



IJMRBS

ISSN 2319 - 345X
Vol. 3, No. 2, April 2014

International Journal of
Management Research and
Business Strategy



www.ijmrbs.com

DISCOURSE ON THE INTEGRATED FRAMEWORK BETWEEN MARKETING AND TWEENS

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One revolutionary recent development in advertising to kids has been defining a “tween” market (ages 8 to 12). No longer little children, and not yet teens, tweens are starting to develop their sense of identity and are anxious to cultivate a sophisticated self-image. The marketing industry is forcing tweens to grow up quickly by hiring “cool hunters” or “cultural spies” to infiltrate the world of teens and bring back the latest trends. Teen anger, activism and attitude have become commodities that marketers co-opt, package and then sell back to teens. Does the media reflect today’s teens, or are today’s teens influenced by media portrayals of young people? It’s important that parents discuss these issues with their teens, and challenge the materialistic values promoted in the media looking at whooping 12000 Cr is the Indian tween market size. This paper is an honest endeavor to understand the purchase behavior of tween customer segment, impact of media on their decision making construct and finally the factors that creates brand awareness among these groups.

Keywords: Tween, Marketing, framework, Media

INTRODUCTION

Next to China, India is the most populous country in the world, with a 1995 population of 950 million. India’s urban population accounts for 28% of the country’s total population. In 1991, one third of the 12.6 million inhabitants of Bombay were homeless, living on the streets or in squatters’ camps built on putrid landfills. Bombay, India’s most populous city, has 100,000 people per square kilometer. The 1995 age distribution showed that 36.8% of the populations were under 15 years of age; the working age group (15 to 64) was 69%; and the aged population (65 and over)

was about 4%. The 1995 life expectancy at birth for males was 58 years and for females 60 years. The birthrate was 28 per 1,000 populations and the death rate 10 per 1,000 population, giving a natural annual growth rate of 1.8%. The 1995 infant mortality rate was 76 per 1,000 live births. The sex ratio showed 929 females to 1,000 males. India has one hospital bed per 1,357 persons, and one physician per 2,189 persons. The 1993 literacy level was estimated at about 50%, with schooling compulsory to age 14; the literacy rate is significantly lower for females than males. It is not uncommon to see a tween

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customer spending money to buy the latest album of Sonu Nigam, to play on his MP3 compatible play-station, browsing through the latest magazines on fashion before entering the lee's showroom, to buy a pair of low cut jeans and a matching bottle red top and then using the latest model of a Motorola cell-Phone to send pictures of himself to some close friends. Tween consumers have now become a growing force in almost all global markets, increasing not only in number, but more importantly also in spending power.

Most companies have tried to harness this power of the tween market—very few have succeeded in reaping the rewards of tween brand loyalty. The immense potential of this segment has made it even more important for marketers to arrive at the correct methodology at the earliest. Since there are not many tween-specific brands in India, most strategies have been adopted from foreign countries, to address the burgeoning Indian tween customers. Since the Indian tweens has always been different from their counterparts abroad, branding to Indian tween customers is easier said than done. Globally their total purchase influence is an astounding \$188 tn. "In 2000 their purchase power had reached a whopping \$290 bn in the United States. In Indian market the current tween market stands at whopping Rs. 12000 cr.

OBJECTIVE

Today's tweens are not only a more powerful segment but probably one of the most profitable. This paper is an honest endeavor to gain an insight into the decision making process and the driving factors that influence tween buying behavior, there by helping a marketer to take advantage of long term payoffs in brand loyalty, as tweens today

become the buyers of tomorrow. It is a global phenomenon that the three very important socializing modes are family, peers and media. This paper tries to find out which one out of these three agents influence the most for a tween to make a choice purchase.

The following are the objectives of the research study:

- To examine the perspectives that influences the brand cognitive level of the tweens.
- To estimate the factors that play the key role in finalizing the purchase behavior of the tweens and also to analyze the shopping and spending patterns of tween customers.

The marketers are interested in the tween segment due to their sheer population size and segment attractiveness. The data regarding their population are as follows (Tables 1 and 2).

PARADIGM SHIFT

During these two decades there is a lot of changes which has attracted the attention of marketers as well as the marketing researchers. The paradigm shift has been represented as under:

Materialistic Values

- Tweens spent time and money collecting brand names.
- Well known brands last longer, match what one's friends are wearing, look modern, Affluent.
- Today tweens dress up more, try to follow fashions closely, and dare to express themselves.

Influences

- Fashion center – US.

