
The Influence of Advertising on the Consumption Behavior of Kenyan Families in Purchasing Children's Products

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ABSTRACT

The objectives were to establish the effects how advertising to children influence their family purchase decisions of households and to make recommendations in Kenya. Primary data were collected from 200 respondents selected at random from four county districts of Nairobi, using a semi-structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered through a personal interview and responses were analyzed using SPSS for Windows. To test the hypotheses developed for the study, appropriate statistical tests such as the F test was used. This was achieved through correlation analysis, multiple and step-wise regression analysis, and ANOVA. This study found out that advertising to children creates a positive effect and significantly influences on family purchase decisions in Kenya.

KEYWORDS

Household; Family purchase decisions.

1. Background of the Study

Buying an incredible variety of goods and services by the consumers around the world varies tremendously in age, income, level of education, and tastes. How these diverse consumers connect with each other and with other elements of the world around them impact their choices among various products, services, and companies (Kotler, 2008). Consumer purchases are influenced strongly by cultural, social, personal and psychological characteristics. Family members can strongly influence buyer behavior. The family is the most important consumer buying organization in society. Marketers are interested in the roles and influence of husband, wife, and children on the purchase of different products and services (Norgaard, 2007).

Chaudhary and Gupta (2012) define the concept of influence in family decision making as "a change in a person's dispositions, as a result of interaction between parents and children". Gronhoj (2003) talks about a competence enabling the achievement of specific results. What is interesting in these definitions is that influence means making a person change his or her decisions via, for example, interaction or direct confrontation. Interaction is part of the active or direct influence, where for instance the child interacts with his/her parents by using various influence techniques to achieve what he or she wants. Influence can also be

more passive or indirect, where parents are aware of the child's preferences and try to comply without direct interaction with the child (Grønhøj, 2003).

In general, many studies on consumer behaviour focus on the individual's decision making, and sometimes include the influence from other relevant persons through factors such as the "subjective norm" (the theory of reasoned action). As a result, such factors only take indirect influence into account, for example, when parents know what their children want, and they are willing to comply with these wants. Another aspect is that the individual buying agent is not always able to predict precisely what other family members want him or her to buy (Norgaard, 2007). A successful choice may also require direct interaction, for example, where parents can ask their children what they want.

This study picked children as a study group because children are a very important target market for marketers worldwide. Children have come to constitute a very important consumer group (Norgaard, 2007) that influences family purchases of various products in many ways (Caruana and Vassallo, 2003). During 1940–1950s, kids were not considered as consumers in their own right but only an extension of their parents' purchasing power. But with the dawn of advertising especially the TV and Internet, children have become full-fledged consumers. Research shows that children have influencing power for almost all product categories. Whether the product is for a child's own use or the product is for family use, a child has very strong influencing power (Chaudhary and Gupta, 2012).

Children not only just want things, but also have acquired the socially sanctioned right to want; a right which parents are loath to violate. Layered onto direct child enticement and the supposed autonomy of the child-consumer are the day-to-day circumstances of overworked parents: a daily barrage of requests, tricky financial status, and that nagging, unspoken desire to build the lifestyle they have learned to want during their childhoods (Cook, 2001). Thus, recognizing children as a primary market, an influencing market, and a future market (Norgaard, 2007), children today are seen as different from past generations; especially the 8–12-year olds (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.

The reasons of choosing the 8–12-year-old age band is that children at this age are expected to be mature enough and have been found to be active and independent shoppers (Chan and McNeal 2003), highly cognitive in consumption choices and knowledgeable about products and brands. On the other hand, children of less than 7 years of age have limited cognitive abilities (Caruana and Vassallo, 2003). However, children of 8–12 years have more personal power, more money, influence and attention than any other generation before them" (Lindstrom, 2003). Family structures are changing, and this influences family decision making (Wut and Chou 2009).

Tufte as quoted by Opoku (2010) found out that communication has become more open and democratic, one consequence being that, today's 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 (Caruana and Vassallo, 2003); Chan and McNeal (2003), a phenomenon called reciprocal socialization, suggesting that children influence parents, just as parents influence children (Moore et al., 2002).

