) who found that mothers who shopped with their children, ended up spending 30 % more than initially intended. The study also found that respondents spent more on food items when children were present while shopping. Not surprising, the child respondents in that study saw shopping with parents as an opportunity to buy or influence the purchasing decisions.

I consider my child's preference when buying something for him / her.

Table 7.10: Consideration of child's preference when buying for him / her

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative %
Always	15	50	50
Most of the time	8	26.7	76.7
Sometimes	7	23.3	100
Seldom	0	0	100
Never	0	0	100
Total	30	100	

The above table reveals an overwhelming result that all the respondents took their children's preference into account when making a purchase for them. The influence of the child on the purchase decision of parents seems quite evident as 76.7 % of respondents agreed to the statement. None of the respondents disagreed with the statement.

The above results strongly matched that of the South African study by North, Birkenbach and Slimmon (2007:10) in which their child respondents agreed that their parents asked for their preferences when buying something for them.

I consider my child's preference when buying something for the family

Table 7.11 indicates that respondents were not completely for or against the above statement with most i.e. 70 % opting for the "sometimes" option. Six respondents agreed with the statement while three disagreed.

Table 7.11: Consideration of child's preferences when buying for the family

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative %
Always	2	6.7	6.7
Most of the time	4	13.3	20
Sometimes	21	70	90
Seldom	2	6.7	96.7
Never	1	3.3	100
Total	30	100	

Tustin's South African study (2008:37) is consistent with the above results. His study showed that parents were mainly responsible for items purchased that were intended for general family use for example household appliances, furniture,

kitchenware and cleaning equipment. Similarly, another South African study by North, Birkenbach and Slimmon (2007:10) indicated that parents seldom asked for their children's opinions when buying things for the family.

I voluntarily ask my child for their opinion on a purchase including non- child purchases like the family car.

The results below are similar to that obtained in the previous questions. It is noted that the respondents mainly opted for the "sometimes" option. However, what is noticeable is that 26.7 % of respondents clearly indicated that they never considered their child's opinion on a big purchase.

Table 7.12: Childs opinion on non- child purchases.

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative %
Always	7	23.3	23.3
Most of the time	1	3.3	26.6
Sometimes	11	36.7	63.3
Seldom	3	10	73.3
Never	8	26.7	100
Total	30	100	

The above results correspond with Tustin's (2008:37) study that indicated parents themselves were mainly responsible for big purchases like motor-vehicles and furniture. The results of this study however conflict with the results of an Indian study by Sethi (2011:1) that indicated that parents in India seek the advice of their children on big purchases like cars. The study further revealed that car companies in India target their advertisements at children as their parents seek their advice. Lindstrom (2004: 47) supports this and points out that in the United States; children indirectly influence 300 billion worth of goods through their opinion on non-child purchases like cable TV and trips to restaurants.

What purchases are influenced, Who influences it and How is it done.

Table 7.13 reveals that 46.7% of the respondents felt that toys were the most influenced purchased. With the rise in technology and the popularity of the "Blackberry", it was expected that cell-phones would have featured more prominently.

The findings below correlate with Tustin's study (2008:37) who also found children's toys and clothing for children as highly influenced purchases. The fact that no respondents felt influence on motor-vehicles, corresponds with the previous two questions were respondents reported very little influence on non-child purchases.

Table 7.13: Items on which influence was experienced

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative %
Sound /TV / Appliances	4	13.3	13.3
Toys	14	46.7	60
Cell-phone	4	13.3	73.3
Clothing	8	26.7	100
Motor-Vehicle	0	0	100
Total	30	100	

Table 7.14 reveals that 46.7% of the respondents felt that breakfast cereals were the most influenced food item. Fast Foods also featured quite strongly with 26.7% or eight respondents in favour of that choice.

Table 7.14: Food items on which most influence was experienced

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative %
Breakfast Cereals	14	46.7	46.7
Sweets and Chocolates	5	16.6	63.3
Fast Foods	8	26.7	90
Soft – Drinks	0	0	90
Ice - Cream	3	10	100
Total	30	100	

The above finding was also confirmed in the study of Wilson and Wood (2004: 333) who reported that children were most influential on products they consumed like breakfast cereals. Their study also revealed that nine out of ten parents rated cereals as the most influenced product. The second choice of fast foods also featured high in the study carried out by Tustin (2008: 181).

The child that is most influential in altering my purchase decision is.

It is noted that 53.3 % of the respondents felt that their eldest child was most influential on them. The youngest appears less influential than expected as one would normally expect the youngest to be the "favourite or pet" of the household.

