

Mass Media- An Originator of Pester Power and Materialism

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ABSTRACT

Media, being an important socialization agent plays a vital role in child development. Studies on the effects of mass media on a child behavior discuss the extent to which children are influenced by advertisements and are measured by the amount of child purchase requests. The dynamic promotional media in Asian countries have resulted in increased materialism among children. Marketers are targeting children at a very early age thus advertisement has turned to be a chief determinant of materialism and child purchase request. This paper investigates mass media as socialization operator and pester power originator for kids in Pakistan. It further studies parental perspective of mass media's role in making kids more materialistic and hence shaping their product purchase request. Cross-sectional causal research was conducted using purposive sampling. Data was collected from parents of children aged between 7-11 years. Hypotheses statements were tested using SEM and bootstrap method using AMOS software. Mass media was found to be a significant predictor of pester power and materialism. Materialism was found to mediate the relationship between mass media and Pester power. The findings of this research are valuable for both marketers and parents in understanding and managing materialism and pestering among children.

Keywords: Pester power, child socialization, materialism, cognitive, nag factor.

1. INTRODUCTION

Children constitute a major market segment of active and influential buyers for majority of house hold purchase items. Children are not just future consumers, rather they enjoy a noteworthy impact over the family buying decisions. "Influence" is referred to the impact that kids have over family buying choices. Advertising is the main impetus behind child influence. The increasing ability of kids in family purchase decisions has caused strategic marketing decision makers to carefully target advertisements towards the child segment. The amount of money spent by companies on marketing activities towards

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children is about \$17 billion annually (Horovitz,2006). An increase from \$100 million spent in 1983 (Schor,2004).Marketers are establishing cradle-to-grave brand loyalty and promote nagging,by targeting children through licensed toys and accessories featuring media characters (Thomas,2007).Children ages 2-11 see more than 25,000 advertisements annually on TV alone(Holt,Ippolito,Desrochers,&Kelley;2007).Internet represents a favourable environment for marketing promotional activities since children are not usually supervised while navigating the Internet(Puiu,2008).Children under 12 influence \$500 billion purchases per year (Campbell & Davis-Packard, 2000). The current generation of children is the most brand conscious ever (Achenreiner & John, 2003).

These ads promote materialism among children due to the reason that young kids are incapable of comprehending the difference between fantasy and real world. Moreover kids lack the sufficient ability to understand the worth of products aimed at them. Several studies have studied the degree materialism among kids in various countries. A past study reveals that many children in the UK have become materialistic over the passage of time (GFK Social Research, 2007 as cited by Lenka, 2014). Marketers are spending billions of dollars in advertisements targeted towards children (McNeal, 1999).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Mass Media- A Socialization Agent

Media has been considered as a vehicle by advertisers to promote their product .Media incorporates daily papers, magazines, TV, radio and web. As per past researches mass media is acknowledged to be a chief socialization agent (Haq & Rahman, 2015; Ward, 1974; Godhani, Khant, & Jadeja, 2012; Moschis, 1978) and advertisements presented on mass media promote the ideas among individuals that acquisition of products result in happiness,success and increased social acceptability (Shrum & Rustagi, 2017). According to a recent study ,child media exposure is highly correlated with increased child purchase request for unhealthy products therefore television and internet exposure to young children is regarded as facetious having harmful effects on child behavior and health. (Robinson et al., 2017). The new media including mobile media

modifies media usage and advertising exposure among young children. (Nelson, Atkinson, Rademacher, & Ahn, 2017). An average youngster sees approximately 40,000 advertisements every year (Kunkel, 2001). Media has been examined as a significant socialization agent (television, internet) having a great impact on persuasive behavior among children (Elder, 2018; Nelson et al., 2017; Haq and Rahman, 2015; Godhani, Khant, and Jadeja, 2012).

Pester Power

Pester power is defined as a child's power to influence purchase decisions of parents by product purchase requests (Gunter & Furnham, 1998). Pester power is also called the "Nag factor" (Bridges & Briesch, 2006). Children influence the buying decision of their adults through purchase requests (McDermott, Sullivan, Stead, & Hastings, 2006).

