

# “Children's influence on parental purchase decisions in Malaysia”

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## Children's influence on parental purchase decisions in Malaysia

### Abstract

The paper examines the influence of children in their parents' purchase decision-making in the developing country of Malaysia. It specifically examines the types of products, requested by children, and the tactics, they use to get their requests accorded. Findings show that there is no gender difference between boys and girls in the extent of their influence on parental purchases. However, products requested by girls when shopping with parents tend to vary widely from those requested by boys. The tactics most used by Malaysian children to get their requests accorded were found to be pressure tactics, rational persuasion and upward appeal. In the paper, implications of these findings for marketing strategies are discussed, and directions for future research are given.

**Keywords:** Malaysia, children, parents, shopping, purchase decision, children's tactics.

### Introduction

In this age of youth's empowerment due to information technology, there is a growing renewed interest in researching children's consumer behavior, especially as it pertains to their influence on parental purchase decisions. Such research takes on particular significance when carried out in developing countries, such as Malaysia. It would be enlightening to determine how the advent and advancement of information technology is changing the purchase decision landscape between parents and their traditionally quiet and submissive children in such countries. The gained information could have important implications for marketers in those developing countries in their search for the most effective marketing strategies in this 21<sup>st</sup> century. As purchasing power of young people exhibits continued growth, marketers, manufacturers and advertisers have become increasingly interested in devising effective methods of reaching the young persons market. McNeal (1990) stated that these youngsters may observe, request, and select goods with permission while accompanying their parents shopping, as well as on independent trips to shops themselves. The increase of dual income families has further empowered young ones, making them more thoroughly involved in the family purchases in their early age. Children's continuous involvement in the market, their direct purchases and influence upon adult purchases, can contribute billions of dollars each year towards a country's economic growth. The growing interest in this research topic is, thus, understandable.

Consumer's role can be divided into three: the decision-maker, who decides on the need for the goods or services; the purchaser, who actually buys the goods; and the user, who consumes the goods and services. Children may be considered a consumer themselves and not just the users of what other family members buy for them. McNeal (1998) submitted that children at the age of four or five enter the consumer role and, by nine or ten, they perform the role of consumer with

relative confidence and expertise. Children, aged 12 and below, are a powerful force in the market. They start to observe the market place as young as 2 months old and start to request products at age 2, then they are actively involved in influencing and purchasing decisions from that age onward. He further submitted that the amount children spend increased yearly and shows no sign of downturn, and they have a very strong influence on what goods and services are brought into their houses. This proposition will be examined in the context of a developing country, namely Malaysia.

Malaysia is considered to have a very young age group of population. The records indicate that about 33.3% of Malaysians belong to the group of 0-14 years, and 29.3% of them live in the Klang Valley (Star, 2004). Malaysia has about one third of population in the age group of 0-14 years. The population in Malaysia comprised of 60% Bumiputra (or ethnic Malays), more than 25% Chinese and about 7% are of Indian descent. However, all of them share similar patterns of culture and style of living. This is, therefore, a very multicultural society like the United States. There are 5.8 million households in Malaysia of which 8.6% have monthly income below RM 1,000, 29.4% have income RM 1000 and RM 2000, and 19.9% earns between RM 2001 to RM 3000 (\$1 = RM3.80). The economic performance of Malaysia has been the best in Asia from the time of its independence. Its gross domestic product (GDP) rose on average 6.5% per year during the period from 1957 through 2005 and 5.9% in 2006, 6.3% in 2007 and 4.6% in 2008. The GDP per capita in 2009 was estimated to be \$14,800. Malaysian economy was 3<sup>rd</sup> largest in South East Asia in 2007, and 29<sup>th</sup> largest economy in the world, when compared with the world in purchasing power parity.

The facts and figures stated above provide a very interesting target for marketers to study consumer behavior of Malaysian children, and explore the potentials within them. Even though several studies have been conducted on children's buying behavior and their influence on decision-making in the household purchase, these studies mainly focus on Western

countries or those of developed countries. Very few studies have been done on developing countries like Malaysia. Malaysia is a multiracial country, and each race has their own unique background and cultural influence in bringing up their children, making it a particularly worthy choice for a case study of this phenomenon. The purpose of this study will be to collect and assess data that will help understand the influence of children in the purchase decision of their parents. The study will, among others, identify the categories of goods that the children have the most influence on in their families' decision-making, how significant this influence is according to the specific gender of the children, and the strategies or tactics employed by children to get their parents comply with their requests.