Caruana and Vassallo (2003) identified that, ever since the early 1990s, marketers have targeted children since they are not only consumers but also influence family purchasing. Children influence family buying decisions in four different ways according to Wut and Chou (2009). First, children influence their parents to buy products for their own use according to their personal preferences. Second, older children generally get pocket money and buy the products of their choice directly. Third, children influence their parents' choice for products for joint consumption by the family. Lastly, children influence their parents' own preferences.

Customers play the most significant part in business. In fact, the customer is the actual boss in a deal and is responsible for the actual profit for the organization (Kotler, 2008). A customer is the one who uses the products and services and judges the quality of those products and services. Hence, it is important for an organization to retain customers or to make new customers and flourish business. To manage customers, organizations should follow some sort of approaches like segmentation or division of customers into groups because each customer has to be considered valuable and profitable (Kotler, 2008).

Customers can either be; only buyers, only users or buyers and users. Sometimes, the customer who chooses a product or service is not the end-user or the person who uses it. For example, one might create a computer game for children. But children are not the ones who actually buy the game. The child is the user, but the decision maker is probably the child's parents. The buyer may be the parents or the adult who picks the game up at the store.

Family decision making is different from individual decision making and is more complex because of the likelihood of joint decisions and different role specifications for members (Wut and Chou 2009). To understand how consumers actually make buying decisions, there is a need to identify who makes and has input into the buying decision; people can be initiators, influencers, deciders, buyers, or users (Kotler, 2008). Children may combine the roles of initiators - those who request that something be bought, influencers - those who influence the buying decision, or users - those who use the product. These roles carried on to the family decision-making process, place children as being equal participants in the buying process just as parents. This study considers children as having direct influence in the family purchase decisions through being; initiators, influencers and users.

2. Figures

2.1. Literature Review

The basic role of advertising is to provide consumers with the right amount of information regarding a product or a service. Advertisements tend to be highly informative and present the customer with a number of important product attributes or features that lead to favourable attitudes and can be used as the basis for a rational brand preference (Clow and Back, 2002). People get information from advertisements through the attractiveness they hold, the attention they create and the awareness they give (Arens, 2002). Advertising is a structured form of applied communication, employing both verbal and non-verbal elements that are composed to fill specific space and time determined by a sponsor.

Effective communication through advertising leads the consumers toward the purchasing of a brand (Arora, 2007). One key concern for the advertiser is whether the advertisement or commercial conveys the meaning intended. The receiver is viewed as being very actively involved participant in the communication process; whose ability and motivation to attend, comprehend and evaluate messages is high.

If the consumer or the audience gets the message and understands it as the advertiser has it in mind, it is a great success for the advertiser. That understanding leads the person to prefer and purchase the brand (Narayan, 2010).

Marketing activities such as advertising affect both internal and external behaviours of the consumer. Most specifically, consumer perceptions are influenced through exposure such as seeing an advertisement; attention which means that the consumer recognizes the advertisement; awareness which is common if the advertisement involves some humour; and the retention that keeps or stays in the mind of the consumer (Arora, 2007). Advertisements also affect the knowledge by giving information, attitude, personality, lifestyles of the

consumers, and the culture of the consumer. The concept of advertising makes it possible to involve consumers and this greatly affects their buying decisions (O'Sullivan, 2005).

Advertising influences people through education, persuasion and reassurance. It also influences the shopping experience, by making shopping simpler and helping to moderate the prices of advertised products (Armstrong and Kotler, 2006). Customers are the focal point of all marketing activities and therefore, organizations must define their products not according to what they produce but according to how they satisfy customers (Pride and Ferrel, 2012). Through advertising, a marketer expects to gain something of value in return, generally the price charged for the product. A customer also develops expectations about the seller's future behaviour. To fulfill these expectations, the marketer must deliver on promises made (Pride and Ferrel, 2012). Marketers generally focus their marketing efforts on a specific group of customers called a target market. Children are one such target market.

Advertisers stress the benefits of consumer socialization to render children "more comfortable in the commercial world" (Clow and Back, 2002). The brevity of opportunity for products and services aimed at children amplifies the intensity of attempts to reach them, particularly through TV advertising. Nowadays, children are in the environment of the omnipresence of TV in which programmes and commercials are used with persuasive intentions. Considerable evidence has shown that more children interact with the mass media, more consumer behavior learned by children and more consumer socialization occurs (Clow and Back, 2002). A study to determine new product information sources for Chinese children shows that TV is considered the most important information source for learning about new products, and the perceived importance of TV as an information source of new products increases significantly with the age of children (Chan, 2003).