Changing family structures, delayed parenthood, dual income families, hyper parenting, and indulgent parent have a substantial influence on pester power. (Soni & Upadhyaya, 2007). According to past literature, Rapid technological advancement, increased number of TV channels and online venues advertising and programming content encourage children to make purchase requests for products (O'Guinn & Shrum, 1997). Marketers present their products in advertisements in a captivating way which creates a desire for unhealthy products in children (Valkenburg & Cantor, 2001). Marketers are targeting children through integrated marketing communications activities including television and print advertising, sales promotions, packaging designs and in-school marketing (Calvert, 2008; Lati, Hamid, Abrar, & Ali, 2017; Kumar & Sharma, 2017; Marshall, O'Donohoe, & Kline, 2007). Children have the strongest influence on their family when they are in the age range 5-11 (Bennett, 1991).

Pester power is exerted by children through a variety of persuasive or emotional strategies dependent upon the family structure (Anitha & Mohan, 2016; Calvert, 2008). During the age (7-11 years), children are characterized by using persuasive pester power (Götze, Prange, & Uhrovská, 2009). Persuasive strategy can be in the form of pleading for products (Palan & Wilkes, 1997). Emotional pestering includes expressing emotions such as anger, sweet talk etc (John, 1999). As per a study of first grade students it was

found that pester power was a highly correlated with excessive mass media exposure (Robertson & Rossitor, 1976). Pester power is closely related to materialism as claimed by past researches (Nash & Basini, 2012).

Materialism

Materialism is defined as “The importance an individual places on the acquisition and possession of material objects” (Belk, 1985). Materialism was considered as an orientation which views material goods and money as significant factors determining happiness and social progress (Ward & Wackman, 1971). Materialism scale developed by Richins is referred to as the Matval scale of materialism as it considers materialism as a value instead of a personality trait (Fournier & Richins, 1991; Richins, 1994; Richins & Dawson, 1992). The scale developed by Richins included Acquisition of centrality, happiness and success as the sub dimensions of materialism value scale (Richins & Dawson, 1992). Getting possession, status, and acquisition in one’s life can be defined as success. Acquisition of centrality refers to the things that are the focus of an individual’s life. Pursuit of Happiness includes the things that a person admire, appreciates, enjoys and feels grateful about. It can be defined as an outcome in one’s life. Richins and Dawson (1992), developed components of materialism namely success, centrality and pursuit of happiness. Media (television) plays a crucial part in evolving materialism among young kids (Dávila, Casabayó, & Singh, 2017; Shrum & Rustagi, 2017). Media created materialism influence youngsters typically in early and mid childhood (Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2003; Chaplin & John, 2007).

Research Objectives

This study investigates the role of Mass media in enhancing pester power as a result of increased materialism among Pakistani children. The aim of this research is to study the perception of parents’ about mass media as a powerful socialization agent as well as source of pester power for young kids

Research Hypothesis

The research hypothesis have been developed so as to answer the following research questions.

1. What is the role of mass media in developing materialism and pester power

among young Pakistani children?

2. Is pester power a result of increasing materialism among young kids?

The following hypotheses have been developed on the basis of the above research questions.

H₁: Mass media is significantly and positively related to pester power.

H₂: There is a significant positive relationship between mass media and materialism.

H₃: There is a significant positive relationship between materialism and pester power.

H₄: Materialism partially mediates the relationship between mass media and pester power.

Variables under study. This study consists of three types of variables namely dependant variable ,intervening variable and independent variable. Mass media (television and internet) has been used as independent variable whereas pester power is used as a dependant variable. Materialism is used as a mediating variable.

Theoretical framework. Theoretical framework for this research identifies the relationship between independent variable i.e. Mass media and dependant variable i.e. Pester power in the presence of the mediating variable Materialism.

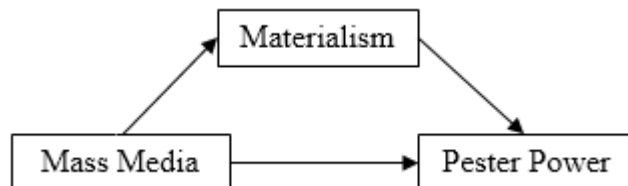


Figure1.Research Model

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This is an explanatory research which involves development of causal relationship between independent variables and dependent variables. Deductive reasoning was applied to set propositions based upon the theory of child socialization and the social power theory. This is a cross sectional study in which numerical data pertaining to variables are gathered using self-administered survey method from parents having children aged between 7 to 12 years old. Hypothetical deductive approach has been used

in this research.

Data Collection Method

There are two sources of collecting data (Sekaran, 2006). Data for this research work has been collected through both primary and secondary source. Secondary sources included articles from well recognized journals and books. A self-administered structured survey form was used to collect primary data for this research.