### 1. Literature review

Several researchers have studied children's consumer behavior with interesting findings. Rose (1999) used the socialization theory to predict children's influence on family decision-making in the USA and Japan. He argued that development timetables should be higher, and consumer socialization should occur earlier in the USA than in Japan. Consequently, Japanese mothers would anticipate and tend to satisfy their children's needs more than United States' mothers do. He found that Japanese children influence family purchases relatively more, compared to children in the US. Cooper (1999) reported that in the US an average of 43% of total purchases by parents were influenced by children. Liebeck (1994) reports that mothers, who shop with their kids, wind up spending 30% more than they originally intended and fathers spend 70% more. McNeal (1992) provides four main reasons for an increase in children's influence on family purchases, namely:

- ◆ parents, who have fewer children, increase the influence of children;
- ◆ there has been a general increase in one parent families that has resulted in children doing their own shopping;
- ◆ increase in working women and delayed child bearing resulting in mothers tending to have more money to spend on their children;
- ◆ working couples encourage more household participation and self-reliance.

Moschis and Moore (1979a), Stephens and Moore (1975) and Ward et al. (1977) reported that children's preference for consumer information sources is affected by family environment, i.e., the type of family they come from. These researchers have identified the following family communication patterns: *laissez-faire*, protective, pluralistic and consensual. Each of these affects children's consumer information sources differently they reported.

Other researchers reported that children's influence on family decision differs depending on the product type of interest (e.g., Belch, Belch and Caresino, 1985; Corfman and Harlam, 1997; Foxman Tansuhaj, 1988; Foxman et al., 1989; Isler, Popper and Ward, 1987; Swinyard and Sim, 1987). They reported that children have the most influence over purchases of child-relevant items (e.g., cereal and toys), a moderate degree of influence for family activities (e.g., vacations) and the least influence for purchases of consumer durables and expensive items. Older children are also reported exerting more influence than younger children (Labrecque and Richard, 2001).

McNeal (1998) notes that today's parent's worry that their children should have it as good as other children, and give them more money, more things and more opportunities. So doing, parents are helping their children in developing their consumption skills that allow them to function effectively in the marketplace early in life. Shim et al. (1995) reported that the more often those parents take their children shopping, the more conscious the children become of information about products, such as brands and prices. Children learn from parents and at the same time they also influence their parents' buying decision. Moschis (1987) reported that family communication influences a child's interaction with other socialization agents, such as mass media and peers, which, in turn, influence their consumer learning. Carlson and Grossbart (1988) noted that children learn from formal and non-formal social interactions that build their consumption behavior skills. Children are said to learn to become consumers from various socializing agents including parents, peers, schools, stores, media, products and packaging. With children aged seven to eleven, parents are said to constitute the main factor of socialization. Mothers are assumed to play primary roles in the intergenerational influence process (Abrams, 1984; Aldous, 1974). Several authors (e.g., Alsop, 1988; Ward, Wackman Wartella, 1977) noted that mothers control their children's money and contribute more to their children's adult consumption patterns. As children age, a shift from parental to peer influence is said to occur (Zeijl et al., 2000). However, peer influence is said to concern mainly expressive aspects of consumption (Moschis, 1987).

The influence of the media on children's consumer behavior has also been commented on in the literature. Reportedly, as children get older, they have a better understanding of the media, and watching television is the number one favorite after school-activity for six to seventeen year olds (Center for media Education, 2002). The interaction between the mass media and public is very important because it is believed that what is prominent in the media will become salient in the public's mind and in turn, affect consumer behavior such as shopping and pur-

chasing (Sutherland and Galloway, 1981). This is important to children because it helps to develop children's consumer attitudes and behaviors. The impact is said to be indirectly felt by parents because children, who receive messages from the media, may turn the messages to their parents in the form of requests for products, thus, influencing the latter's buying decision (Wartella, 1981).

Psychologists like Bell (1968; 1971), Harper (1971; 1975) and Yarrow (1971) have demonstrated experimentally that, even at the seemingly helpless infant level, the child is capable of modifying the behavior of parents. They also submitted that parents receive economic benefits from children in the form of reverse intergenerational transfers, where children have a positive influence on family behavior. As children get older and go to school, they will influence their parents' behavior through what they learned in school and cause their parents to become a more efficient consumer. This process of children influencing their parents is known as "reverse socialization". Reverse socialization is said to happen as children become older and obtain a certain degree of independence.