Children watch a great deal more than programmes created specifically for their age groups. Their experience of advertising (and of consumption) extends far beyond products and services aimed explicitly at them. Yet television advertising has an iconic significance for both sides of the debate as a peculiarly visible component of promotion aimed at children. This includes other media, the Internet, "word of mouth" crazes, and product placement (O'Sullivan, 2005).

The response of parents to children's attempts at influencing family purchases, acts as reinforcements to children's future behaviour as consumers. Parents who satisfy children's requests encourage children to be attentive to advertising and to ask for things more frequently; while parents, who discuss children's requests, encourage them to develop skills in selecting and interpreting product information (O'Sullivan, 2005).

2.2. Consumer Purchase Decisions

Consumers make many buying decisions every day. Most large companies research on consumer buying decisions in great detail to answer questions about what consumers buy, where they buy, how and how much they buy, when they buy, and why they buy (Perner, 2010). Marketers can study actual consumer purchases to find out what they buy, where, and how much. But learning about the whys of consumer buying behavior is not so easy; the answers are often locked deep within the consumer's head. The process of consumer decision making can be viewed as having three distinct but interlocking stages: input stage, process stage and output stage.

2.2.1 Input stage

The input stage influences the consumer's recognition of a product need and consists of two major sources of information; the firm's marketing efforts i.e. the product itself, its price, its promotion, where it is sold and the external and non-commercial sources, the consumer (family, friends, neighbours, other informal and non-

commercial sources, social class, cultural and sub cultural memberships) (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2007). The cumulative impact of each firm's marketing efforts, the influence of family, friends and neighbours and society's existing code of behaviour are all inputs that are likely to affect what consumers purchase and how they use what they buy.

2.2.2 Process stage

The process stage focuses on how consumers make decisions. The psychological factors inherent in each individual (motivation, perception, learning, personality and attitudes) affect how the external inputs from the input stage influence the consumer's recognition of a need, pre-purchase search for information and evaluation of alternatives (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2007). The experience gained through evaluation of alternatives, in turn affects the consumer's existing psychological attributes.

2.2.3 Output stage

The output stage of the consumer decision making consists of two closely related post-decision activities; purchase behavior and post-purchase evaluation. Purchase behaviour for a low-cost, non-durable product (e.g. a new shampoo) may be influenced by a manufacturer's coupon and can actually result into a trial purchase if the customer is satisfied. The trial is the exploratory phase of purchase behaviour in which the consumer evaluates the product through direct use (Schiffman and Kanuk 2007).

3. Research methodology

3.1. Research design

Research design is the conceptual structure within which research is conducted. It constitutes the blueprint for the collection, measurement and analysis of data (Kothari, 2002). The study took the form of a descriptive survey. A descriptive survey resulted in the collection of quantitative and qualitative data appropriate to test the independent variable; peer group on family purchase decisions in Kenya. According to Zikmund (2010), a descriptive research design includes a process of collecting data to answer questions concerning the current status of the subjects under study.

3.2. Target Population, Sample and Sampling Procedures

A population is the whole group that the research focuses on (Kothari, 2012). This study target parents of 8–12-year-old children in Kenya. The study used parents and saw children as objects of research as underlined by Christensen and Prout (2002). Their consumer experiences are studied from the outside as parents take a paternalistic view. According to 2009 census, Nairobi has 985,016 households with the age distribution: 0–14 years (30.3%), 15–64 years (68.5%), 65+ years (1.2%). The study estimated the age bracket of 8–12-year olds to constitute 10% of Nairobi households. Nairobi is cosmopolitan and therefore was the most appropriate to generalize.

Sampling refers to the process of obtaining information about an entire population by examining only a part of it. If the appropriate sampling design is not used, a large sample size will not in itself, allow the findings to be generalized to the population (Sekaran and Bougie, 2010). Zikmund (2010) contends that, only a small sample is required if the population is homogeneous and vice versa. Small sample sizes with similar characteristics would give an objective representation of the population. On the other hand, with large sample sizes of heterogeneous characteristics, even weak relationships (say a correlation of 0.01 between two variables) might reach significant levels and would therefore be inclined to believe that these significant relationships found in the sample were indeed true of the population, when in reality they may not be (Sekaran and Bougie,

2010). Neither too large nor too small sample sizes help research projects. There is a rule of thumb proposed by Roscoe in 1975 (Sekaran and Bougie, 2010) for determining sample sizes, which proposes that sample sizes of at least 10% of the target population are adequate.