Table 1: Tween Demographics			
Broad Age Groups: (Excluding J&K)			
Age Groups	Population	Males	Females
6 years & above	150,421,175	77,322,151	73,099,024
	17.94	17.77	18.12
7 to 14 years	161,943,487	84,405,295	77,538,192
	19.31	19.39	19.22
15 to 59 years	464,826,476	241,411,392	27,317,915
	55.43	55.47	55.39
60 years & above	56,681,640	29,363,725	27,317,915
	6.76	6.75	6.77
Age not Stated	4,695,158	2,705,595	1,989,563
	0.56	0.62	0.49

Source: 1991 Census of India

Table 2: Distribution of Population by Age and Sex 1991										
	Age		Total			Rural			Urban	
Country	Groups	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
INDIA*										
Population in '000	Total	838,568	435,208	403,360	622,796	321,271	301,525	215,772	113,937	101,835
Proportions (%)	0-4	12.2	12.0	12.4	12.7	12.6	12.9	10.7	10.4	11.0
	5-9	13.3	13.2	13.4	13.7	13.7	13.7	11.9	11.7	12.2
	10-14	11.8	11.9	11.6	11.9	12.1	11.6	11.5	11.4	11.7
	15-19	9.4	9.7	9.1	9.2	9.5	8.8	10.2	10.3	10.1
	20-24	8.9	8.6	9.2	8.5	8.2	8.9	9.9	9.9	10.0
	25-29	8.3	7.9	8.6	8.0	7.7	8.3	9.1	8.7	9.5

- Influenced by TV, actresses, pop singers.
- A lot of people study abroad, and bring back influences.

Changes

- Higher standard of living.
- More educational options available with private colleges.

- New techniques in education. Scientific approach/beliefs more effective
- Don't just believe what you are told, but value the truth. Believe what we see and hear.
- Housework easier - more facilities, washing machine, micro-wave, can buy readymade Food.

Changing Attitudes

- Problems, concerns, worries shared with friends, not family.
- People more ambitious now.
- Both parents work, less time spent with kids, more tension at home.
- Mothers compensate by giving their children money or buy them things.
- Material things substitute for love.
- Kids don't know the concept of saving.
- Parents blame themselves, can't scold children, and want to avoid conflict.
- Children hide things from their parents - pack clothes and change after tuition class.
- Influence of Mall culture.
- Children are less confident now, closer to friends.
- They copy friends, can't live without the acceptance of friends.
- Talk for a long time on the telephone, even after midnight.
- Dress in a certain way looking into the acceptance of the group.

The issue has been addressed by the marketers and advertisers in the form of employing a persuasive medium of communication. The objective was to create a positive feeling and attitude towards their brand. This group is

particularly targeted because the ability to distinguish between the good and bad, biased, deceptive ads are not present and they have a very wavering vision for identifying the real life and a simulated life. Hence, they become the soft targets for all the subtle tactics of the marketers or the advertisers or sometimes both virtually everywhere be it in classroom or textbooks or internet or rather any identifiable place of the tweens. Media plays a very important role in the cognitive shaping. Celebrities are normally used for the association and brand recall. Though tween group does not influence much as compared to teens but still due to their pester power they are always the choice of the marketers.

METHODOLOGY

- Survey method is used for collecting the primary data and the data was collected using a pre-tested questionnaire.
- The questionnaire is a combination of structured as well as unstructured questions.
- In depth interview technique was employed for a sample of 120 respondents.
- The respondents were in the age group of 8 – 14 years of age..
- Convenient sampling technique was used for the research.
- An exploratory research study has been conducted to get a clarity of the research problem. The secondary data has been collected through internet, journals, magazines and the e-news papers.
- A formal study has also been used by formulating the hypothesis and testing it by using Pearson's Chi-square test to solve the research questions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

It is an established fact that adolescence is a time of growth, maturity, socialization, and reanalyzing of one’s self (Peterson, 1987). It is a time of transition from childhood to adulthood, which also means a period of redefining of perceived expectations. This development of a new understanding of one’s identity comes from several cues, such as family, peers, work, and society (Peterson, 1987; Jones *et al.*, 2004; Reiss and Youniss, 2004). The process is sparked by social interaction and the cues are then internalized and evaluated before a decision as to whether or not to identify with the action is made. Pressures laid on adolescents from peers include rigidity in what each role or influencer place upon adolescents the flexibility remains in the overall choices finally reached in each arena of life. The invention of self-identity is an ever changing and continuous discovery (Reiss and

Youniss, 2004). By listening to their friends they are able to show independence from their parents while maintaining a feeling of conformity and solidarity within their peer groups (Wilson MacGillivray, 1998). It is often with friends that adolescents feel most comfortable expressing their ideas as well as exploring new options. Akers *et al.* (1998) conducted a study that found that “best friends” are similar in issues such as dating and friendships.

ANALYSIS

In order to answer the research problem, we have to search the factors and the construct between them in the context of brand awareness levels, influencers and the purchasing power. It is concluded that parents, peers and advertisements were the main influencing factors. The research findings were analyzed by making use of the chi-square test and the results were presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Consolidated Test Results					
S. No.	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Test Used	ChiSquareValue	Result
1	Media	Brand Awareness level	Chi Square	3.3076*	There is a significant relationship between media and brand awareness level among the respondents.
2	Peers	Brand Awareness Level	Chi Square	38.643**	There is a significant relationship between peer influence and brand awareness level among the respondents
3	Family	Brand Awareness Level	Chi Square	25.2806**	There is a significant relationship between family and brand awareness level among the respondents.
4	Media	Purchasing Power	Chi Square	20.72**	There is a significant relationship between media and the purchasing power among the respondents.
5	Peers	Purchasing Power	Chi Square	2.565*	There is a significant relationship between peer influence and the purchasing power among the respondents.
6	Family	PurchasingPower	ChiSquare	1.897*	There is a significant relationship between family and the purchasing power among the respondents.
<p>Note: Critical values at 4 degrees of freedom at 90% level of significance is 1.064 and at 10% level of significance is 7.779; * indicates significance of the calculated value at 90%; ** indicates significance of the calculated value at 10%.</p>					

Brand Awareness Level

Hypothesis I

Relationship between the Advertisements and Brand Awareness levels.