Strategies, used by children to negotiate their requests with their parents, have also come under study. Children employ different strategies to interact with their parents. Davis (1976), Falbo and Peplau (1980), Scanzoni and Szinovacz (1980), Spiro (1983), French and Raven (1959) have identified the following strategies:

- ◆ bargaining strategies, used with the intention of creating agreement between family members, based on mutual gain and mutually satisfactory outcome;
- ◆ persuasion strategies are to convince an opposing family member to resolve decision conflict in the persuader's favor. They focus on unilateral gain for the persuader rather than mutual gain for both;
- ◆ emotional strategies, where there is an intentional use of emotion, either directly or indirectly. Emotional tactics include crying, pouting, anger, withdrawing or giving silent treatment;
- ◆ request strategies are direct request involving expressing either a need or a want for a particular item;
- ◆ expert strategies rest on the extent of the knowledge or perception that one individual attributes to another individual within a given area. "Teaching skills", for example, involve the deliberate sharing of parental consumer knowledge with children for the express purpose of teaching children how to be effective consumers;
- ◆ legitimate strategies are based on the legitimate right of an individual to influence another individual, who, in turn, has internalized values that recognize and acquiesce to this legitimate right.

Marquis (2004) submits that the development of strategies by children to influence parental decisions on food purchasing have four levels: individual influences, interpersonal influences, environmental influences and societal influences. McNeal and Yeh (2003) reported that like the children in the USA, Asian children are gaining rapid influence over the household items their parents buy. The only difference is the attitude of the parents. In the USA the children influence is said to be by begging their parents to buy things, while in Asia parents often ask their children for advice. The parents are said to request advice from children because grown up children are more exposed to the television and the Internet, and there are societal shifts that give children a stronger voice in the family.

## 2. Theoretical foundation

The theorist, Deborah Roedder John (1999) in her research, states that children's consumer behavior development can be categorized into cognitive development and social development. Cognitive development can be divided into 4 main stages: sensorimotor (birth to two years), preoperational (two to seven years), concrete operational (seven to eleven years) and formal operational (eleven through adulthood). The preoperational stage features children who are developing symbolic thoughts but are still very focused on perceptual properties of stimuli. At this stage, the child tends to be "perceptually bound" to the readily observable aspect of their environment. On the other hand, at the concrete operational stage, children do not accept perception as reality but can think about stimuli in their environment in a more thoughtful way.

At preoperational stage children have the tendency to focus on a single dimension. In contrast, at the concrete operational stage, children can consider several dimensions of a stimulus at a time and relate to it in a more thoughtful and relative way. In the formal operational stage, children progress to more adult-like thought patterns, capable of even more complex thoughts about concrete and hypothetical objects and situations.

Social development theories also provide description of how children's ability to understand different perspectives progress through a series of stages (Selman, 1980; Ginsburg and Opper, 1998). In the egocentric stage (age 3-6), children are unaware of any perspective other than their own. During next stage, the social informational role taking stage (age 6-8), children become aware that others may have different opinions or motives but they do not have the ability to think from another person's perspective. In the self-reflective role taking stage (age 8-10), children not only understand that others may have different opinions but they also consider the other person's viewpoint. At the fourth stage of mutual role taking (ages 10-12), children re-

quire dual consideration of both parties' perspectives. At the final stage: social and conventional system rule taking (ages above 12), the children have the ability to understand the other person's perspective as it relates to the social group to which he belongs or the social system in which he operates.

Further, according to the model of consumer socialization by John (1999), the development of consumer socialization goes through three stages, where it starts from perceptual stage (children are from age of three to seven), analytical stage (children aged seven to eleven) and reflective stage (children who are aged eleven to sixteen). In the perceptual stage, children have very limited information about information they need to have to consume. In the analytical stage, the awareness of the information resources increases, and at the reflective stage, children have a contingent use of different information sources.

