

Buyer behaviour – case study: influence of children on buyer behaviour



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Research suggests that children are exerting more influence over family buying decisions. What are the implications of this for retailers, brands and marketers? Children are an important part of the family buying process. But what roles do they play? Marketing theory suggests five main roles in a family buying process: - Initiator - Influencer - Decider - Buyer - User Which roles do children play in addition to the obvious one - “ the user” Children certainly influence family buying decisions from cars to holidays.

They are also the buyers of the future. Provide children with Penguin bars and McVitie's may be able to hold on to the adult due to brand awareness and brand loyalty formed at such an early age. But how should businesses market to children? Are there conflicts with being seen to specifically target the child audience – can it alienate parents? Products have to appeal to the conflicting agendas of child and parent, while fighting off increasing competition.

A marketer of children's foods was recently quoted as follows: " Ten years ago children wouldn't have given a damn about cheese. It used to be just Dairy Lea, but now children's dairy products encompass everything from cheese to yogurts, and fromage frais. Our brands also face more intense competition than ever and it's not just from other chocolate biscuits - it's from products such as Dairy Lea Dunkers and Fruit Winders. These things didn't exist before. "

Marketers also have to recognise that children are moving into new markets. Children as young as seven buy DVD's, and no teenage lifestyle is complete without a mobile phone. This has a knock-on effect. For example, the money

children spend on mobile phone cards reduces the money they spend on snacks. Marketers also need to be sensitive to the peculiarities of children-related markets. It may be tempting to use a daring marketing campaign to make a product stand out.

But a poorly thought-through campaign could result in the product and/or brand being attacked by ethical campaigners, outraged mothers, educationalists, health and safety organisations and others. A good example of how things can go wrong is Sunny Delight. Sunny Delight enjoyed boom sales after its initial launch. However, the drink's popularity crashed when the media realised that it was sold from chiller cabinets purely as a marketing ploy to make it seem fresh and, therefore, healthy. The actual product formulation was far from healthy.

Retailers face a challenge to display products in a way that attracts children. Promotional displays have to be able to handle child usage (or abuse) and capture a child's imagination and attention. Disney has a reputation as being particularly good at interactive promotional marketing. Many children also prefer Woolworth's to supermarkets because of features such as pick 'n' mix sweets. The Early Learning Centre succeeds by creating a playground which allows children to play with toys rather than leaving them wrapped in plastic.