Data Collection Instrument

A self-constructed structured survey was developed on the basis of the survey items generated by previous researchers in the past. All the items were measured using a 5 point likert scale ranging from strongly disagree = 1 to strongly agree = 5. The first section (Section A) consist of questions pertaining to the demographic characteristics of the parent and their children. The results of descriptive statistics is shown in the appendix section. The second section had all the items relating to the mass media, pester power and materialism. The constructs for the influence of media have been adapted from previous literature (Lenka, 2016; Chaudhary, 2015; Chaudhary & Gupta 2014, 2012; Jain & Sharma, 2016). The items developed for the construct Materialism were based upon the materialism scale developed by Richins and Dawson (1992) . The scale for measuring pester power has been developed from the past researches (Chaudhary, 2015; Chaudhary & Gupta 2014, 2012; Jain & Sharma, 2016; Ogba & Johnson, 2010).

Data Integration & Analysis

Structural equation modeling was performed with confirmatory factor analysis and path analysis, in order to determine the causal relationship between exogenous variable and the endogenous variables (Wan, 2002). The multivariate analysis measures the hypothesized relationships developed in the conceptual framework. Data analysis was done with the help of SPSS and AMOS softwares. The final sample obtained after removal of outliers was 561. All items are were found to be reliable since the value of alpha is greater than 0.7 for each construct . The results of this research study are depicted in table 1. The squared multiple correlations are illustrated in table 2. Path analysis of the modified theoretical framework was performed considering mean of the element of the construct as a representative of the construct. Model fit summary is shown

in table 1.

Table 1. Unstandardized & Standardized Estimated Coefficients for Saturated Model

| Hypothesis | Standard Error | Unstandardized Effect Coefficient | Standardized Effect Coefficient | Critical Ratio | p-value |
|--------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------|---------|
| Mass media-→Materialism | 0.783 | 3.284 | 0.490 | 4.195 | *** |
| Mass media →Pester power | 0.252 | 0.747 | 0.256 | 2.961 | 0.003 |
| Materialism→Pester power | 0.041 | 0.178 | 0.409 | 4.381 | *** |

Where ***=pvalue<0.001

Table 2. Squared Multiple Correlations

| | Estimate |
|---------------------|----------|
| Materialism | .240 |
| Pester power | .335 |

Table 3. Summary of Model Fit for Estimated Model

| Model Fit Index | Value | Criteria | Status |
|---|-------|----------|----------|
| Minimum concentration divided by its degrees of freedom (CMIN/DF) | 3.24 | < 5 | Accepted |
| Goodness of fit index (GFI) | 0.93 | > 0.9 | Accepted |
| Normed fit index (NFI) | 0.91 | > 0.9 | Accepted |
| Comparative fit index (CFI) | 0.92 | > 0.9 | Accepted |
| Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) | 0.063 | < 0.08 | Accepted |

Mediation effect is tested using 95% bias corrected confidence interval based on 2000 bootstrap samples. The results of mediation test prove that the direct effect of Mass media on pester power is significant with standard estimate of 0.256 whereas mass media also has a significant relationship with materialism having a direct effect with a standardized estimate value of 0.490. The effect of materialism on pester power has a standardized estimate of 0.409. The findings of mediation test are interpreted in the table 4.

| Hypothesis | Direct effect(x→on y) | Indirect effect | Result |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Mass media→Materialism→Pester power | 0.256* | 0.20* | Partial Mediation |

Where * = pvalue<0.05

| Summary of research hypothesis testing is presented in table 6 below. | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| Hypothesis | Result |
| H1: Mass media is significantly and positively related to pester power | Supported |
| H2: There is a significant positive relationship between mass media and materialism. | Supported |
| H3: There is a significant positive relationship between materialism and pester power | Supported |
| H4: Materialism partially mediates the relationship between mass media and pester power | Supported (Partial Mediation) |

4. CONCLUSION

The findings of this research prove the significance of Mass media in developing pester power and materialism among children. It showed that 46% children watch television for 2-4 hours per day and 23.8% are exposed to internet for 1-2 hours in a day. The results of the study are consistent with previous study and it proved that children are highly influenced by mass media (Jain & Sharma, 2016; Ward, 1974). This influence leads to materialism and thus pestering among young children. Pakistani children (7 to 12 year old) learn pestering behaviour due to their exposure to television advertisements and materialistic content on mass media. Pakistani parents must monitor the time that their young kids spend on internet and television. As per the research findings, I would conclude that materialism is an adverse effect caused by mass media .Moreover materialism leads to pester power in children. Parents should be highly involved in shaping their child’s socialization environment and they should monitor the exposure of their children to Mass media