Based on the review of the literature, and the theoretical foundation, discussed above, the following three hypotheses are proposed for testing in this study, namely:

*H1: Malaysian children will request parents to buy goods for them when they shop together.*

*H2: Malaysian children exert a significant influence of their parents' purchase decisions.*

*H3: There is a significant difference between Malaysian girls and boys in the extent of their influence on their parents' purchase decisions.*

### 3. Methodology

A sample of Malaysian parents was selected for this study. Based on their demographics, the final sample is believed to be representative of the population. The measuring instrument used is a structured questionnaire, guided by the research objectives and literature review. Most of the questions consisted of 5-point Likert scales. A few open-ended questions are included to enable the respondents to express general attitudes and opinions, which can help to analyze further their responses to the structured questions. The questionnaire was divided into 4 sections. Section A contained 4 general questions regarding the parents' demographics; section B contained 7 questions related to children's information; section C with 5 questions is related to the children's buying behavior; and finally section D has 7 questions that focus on the children's influence on their parents' purchase decisions. Thus, a total of 23 questions related, to the study, were asked the respondents. The questionnaires were sent to the target respondents via e-mail. The respondents were given two weeks to respond via e-mail. Follow up e-mail and telephone calls were used to remind the

respondents, who have not replied by this deadline. In all, 100 useful questionnaires were returned, which were the ones analyzed for this study.

### 4. Results

Table 1 shows the gender distribution of the respondents. It could be seen that they are fairly equally distributed between males and females with ratio of 46:54. All of these parents have children between the ages from 0 to 12 years.

Table 1. Respondents by gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	46	46%
Female	54	54%
Total	100	100%

Malaysia is a multiracial country consisting of Malays, Indian, Chinese and others. Table 2 shows the distribution of the respondents by race. It could be seen that Chinese consist of 63% of the respondents, followed by Malays 19%, Indians 16% and the last is 2% of other races. This closely follows what obtains in the general Malaysian population.

Table 2. Races of respondents

Races	Frequency	Percentage
Malay	19	19%
Indian	16	16%
Chinese	63	63%
Others	2	2%
Total	100	100%

Table 3 shows the occupational distribution of the respondents. It is noted that professionals constitute 54% of the respondents, followed by executives – 23%, self-employed and home-makers – 2% each, and finally others consisting – 19%.

Table 3. Occupation of the respondents

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Housewife	2	2%
Professional	54	54%
Executive	23	23%
Self employed	2	2%
Others	19	19%
Total	100	100 %

Table 4 shows the income distribution of the respondents. The respondents' monthly income ranges from RM1500 to more than RM6000. Those who earn more than RM6000 represent 23% of the total respondents, while those who earn in the range of RM4501-RM6000 are 7% and 28% earn RM3001-RM4500 monthly. This means that most of the respondents earn RM1500-RM3000 monthly, a 42% of the total number of respondents.

Table 4. Monthly income of respondents

Monthly income	Frequency	Percentage
RM1500-RM3000	42	42%
RM3001-RM4500	28	28%
RM4501-RM6000	7	7%
>RM6000	23	23%
Total	100	100%

Table 5 shows the family size distribution of the respondents. It could be seen that most of the families have only one child aged 0-12. This makes up 42% of total respondents, followed by families with two children at 35%, those with three children at 16%, and finally those with four children at 7%. None of the respondents had five or more children. Married couples in big cities like Kuala Lumpur prefer to have smaller families. Families, earning a dual income, do not have much time for their children, fewer children enable them to concentrate on the children education and other welfare, where they can provide a better quality of life for their children.

Table 5. Number of children in respondents' family (below 12 years old)

Number of children	Percentage
One	42%
Two	35%
Three	16%
Four	7%
Five	0%

Table 6 shows the distribution of frequency of shopping trips with children. All of the respondents reported bringing their children to shop with them though with varied frequency. It can be seen that 74% bring their children shopping once a week, followed by 12% who bring their children twice a week, 5% who bring their children for shopping three times a week and finally, 9% of the parents who do so more than three times a week.

Table 6. Number of times parents bring children shopping

Number of time per week	Percentage of parents
Once	74%
Twice	12%
Three times	5%
More than three times	9%

Respondents reported that the products, mostly requested by children when shopping together, are toys and games. Food comes second on the children's list, followed by books, magazines and stationery. The least appealing item is clothing especially for boys, who seldom make request for clothing. Table 7 shows the ranking of goods often requested by boys when shopping with parents.

Table 7. Popularity ranking of goods requested by boys

Categories of goods	Ranking
Toys	1 <sup>st</sup>
Food	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Games	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Book & magazines	4 <sup>th</sup>
Stationery	5 <sup>th</sup>

As could be seen, the goods, requested by boys when they shop with their parents, are food, toys, games, stationery, books, and magazines. However, for them the first priority is toys, followed by food, games, books, and magazines, while stationery is the product least requested by boys.