H₀: There is no significant relationship between the advertisements and brand awareness levels among tweens .

H₁: There is a significant relationship between the advertisements and brand awareness levels among tweens.

Pearson's Chi-square test clearly shows that there is a significant relationship between the advertisements and the brand awareness levels. Hence, the null hypothesis H_0 is rejected.

Hypothesis II

Relationship between peer influence and brand awareness levels.

H₀: There is no significant relationship between peer influence and brand awareness levels among tweens.

H₁: There is a significant relationship between the peer influence and brand awareness levels among tweens.

Hypothesis III

Relationship between family and brand awareness levels.

H₀: There is no significant relationship between the influence by the family and the brand awareness levels.

H₁: There is a definite relationship between the influence by the family and the brand awareness levels.

As the chi square test has shown, there is no clear associative relationship between parental income and this segments decision making we have not included in the further analysis.

Purchasing Power of the Tweens

Hypothesis I

Relationship between advertisements and the choice purchase behavior .

H₀: There is no significant relationship between the advertisements and the choice purchase behavior among the tweens .

H₁: There is a significant relationship between the advertisements and the purchase behavior among the tweens. The test clearly shows that there is a significant relationship between the advertisements and the choice purchase behavior among the tweens.

Hence the null hypothesis

H_0 is rejected.

Tweens are quite well versed with the brand communication nomenclature and they also take media into consideration before taking the final decision.

Hypothesis II

Relationship between peer influence and the choice purchase behavior .

H₀: There is no significant relationship between the peer influence and the choice purchase behavior among the tweens.

H₁: There is a significant relationship between the peer influence and the choice purchase behavior among the tweens.

Pearson's Chi-square test clearly shows that there is a significant relationship between the advertisements and the choice purchase behavior among the tweens . Hence the null hypothesis

H_0 is rejected.

From the above analysis it was found that the tweens take lot of care to consult their friends

and counterparts before purchasing a brand. It has been also observed that they almost purchase those brands which are very similar to their friend's brands.

Hypothesis III

Relationship between family and the choice purchase behavior

H₀: There is no significant relationship between the family and the choice purchase behavior among the tweens.

H₁: There is a definite relationship between the family and the choice purchase behavior among the tweens.

Pearson's Chi-square test clearly shows that there is a significant relationship between the family and the choice purchase behavior among the tweens. Hence the null hypothesis H_0 is rejected.

These segment act as a major influencer in the form of pester power in the family decision making process. Whether a single or double income family this vulnerable group plays a deciding role in the final outcome of the purchase decision.

CONSOLIDATED TEST RESULTS

The research findings were further analyzed using Pearson's method of correlation and it was found out that there was a very high degree of correlation between the factors—media and peers (whose correlation coefficient was around $r = 0.9702$). A similar result was also obtained with factors - media and family (whose correlation coefficient was around $r = 0.9048$). Therefore, in the context of this research study the main determinants of the purchasing power of tweens and their brand awareness are media (advertisements), peer influence and family.

Sources of Brand Awareness

- Audio and visual Media – Radio and Television.
- Print Media – Newspapers, Popular Magazines, Hoardings .
- Word of Mouth Communication – Family/ Friends.
- Retail Store outlets – Interactive Brand Experiences.

The respondents are having a positive view towards the advertising message and they also follow their role model while making their purchase decision. However they are not impulsive customers always they also take lot of other factors in to rationale of buying. Therefore the marketers should be careful while strategizing their market operations. These customers are also very brand conscious.

LIMITATIONS

- The questionnaire for the research study has been designed only with variables like media (advertisements) , peers and family as the main criteria for determining the brand awareness levels and the choice purchase behavior of the tweens .
- Ignorance on the part of the respondent and time-constraint are some of the limitations of this study .
- The research study is confined to only a selected fraction of the population of the tweens in the city of Bhubaneswar with the sample size of 90 respondents . This is not a true representation of the tween population as a whole.

CONCLUSION

With the explosion in the technology and in an

era where consumers are ever demanding marketers are expected to be highly consumer focused and innovate their product offerings so as to fit in into the ever dynamic consumer choice and preferences. Innovation and continuous adoptability to these dynamic and upwardly mobile customers will be the key mantra for success in the market place. So in this highly advanced technological era the marketers should take care about their communication strategy, use of celebrities and the product and service offerings so as not to disturb the minds of these customers rather it should work in a positive way to ignite their decision making cognitive process. Referring one recent article in Sunday times (Dt.12.10.08/ TOI) where the author claims the quick demolition of the gap between tween and teen customers, the marketers need to be proactive than reactive to woo this segment.

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International Journal of Management Research and Business Strategy

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