It is also on Roscoe's preposition that this study used a sample size of 200 parents/guardians of children aged 8–12 years. The study used a mixed sampling design. Cluster sampling based on counties was used on the larger Kenya and Nairobi City County was purposively chosen to represent the Kenyan population. This is because Nairobi is cosmopolitan and therefore was the most appropriate to generalize. In a second stage, Nairobi was divided into four clusters. The clusters bore proportionate percentages which correspond to the representation of children in the households. A multi-stage random sampling was conducted and a 10% of the Nairobi households were drawn from the population. In a second and third stage, another 10% were drawn randomly enabling the study to consider a sample of 200 parents. Purposive sampling was used to have only households that bore children aged 8–12 years. Purposive sampling gave the researcher an opportunity to pick out households which had children aged 8–12, from different households with varying children age categories to bring out representation among the respondents.

3.3. Research Instruments and Data Collection and Analysis

Primary data were collected using a semi-structured questionnaire, which was interviewer administered. A structured questionnaire presents the respondents with a fixed set of choices, often called closed questions. According to Krishnaswamy et al. (2006), a questionnaire is good because, a standardized and impersonal formats of a questionnaire have uniformity and help in getting data objectively, information on facts, attitudes, motivation and knowledge can be obtained easily.

Prior to actual collection of data, a pilot test was done on 10 households to obtain some assessment of the question's validity and the likely reliability. Before the actual data analysis, gathered data were cleaned, edited and then coded. Once this was done, the analysis of the data was carried out using the proposed models in Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 18. This study used multiple regression and multiple correlation models to determine the interdependence between children influences in peer group and family purchase decisions.

4. Results and Discussion

According to the study, 50% of the respondents agreed that children get product information from the television. 2.2% of the respondents agreed that their children get product information from outdoor advertising, 1.6% get product information from the radio, 1.1% from playmates while 1.1% of the respondents agreed that their children get product information from daily newspapers. According to the study, 88% of the respondents strongly agree that their children are attentive to family product advertisements. This is in line with Chan and McNeal (2003), who found out that Chinese children are exposed increasingly to a large amount of advertising, especially through TV. According to Chan and McNeal (2003), children interact regularly with most advertising media. O'sullivan (2005) also found out that children watch a great deal more than programmes created specifically for their age groups. Their experience of advertising (and of consumption) extends far beyond products and services aimed explicitly at them. Yet television advertising has an iconic significance for both sides of the debate as a peculiarly visible component of promotion aimed at children.

The study shows a relationship between the dependent variable, which is purchase decisions, and independent variable, which is advertising. The coefficient of determination R square and correlation coefficient R shows the degree of association between advertising and family purchase decisions in Kenya. The results indicate that R square was 13.0% while R was 36.1%. Thus, the conclusion that there is a moderate association between advertising and family purchase decisions in Kenya.

4.1. Discussion of Findings on the Relationship Between Advertising and FPD

The two dimensions of media that confer influence upon children are advertising and editorial/programming content, which specifically intends to inform young people about products and encourage them to purchase (O'sullivan, 2005). This study also confirmed advertising to children as having a positive and significant influence on family purchase decisions in Kenya. Family purchase decision making is a joint process where children and parents influence decisions. The results support these expectations. R² value for advertising is 13% indicating that advertising to children only influences partly.

This concurs with Desai (2008), who found out that, children are in the environment of the omnipresence of TV in which programmes and commercials are used with persuasive intentions. Considerable evidence have shown that more children interact with the mass media, more consumer behavior learned by children and more consumer socialization occurs. This is depicted by the study findings of the linear relationship between advertising to children and family purchase decisions. The findings concur with O'sullivan (2005) who found out that advertising has an iconic significance on the promotion aimed at children.

4.2. Areas for Further Research

The study methodology has targeted parents/guardians who expressed their opinions on the extent to which their children actually influenced family purchase decisions. As a future avenue of research, there is need to carry out similar research on children's influence to family purchase decisions in Kenya while using children themselves in order to establish whether the two findings would agree for generalization.

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