Girls tend to have more items to request from their parents compared to boys. Besides, the normal items that are also requested by boys, girls make other requests that are mainly beauty products and accessories. The most appealing request from girls is also toys, but when it comes to clothing, girls treat this as important as food! Table 8 shows the rankings of products requested by girls. It could be seen that toys come first, followed by food and clothing that tied in popularity ranking. The third place is taken by books and magazines, followed by stationery, accessories, personal products and finally games. Thus, while games occupied the 3<sup>rd</sup> position for boys, it is the least requested by girls!

Table 8. Popularity ranking of goods requested by girls

Categories of goods	Rating
Toys	1 <sup>st</sup>
Food	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Clothing	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Books & magazines	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Stationery	4 <sup>th</sup>
Accessories	5 <sup>th</sup>
Personal products	5 <sup>th</sup>
Games	6 <sup>th</sup>

A question was posed to the respondents, whether they take their children's opinion into consideration when buying goods for the family, especially luxury goods. Responses show that generally 33% of the parents do not take into consideration the views of their children, while 62% of the parents consider their children's opinions when they buy goods for the family. Some 5% of the parents did not respond to this question. In response to the question: "why not if not?", the given reason why parents do not take their children's views into consideration is that their children are too young to make decisions. The study data shows that the parents that do not take their children's opinion into consideration are mostly those with children aged 0-3 years old. The children at these ages may not have the

knowledge of the products or goods that their parents need to buy, especially luxury goods. Some 95% of the parents think that their children are too young to make these decisions. The remaining 5% of the respondents gave other reasons, such as the head of family should make the decision involving the purchase of luxury or expensive goods for the family.

Respondents were asked what tactics their children use to get their requests accorded them. Eight tactics were identified from the responses. In the language of the literature (Yuki and Falbe, 1990), the tactics are: pressure tactics, upward appeal, exchange tactics, coalition tactics, ingratiating tactics, rational persuasion, inspirational appeals, and consultation tactics.

The pressure tactics are the tactics used by a child when he/she makes threats of intimidation to pressure the parents to comply with his/her requests.

Upward appeal is where the child seeks to persuade the parents that the request was approved or supported by an older member of the family, like the grandparents, a teacher or even a family friend.

Exchange tactics is the tactics used when children make an explicit or implicit promise to give their parents some sort of service, such as washing the car, cleaning the house, or taking care of their little brother or sister in return for a favor they asked of their parents.

Coalition tactics are used when the child seeks the aid of others to persuade the parents to comply with his/her request, or uses the support of others as an argument for the parents to agree with him/her.

Ingratiating tactics is when a child seeks to get the parents in a good mood or think favorably of him or her before asking them to comply with a request.

Rational persuasion tactics are used when a child employs logical arguments and factual evidence to persuade the parents to agree with his/her request.

Inspirational appeals are the tactics used when the child makes an emotional appeal or proposal that arouses enthusiasm by appealing to the parents' values and ideals.

Last but not the least, is the consultation tactics, where the child seeks the parents' involvement in making a decision. The parent's involvement makes the parent understand and perhaps comply with the child's request.

Table 9 shows the popularity ranking of children's tactics as reported by the parent-respondents. It could be seen that parents rank pressure tactics as the most used tactics by their children, followed by rational persuasion at second, whereas upward appeal and inspirational appeals tie in the third place.

The exchange tactics and the consultation tactics jointly take the fourth position, while ingratiating tactics is ranked 5<sup>th</sup>. The least used tactic, in the last position, is coalition tactics.

Table 9. Ranking of tactics used by children

Tactics used	Rating
Pressure tactics	1 <sup>st</sup>
Rational persuasion	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Upward appeal	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Inspirational appeals	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Exchange tactics	4 <sup>th</sup>
Consultation tactics	4 <sup>th</sup>
Ingratiating tactics	5 <sup>th</sup>
Coalition tactics	6 <sup>th</sup>

### 5. Test of hypotheses

The three hypotheses of this study were examined statistically, using the Z-test. The first hypothesis, H1, states that: "Malaysian children will request parents to buy goods for them when they shop together". Given a computed Z-score of 23.47 this hypothesis could not be rejected at the .05 significance level. Thus, there is evidence to show that when Malaysian children shop with their parents, they will request goods to be purchased by the parents.

