Business Standard

Monday, Aug 16, 2010

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Keyword



When kids shop

Byravee Iyer / Mumbai August 16, 2010, 0:24 IST

Children are increasingly influencing their parent's buying decisions. A new IMRB International study talks to 5,000 children and finds out their preferences and behaviour when it comes to shopping

The signals are there for all to see. Television channels for children have proliferated. Companies have gone to school campuses to catch consumers while they are still in their formative years. Common knowledge suggests that children now influence the decision of older people in categories like mobile phones, computers and so on. A couple of weeks back, food and beverage majors such as Hindustan Unilever, Kellogg, Coca-Cola, Cadbury's, PepsiCo, Mars and Nestlé took a stand by deciding to refrain from advertising products to children below 12 years. As part of the pledge, these companies will also refrain from commercial communication of food and beverage products in primary schools as well.

The move only underscores the importance of children as brand consumers. But has anybody trued to profile these young consumers? Research firm IMRB International has come out with a study after talking to over 5,000 children (8- to 14-year-olds) from across 18 cities in the country. The genesis of this study lies in the fact that there is paucity of information at a syndicated level on the why's and how's of the kid's world in the Indian market.

At least one parent of all the children was interviewed as well to validate and compare claims. "Increasingly, more and more parents are beginning to depend on their children, whether it is related to choosing which DTH operator to go for or picking the colour of your car," says Ashish Karnad, business director (media and panel group), IMRB International.

Gaming rocks best Window shopping Needs to impress others Reat: SEC A kids Source: IMBR DISCAN Metros Small towns

How they shop

According to the study, 68 per cent of the children claim that window shopping in malls is their favourite pastime. This is particularly true for metros and large towns, perhaps because the proliferation of malls is higher there. Sixty per cent of children feel fitting into a group is very vital for this generation. Given that it is not surprising that 35 per cent were certain to buy a product if their friends had it. Almost 25 per cent proactively keep track of what their friends own. This is higher among boys than girls. Children express a strong desire to impress others around them and are highly conscious of what others think

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Celebrity endorsements work wonders for them with 63 per cent of the respondents favouring celebrity advertisements. What is more, if an ad has their favourite celebrity, 34 per cent would straight away go and buy the product. "We realised from this study that celebrities do indeed work big time. However, within this it's important to note that those celebrities who are real achievers like Sachin Tendulkar make more of an impact rather than a movie star like Akshay Kumar," Karnad points out. Also, children like to watch ads which have reality rather than fantasy. Some of the ads that have worked well amongst them include the Rani Mukherji Munch campaign as well as the Airtel and Horlicks ads that featured children.

Almost 20 per cent mobile phone purchases of adults are influenced by their children. The figure is as high for television, and higher still for desktop computers as well as laptops. Of course, their influence is stronger in metros rather than small towns. One surprising insight of this study is that the new generation displays high sensitivity to the environment with as many as 70 per cent wanting to participate in environment-related activities.

Favourite food

Junk food remains the poison of choice of children. As many as 30 per cent of the children claim that since they eat nutritious food at home they should be allowed to eat junk food outside. Good news for companies like Nestlé, GlaxoSmithKline Consumer Healthcare and Hindustan Unilever: Healthy food like atta noodles and packaged soup have gained acceptance with lots of parents. In fact, an earlier IMRB report had said that 45 per cent of all households in the country now consume instant noodles.

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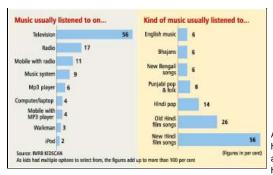
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A few years ago, Nestlé had repositioned Maggi as a healthy snack with the launch of rice and atta noodles, and highlighted the benefits with the tagline, "Taste bhi, health bhi" (Taste as well as health). And now recently,

GSK has come out with Foodles, which it claims are nutritious instant noodles.

Meanwhile, a strong positive disposition towards milk food drinks is noticed amongst the parents with 83 per cent claiming that these help provide the required nutrition which normal food does not provide. Conversely, 68 per cent of the children feel school canteens "rock". Another 20 per cent buy canteen food because it makes them appear cool. Similarly, 66 per cent children like chewing gums as it raises their "cool" quotient. Among their favourite food items, ice cream tops the list closely followed by chocolates and biscuits. Breakfast cereals top the list in the least-liked food category.

The IMRB study also covered media and entertainment. According to the study, children resort to entertainment solely to reduce tension and the burden of studies. This is closely followed by the intention of getting information about new things. Interestingly, gaming beats TV as the prime source of entertainment. Thirty per cent children go on to claim that entertainment is not possible without cool gadgets. Viewership of general entertainment channels among children is only passive; mainly because single TV households have a fight for the remote amongst the parents to watch their favourite show. As many as 60 per cent of the children claim they would switch to a kids' channel if they got the remote.

Fitting into a group vital for 60 per cent # Window shopping at malls favourite pastime for 68 per cent # 25 per cent track what's going on in peer group # Celebrity endorsements favoured by 63 per cent # 20 per cent mobile phone purchases influenced by kids # Participation in environment-related work important for 70 per cent # School canteens rock for 68 per cent # 30 per cent feel junk food should be allowed

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