Table 7.15: Childs ranking and ability to influence

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative %
Eldest	16	53.3	53.3
In-between	2	6.7	60
Youngest	7	23.3	83.3
Only child	5	16.7	100
Total	30	100	

Mehrotra and Torges (1977: 56) report that older children make fewer direct attempts to influence their parents but their attempts are more successful than the younger children of the same household. Ward and Wackman (1972: 319) provided a possible reason for this. They state that parents may believe that older children are more competent in making judgements about purchase decisions.

Techniques or tactics most often used to influence a purchase

Based on the findings below, "Persuasion" and "Bargaining" appeared to be the most popular techniques or tactics used by children. It accounted for 53.3 % and 36.7% respectively. "Crying" and "Guil" featured very low at 3.3% and 6.7% respectively.

These findings correlate with other studies conducted. Wilson and Ward (2004:333) reported that persuasion or "pester power" was common and included acts like "nagging" or "whining" until the parent gives in. Harper, Dewar and Diack (2003:203) reported other techniques like "sulking" or "crying" but these do not appear to be very common. Kaur and Singh (2006: 6) also reported that bargaining and persuasion appeared to be a common strategy to influence a purchase decision outcome.

Table 7.16: Tactics and techniques used

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative %
Persuasion	16	53.3	53.3
Bargaining	11	36.7	90
Crying	1	3.3	93.3
Anger	0	0	93.3
Guilt	2	6.7	100
Total	30	100	

The above results also coincide with the results of Tustin's study (2008:95) who reported that "anger" and "guilt" appeared

to be the least used tactics. This matches the results of this study as no respondent reported "anger" as a tactic.

Objective 1: To determine if children between the ages of eight and twelve do in fact influence the purchase decisions of households.

An overwhelming 70 % of respondents agreed that their children do in fact influence their purchase decisions. This is a clear indication that the phenomenon does exist and has been corroborated by data from the study. The findings also correspond and agree with findings from the literature review.

Objective 2: To determine if peer influence affects children's purchase choices.

A total of 56.7 % of respondents agreed with the fact that peers do in fact influence their child's choices. This far exceeds the 23.3 % that disagreed with the statement. The findings of the study also correspond with findings from the literature review. It has also been pointed out that peer influence in this age group is stronger than that experienced in teenagers and adolescents. The objective is therefore met as findings reveal that the phenomenon does exist.

Objective 3: To establish the techniques and tactics children engage in to successfully influence a purchase request.

The findings revealed that 90% of the respondents reported persuasion and bargaining as the most common techniques used. Crying and guilt featured very low. The findings of the study correlates strongly with findings of the literature review were persuasion or "pester power" was reported by most authors as being popular while anger and guilt were less prominent.

Objective 4: To establish if television (TV) and TV advertising serves as the main initiator of a purchase idea for a child.

The findings revealed an interesting result as respondents appeared to be almost equally for and against the idea that TV was influential. A total of 40 % agreed with the statement while 43.3 % disagreed. Five respondents remained neutral. This differs from international studies where TV's influence was considered high. TV viewing habits of SA children is therefore arguably different from their overseas counterparts. The influence of TV in a South African context is therefore considered negligible.

Future Research

Based on the findings of the study and the objectives that were initially set out, there still remains areas that have not been adequately covered and could be included in future research. These include:

- As South Africa is a highly diverse country, further research could look at child influences based on different cultural groups.
- Other income groups like the high and low income groups can be analysed and compared to results of this study that focussed on the middle income group.
- As many children spend a lot of time with grandparents due to both parents working, the influence that they exercise on grandparents could be tested.
- This study focussed on one school in the Durban area with a small sample. Other studies should focus on other major cities to see if shopping and spending habits differ in other parts of SA, with a greater sample size to increase generalisation.

Conclusion

This study set out to investigate the influence of children on the purchasing decisions of households. The reasons why this phenomenon is on the increase was discussed. The study found that children have to fit into the role of consumers early in their

lives due to time pressures and both parents being required to work as a result of economic constraints. Children are also exposed to mass media allowing them to make more informed decisions and advanced technology allows them to keep abreast with the latest offerings.

A sample was randomly selected and subjected to a carefully planned questionnaire which tested various aspects from employment status, child's gender, child's rank order to factors like peer influence, influence of TV and techniques used by children. The results revealed that the influence of children on purchases was prevalent in the sample, especially on items for their own use. The presence of peer influence was also confirmed.

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