The second hypothesis, H2, states that: "Malaysian children exert a significant influence of their parents' purchase decisions". Based on a computed Z-score of 2.47, this hypothesis could not be rejected at the .05 significance level. Thus, there is evidence that parents sometime make purchase decisions based on their children's opinion or preference.

Finally, the third hypothesis, H3, states: "There is a significant difference between Malaysian girls and boys in the extent of their influence on their parents' purchase decisions". Given a computed Z-score of 1.17, this hypothesis could not be accepted at the .05 significance level. Thus, gender of children does not determine the extent of their influence on parents' purchase decision. There is no difference between boys and girls in the amount of influence they exert on parents' purchase decisions.

### 6. Implications

The results of this study have some implications for marketers in Malaysia, and by extension in other similar developing countries. Children and parents have different views on the goods purchased. Children's decisions are made mostly on the basis of the potential immediate gratification, while parents' purchase decisions are made on the basis of the potential long-term benefits to the children. Therefore, marketers have to take care of both sides to get the balance between them and get the most benefits out of parent-children interactions. In the attempt to

reach the children's market, marketers need to plan beyond their traditional way of doing businesses. The role of parent, as a main decision-maker in families, has changed even in this traditional society. The buying process has shifted slowly to children, as the influencer's role has become more important than before.

In some situations, children are the initiators of the buying process of selected products in the families. Hence, marketers must take into consideration who occupies, what role in the family when carving out their promotional strategies. For example, the usual sales promotions, promising some cents or some percentages off, may not motivate children as they would their parents. Alternative elements of promotion will have to be employed for the young initiators! There is also an implication for choice of communication channel. For example, traditional radio channel may be quite effective for the parents. Children, on the other hand, are more adaptive and open to new technologies. Thus, marketers may have to employ channels of communication that make use of more modern technologies, such as Internet social media.

With regards to the television, there will be a need to study carefully the programs that Malaysian children watch and the contents of those programs, in order to carve out an effective way of reaching and communicating with them. Even marketing research methodologies will be impacted. For example, marketers cannot just stick to their traditional market research approach of paper and pencil, or interviewer/interviewee, which may work well for parents. They have to go through other ways, like observation, conversation, and engagement to reach and solicit information from the children.

## Conclusion

This research has examined the influence of children on parental purchase decisions in the developing country of Malaysia. The results of the study show that Malaysian children have significant influence on their parents' purchase decisions in one way or another. Categories of goods, purchase of which children influence, range from cereals to personal products such as soaps, shampoos, books, stationery supplies, etc. Children shop frequently with their parents at least once a week, while some children shopping more than three times a week with their parents. When they shop with their parents, almost all of the children request their parents to buy them one good or more. Children use various tactics to influence their parents. The most used tactics, by Malaysian children were found to be pressure tactics

followed by rational persuasion and upward appeal. With these tactics, children either use threats of intimidation or attempt to persuade their parents themselves or with the help of external parties like grand-parents, friends or relatives, so that their parents will comply with their requests.

Both girls and boys make requests when they shop with their parents, and they show no significant difference between them in the extent that they influence their parents' purchase decisions. The age of children tends to play a role in their influencing power. Parents of older children reported taking their children's opinion into consideration when buying luxury family goods. On the other hand, parents of younger children, especially children below three years of age, reported otherwise.

## Limitations and directions for future research

The findings of this study are subject to a few limitations. For one thing, the sample for the study is limited to parents with children aged 0-12 years old. Thus, parents with children above 12 years old are not included in the study. Children above 12 years old are deemed more mature, and parents will give them more power in the purchasing for the family. These children may have more information and an enhanced ability to influence their parents. Also, the information is gathered from the point of view of parents only, hence, lacking the viewpoint of the children themselves. Children may have a mindset that is different from that of their parents' on some issues. Finally, the sample was only of moderate size (100) due to limitation of resources. A larger sample size would have allowed greater generalization of results.

As directions for future research: resources permitting, larger sample sizes should be used in future studies on this topic. Also, in addition to e-mail or mail surveys, observations should be carried out within the stores and questionnaires, distributed to parents on-the-spot to get their immediate responses. Finally, future research should include children's opinions themselves to get a truer picture of parent-children interactions on parental purchase decisions in Malaysia. This study may also give an impetus to further conduct studies to compare behavior of children in similar situations in the US, Japan, Europe and/or other developing countries, like India, and China.

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