Significance of Research

The significance of this research study is to understand and identify the impact of socialization agents of a child over the pester power of kids. The research outcomes of this study are not only valuable for parents but they are also important for marketers, manufacturers and scholars. It will be enable marketers to develop promotional strategies keeping in view of the methods by which a child socializes. In this way it will allow marketers to foster a methodical platform in order to analyse the factors affecting pestering among kids. The significance and importance of this study shall be helpful for

marketers to design their marketing strategies in such a way order to increase the child purchase requests among young kids. Marketers can utilize the findings of this research to target children effectively using appropriate strategies. Marketers can use socialization agents to influence a child's learning and behaviour. The findings of this research study will enable parents to manage their child's nagging by controlling the exposure and nature of various child socialization agents.

Research Study Limitations

I should stress that my study has been primarily concerned with parental perspective of pester power and materialism within the city of Karachi. These limitations arise due to the constraints of time and cost required to conduct research. However, in the future perspective of children should also be studied in major cities of Pakistan. Future research should examine the influence of mass media on children in pre operational and formal operational stage (children younger than seven years and older than twelve years).

Future Research

The impact of new media including mobile and other digital media exposures on child purchase behaviour is an important untapped area of study particularly in context of Pakistani market. The effective use of digital media to prevent and reduce pester power, materialism and their outcomes such as obesity and unhappiness must be researched in future. The causal relationships between media characteristics, content and context must be explored in relation to mental as well as physical wellbeing of children. In future researchers should study the effect of controlled socialization agents such as restrictions in television viewing and limited exposure to internet upon the purchase influence behaviour of children.

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APPENDIX

Table I. Gender of Reference Child

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|--------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | female | 238 | 39.7 | 39.7 | 39.7 |
| | male | 362 | 60.3 | 60.3 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 600 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Table II. Gender of Parent

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|--------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | female | 242 | 40.3 | 40.3 | 40.3 |
| | male | 358 | 59.7 | 59.7 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 600 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|---------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Graduation | 296 | 49.3 | 49.3 | 49.3 |
| | Higher s | 221 | 36.8 | 36.8 | 86.2 |
| | PhD | 5 | .8 | .8 | 87.0 |
| | Post graduate | 78 | 13.0 | 13.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 600 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|---------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Graduation | 338 | 56.3 | 56.3 | 56.3 |
| | Higher s | 135 | 22.5 | 22.5 | 78.8 |
| | PhD | 9 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 80.3 |
| | Post graduate | 118 | 19.7 | 19.7 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 600 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|-------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Business | 181 | 30.2 | 30.2 | 30.2 |
| | Government | 189 | 31.5 | 31.5 | 61.7 |
| | Not working | 9 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 63.2 |
| | others | 16 | 2.7 | 2.7 | 65.8 |
| | Private | 205 | 34.2 | 34.2 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 600 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|-------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Business | 57 | 9.5 | 9.5 | 9.5 |
| | Government | 113 | 18.8 | 18.8 | 28.3 |
| | Not working | 307 | 51.2 | 51.2 | 79.5 |
| | others | 58 | 9.7 | 9.7 | 89.2 |
| | Private | 65 | 10.8 | 10.8 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 600 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Table VII. Your Child Watches TV for Many Hours in a Day

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|---------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | 0 | 4 | .7 | .7 | .7 |
| | Less than 2 hours | 246 | 41.0 | 41.0 | 41.7 |
| | 2 - 4 hours | 276 | 46.0 | 46.0 | 87.7 |
| | 4 - 6 hours | 69 | 11.5 | 11.5 | 99.2 |
| | More than six hours | 5 | .8 | .8 | 100.0 |
| Total | | 600 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Table V111. Your Child uses Internet for How Many Hours in a Day

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|-------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | 0 | 1 | .2 | .2 | .2 |
| | No access/ rarely | 213 | 35.5 | 35.5 | 35.7 |
| | Less than 1 hour | 207 | 34.5 | 34.5 | 70.2 |
| | 1-2 hours | 143 | 23.8 | 23.8 | 94.0 |
| | More than 2 hours | 36 | 6.0 | 6.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 600 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |