

Children in a Kirana store: Building a case for retail communication

Received (in revised form): 18th September, 2002

ANURADHA MOHAN KUMAR

is a former postgraduate student from the Mudra Institute of Communications, Ahmedabad and was a search executive at Blackstone market facts and IMRB. She is presently a masters student of political science at Delhi University.

P. K. SINHA

was a professor at the Mudra Institute of Communications, and is now professor at the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad.

RAJNEESH KRISHNA

is a professor at the Mudra Institute of Communications, Ahmedabad.

Abstract

This paper looks at child-retail communication interaction at the Kirana store, the Indian version of the US 'mom and pop' retail outlet, in New Delhi. The methodologies for data collection were the non-participatory unstructured observation and exit interview techniques. The results showed a high interaction between the child and retail communication. There is a case for looking at the retail outlet as a communication medium that can be exploited, rather than as a mere storehouse of goods.

INTRODUCTION

The psychological development of children between the ages of three and seven has been described as the pre-operational stage. Compared to other age groups, children at this stage are more prone to high visual cues that stimulate imagination.¹ This highly sensitive group was chosen for the research because of this developmental aspect of children. At this pre-operational stage, children have a limited scope of comprehension, and egocentrism is the important characteristic feature. This age has also been described as the 'fun and play' stage;² children are impulsive and reactive rather than intellectual in their approach to the world. They do not have the ability to deal with more than one aspect of a visual stimulus at any one

time. Another characteristic feature of this age group is overcuing, where an oversized or exaggerated stimulus becomes the focus of the child's attention. Fantasy thinking is also a feature characteristic of the information processing of this age group.³ At this stage, the precision of comprehending visual concepts, such as shape and size, increases. As a result of these evolving perceptual mechanisms, a child correctly observes an object's size and shape regardless of the angle at which it is viewed. According to Cassie Launders,⁴ perceptual mechanisms evolve through active and lively exploration of the environment, and this is critical in the development of accurate perception of size, shape and distance.

According to Rust,⁵ these develop-

Anuradha Mohan Kumar
413 Asian Games Village,
New Delhi 110049, India
Tel: +91 11 649 3859
E-mail: copyanu@rediffmail.com

mental aspects find their behavioural manifestations at the retail outlet. Children will go only for what they notice. They have room in their heads for only one thing at a time. They notice what they know. When children go out shopping, they do not notice attributes. They stick to what they have experienced in the past. They are insecure about predicting the consequences of selecting something new. Moreover, advertising as a form of communication has a limited role in influencing children's perception of a new product. This has been primarily attributed to the limited ability to process complex information.⁶

By the age of six, most children would visit a shop once a week. Most children visit the retail store with their parents. The parent-child interaction at the retail outlet, described by the 'nag and gate-keeper' model, emphasises the gate-keeping role of the parent.⁷ This role deals with the control that the parent exercises on the forces that influence the child. The non-verbal interaction between the parent and child can be explained by the 'invisible rubber band' theory.⁸ At the retail outlet, there is a link (or an invisible rubber band) between the parent and child. This link stretches and contracts as they move through the store. The presence of the parent puts the child in a comfort zone, which allows him to become a novelty seeker. On the other hand, in the presence of the child, the parent also opens up and loses their inhibition. This is known as the 'novelty paradox'.⁹ While the prevalent literature focuses on situations where only the parent is accompanying the child to the retail outlet, in India, a sibling, friend or visiting relative may accompany the child.

Point-of-purchase material and packaging are the main forms of retail communication. Point-of-purchase material performs the function of informing and reminding the consumer about the brand presence, and attracting him to any premium that is offered.¹⁰ Packages that are designed for children generate brand recognition, communicate the product type, and create temptation and desire to purchase the product.¹¹ In children between the ages of three and seven, visual gratification has a very important role to play in most behavioural manifestations at the shop. Hence packaging is very important in decision-making for them. It has also been found that cash-counter goods occupy a significant share (41 per cent) of the purchase requests that kids make.¹² Moreover, it has been noted that the child is the initiator of purchases at the point of purchase.¹³ Much sugar confectionery is bought on impulse.¹⁴ Thus the role of packaging and point-of-purchase communication becomes very important. The different kinds of impulse purchases have been categorised as 'pure impulse', 'reminder impulse', 'suggestion impulse' and 'planned impulse'.¹⁵

Shopping behaviour at the retail outlet is also dependent on the kind of planning for the visit, which can be 'unplanned', 'generally planned' or 'specifically planned'.¹⁶ The planning affects the behaviour of customers at the store, and can result in 'blinker', 'magpie' or 'browser' shopping.¹⁷

The retail outlet is the high point of visual gratification for the child. The Kirana store, or the Indian version of the US 'mom and pop' retail outlet, is the most prevalent form of retailing in

India. This paper examines the child's behaviour at the retail outlet, with special emphasis on the point-of-purchase brand communication. Children between the ages of three to seven are highly sensitive to retail communication at the outlet. At this point, the researchers chose not to focus on the role of the shopkeeper in influencing the child.

OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

The objectives of the research were as follows:

- to understand the factors influencing child behaviour in a Kirana store
- to understand the child-retail communication interaction at the Kirana store.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted on 40 'observation units', consisting of 40 children and the person/persons (if any) accompanying the child in 13 Kirana stores in Delhi. Judgment sampling was used for selection of the units. The study used non-participant observation and exit interview techniques for data collection. The observer discreetly studied the behaviour of the child and the accompanying person, if any. The paper will hereafter refer to the child and the accompanying person as the observation unit. The observer approximated the age of the child, and those assumed to be between the ages of three to seven were further studied. The age of the child was later confirmed in the exit interview. Only children between the ages of three to seven were finally

selected for the purpose of the research.

Once an observation unit was selected, their retail behaviour was noted. The observation technique was non-structured in nature. It primarily focused on the interaction between the child and the accompanying person, and the child and the retail communication. When the observation unit came out of the shop, they were intercepted for an exit interview. Questions asked included the recall of items which caught the attention of the child and recognition of brands noticed. The questionnaire also dealt with the purchase plan and rules governing the purchase of indulgence goods. Indulgence goods included items like toffees, chocolates and crisps, which were mostly requested by the children. The interview was recorded on a dictaphone. After the exit interview, the researcher noted the observed behaviour. The observer also drew sketches of the Kirana stores before leaving the site. The next observation unit was selected only after the complete recording of the observation.

The data were analysed using a content analysis technique. Data from observations and exit interviews were independently studied, and later each case was further studied using data from both observations and exit interviews to show the complete picture.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The factors influencing child behaviour at the Kirana store

The data given under this heading came primarily from the exit interview. These were supported by information

provided by the observation technique. Instances where data by this method contradict the exit interview are also mentioned separately. The data showed that the child-retail communication interaction was affected by several factors, mentioned below.

Predisposition of the accompanying person to the purchase of indulgence goods from the Kirana store

Most of the accompanying persons (38/40) liked purchasing indulgence goods from the Kirana stores. All the observation units either had a purchase plan or the accompanying person had an inkling of a purchase request. For the accompanying person, purchasing sweets and other indulgence goods was a means of pampering the child. This was seen in the behaviour of the observation unit and during the exit interview. At the exit interview, the accompanying persons spoke about requests for indulgence goods, made on the way to the Kirana store.

A case was noted, however, of a person who claimed *not* to like purchasing indulgence goods: a visiting relative was indulgent with the accompanying child, but, in the exit interview, claimed a strong dislike for bringing her children to the Kirana store.

Rules governing the purchase of indulgence goods

Some parents (7/19) had rules on the frequency of purchase of indulgence goods, while others (5/19) had conditions for the purchase of the same. The rules primarily governed the frequency and occasion for purchasing the indulgence goods. This was seen in the case

of a mother, who would only allow her child to buy indulgence goods once a week, and would not allow them to be purchased during exam times. In one instance, homework completion was a condition for the purchase of chocolate. A large number of accompanying persons (18/40) claimed that they had some form of rule enforcement. Another 20 accompanying persons were not particular about the rules to be enforced. Some children (2/40) claimed some form of rule enforcement by the parents.

Prior interaction with the brand

It was found that, in the exit interview, most of the children (38/40) had previously consumed the brand they had requested at the retail outlet.

Advertisements

Although advertisements promote brand recognition, it was extremely difficult to elicit a response from the child about the recall of the advertisements. On the other hand, only a few parents (4/19) claimed in the exit interview that the child asked for indulgence goods after viewing advertisements. Moreover, none of the visits were prompted by advertisements seen on television. The purchasers did, however, claim to have seen the advertisements for the product that they were buying. Children at the upper end of the age limit asked for indulgence goods at home, after seeing advertisements. Advertisements gave the parents the reassurance of the quality of the brand. Thus the accompanying adults primarily experienced the relationship between advertising and in-store display during

the visit to the Kirana store. The above findings agree with those of Moore and Lutz.¹⁸ They found that advertising as a form of communication has a limited role in influencing children's perception of a new product. This could be attributed to the limited ability of children to process complex information.

Accompanying person

It was observed that the child showed greater attention to the retail communication when accompanied by an adult (27/40). Here the child was free to scamper around and explore the packs and posters on display. In most cases the adult was either busy accomplishing the purpose of the visit, or would join the child in exploring the different indulgence goods on display. Here, the point-of-purchase material and the presence of the child jointly influenced the final purchase. A notable instance was seen of a child who picked a point-of-purchase chocolate while the mother was accomplishing the purpose of her visit. Later, as they left the shop, the child insisted on carrying the chocolate home.

Where an older child or a child of the same age (8/40) accompanied the child, the child's attention was primarily directed at the accompanying person rather than to the visual merchandise. Here, the accompanying child would engage the child in a conversation or game, and hence distract attention from the indulgence goods.

Classification of family units

All the above-mentioned factors had a strong bearing on the child-retail com-

munication interaction and the purchase of indulgence goods. Based on the level of resistance to the child-retail communication interaction, the observation units can be classified as 'low', 'high' and 'very high' resistance family units. This classification is primarily based on the rules for purchases and the involvement of parents in the purchases along with their children. Rust¹⁹ has developed an eight-point classification of family types on the basis of parent-child interaction. The three groups emerging from this study roughly correspond to three of the eight groups in his classification.

Low-resistance family units

The children in these units (18/40) primarily belonged to the lower end of the selected age group. In this situation, the accompanying person was often the parent or a visiting relative. The accompanying adult would often take the child out on a treat and would even initiate the purchase of the indulgence goods. In many instances, it was observed that the accompanying adult would draw the child's attention to the indulgence goods. Here, the observation unit jointly explored the packs and point-of-purchase material on display. The child's involvement with the accompanying person and the retail communication was very high. The adult would play a very active and positive role in the purchase. This behaviour was also noted in cases where the child was accompanied by a visiting relative. The amount of time and effort spent in the interaction with the pack displays by this group as very high.

Thus the low resistance of the parents facilitated a high interaction with the communication at the Kirana

store. Here, the facilitating role of the parent was noted.²⁰ Purchase requests from the child often got an affirmative response. Parents gave their children everything they could afford and did not strictly follow the dictum of moderation. This behaviour is characteristic of a permissive style of parenting.²¹ Parents were seen indulging in 'pure impulse' purchases of mints or chocolates, although they came to the shop to purchase groceries.

Most of the observation units in this group had a highly positive orientation to the purchase of indulgence goods. These family units corresponded to Rust's categorisation of a 'young explorers' family type.²² The young explorers are families with young children who are eager to explore the joys of trying out new products with their children. These family units did not have a definite set of rules governing the purchase of indulgence goods. They were still at the stage of defining them. At this stage, the only restraining influences were the commonly held beliefs about the consumption of indulgence goods. The exit interview also indicated that parents used distraction tactics as a method of request avoidance whenever they wanted to refuse on the basis of commonly held beliefs. This not only indicated the low attention span and limited comprehension ability of the child, but also the hesitation of parents in this group to give a stern 'no'.

Although scanning was a behaviour trait that was noted in most of the children in this group, they exhibited a high loyalty to the regularly consumed brands. Exit interviews showed that repeat purchase was a common characteristic of these units. The child would

even reject the accompanying adult's attempts to purchase new brands.

At the exit interview, accompanying adults stressed the roles of the packs and point-of-purchase material as the most important factors influencing the children. According to the accompanying adults, mass media advertising did not influence the purchase request. They also spoke of instances where the child saw the indulgence goods at the shop, and immediately requested them. This finding was supported by observation at the Kirana store.

In the exit interview it was noted that the place of request making was the home, on the way to the Kirana store, or at the actual store itself. Data on in-store requests were obtained from the observation as well as the exit interview. The place of request making did not affect the response of the accompanying person to the purchase request for this group. This, to a large extent, was a function of the positive orientation of the group to the purchase of indulgence goods.

High-resistance family units (20/40)

These were cases where the children were at the upper end of the chosen age group. The main characteristic of this group was the resistance of the parents to the purchase of indulgence goods. This family unit corresponds to Rust's categorisation of a 'retired explorers' family type. The retired explorers are families with older children, and they have passed through the young explorer stage.²³

The positive orientation to the purchase of indulgence goods from the Kirana store was considerably reduced in this group. This was primarily because of the strong presence of rules

which governed the purchase of the indulgence goods. Here, Rust's 'nag and gate-keeper' model was seen in operation.²⁴ The rules for the purchase of indulgence goods ranged from regulating the purchase to setting conditions for it. At the time of rule enforcement, parents were also very conscious of the 'observers' of parent-child interaction at the Kirana store. Hence the need to be perceived as a good parent also came to the fore. The behaviour exhibited at this time was characteristic of the 'authoritative style' of parenting.²⁵ Here the parent attempted a balance between a show of extreme strictness and allowing the purchase of indulgence goods. This was observed in the case of a father who allowed his daughter to buy only one packet of crisps, despite her request for more. In the exit interview, he said that he allowed his children to buy such things, but only in moderation. This allowed her to enjoy, but within limits.

All families pass from the young explorers to the retired explorers stage.²⁶ In the young explorers stage, the brand loyalty of the child gave the parent an assurance of the quality of the purchase request. However, when the families reach the retired explorers stage, their children start experimenting with new brands. In this study, retail communication strongly influenced the purchase requests. Children from retired explorer families were seen asking for new brands, while their parents tried to steer them to tried-and-tested ones. The experimental nature of their purchase requests was unsettling for the parents.

Apart from the request-generating capacity of retail communication, mass media advertisements had a role

to play, as stated by some parents. The exit interview indicated that the children, on being exposed to mass media advertisements at home, asked for indulgence goods. However, there was no case where any specific visit to the Kirana shop was advertisement driven.

At the retired explorers stage, children are allowed to go to the Kirana shop with a friend or sibling, or even alone. While the presence of another child may have been the ideal situation for greater child-retail communication interaction, it was observed that it did not happen. The accompanying child had a distracting capacity, where he commanded greater attention than the communication at the store. Children were seen playing hide and seek games with the accompanying child, or else getting involved in an argument. This prevented the child from getting exposed to the point-of-purchase communication. There were also instances where the accompanying child would direct the attention of the child to the goods of his choice.

At this stage, the place of request making was one of the most important factors that governed the child-retail communication interaction. Parents showed greater hesitation for out-of-home purchase requests. The 'pester power' of the child began to emerge, and the parent was especially apprehensive of the out-of-home requests made by the child on seeing the retail communication. Here the attitude of the parent to the purchase of indulgence goods from the Kirana store became an impediment to the child-retail communication interaction. The parents were aware of the 'pull' capacity of retail communication. They

tried to enforce some form of a restraint on this interaction. In many instances, in spite of varying degrees of opposition from the parent, there was a purchase of indulgence goods.

Very-high-resistance family units

Parents belonging to this group had a strong negative orientation towards taking their children to the Kirana store. Denying the child's request, in front of others, is an embarrassment for the parent. The exit interview revealed that purchases of indulgence goods were made without the child, as far as possible. These parents avoided taking their children to the Kirana store. An interesting instance was of a mother who was passing the store with her children. While the children stopped in front of the store to examine the indulgence goods, the mother stood at a distance. Despite the pleadings from the children, she did not relent. The children, after some time, followed their mother. In the exit interview, she stated her strong dislike for bringing her children to the Kirana store. This family unit corresponds to Rust's categorisation of 'high control' family type.²⁷ These observation units were the least encountered in this study (2/40).

The child-retail communication interaction at the Kirana store

The child's reaction to retail communication at the Kirana store was dependent on the following factors:

- the person who decided on the visit to the Kirana store
- the person accompanying the child on the visit to the Kirana store

— the level of planning for the purchase in the Kirana store.

The person who decided on the visit to the Kirana store

This refers either to a child-driven visit or an adult-driven visit. In the case of child-driven visits, the child and the accompanying person were highly involved in the purchase of indulgence goods. Here Rust's 'novelty paradox' was seen in operation.²⁸ Both the child and the accompanying person examined the packs on display and other point-of-purchase communication. In this instance, the child happily examined the packs and point-of-purchase material while the accompanying parent looked on indulgently. Here the parent was least resistant to the requests for purchase of indulgence goods.

In the case of adult-driven visits, however, the attention of the adult was primarily directed to buying the necessary goods, such as groceries and other household items. These were instances where a child accompanied an adult on an errand. While the adult was interacting with the shopkeeper, the child used this time to examine the communication at the store. In this situation, the adult was resistant to the purchase requests of the child. The adult-driven visits were the testing grounds for the child-retail communication interaction.

The person accompanying the child

The behaviour of the child varied in the following situations:

- child accompanied by the parent (15/40)

- child accompanied by a friend or sibling (8/40)
- child accompanied by a visiting relative (7/40)
- child going to the Kirana store alone (5/40)

There were five instances where the child had come to the shop with the parent and a sibling. Here the observation units were put in the category of child accompanied by a sibling, as the child had a greater interaction with the other child.

The above-mentioned categorisations also determined the level of comfort the child experienced while visiting the store. The child was most comfortable when the parent accompanied him. This was seen in the ease with which he explored the shop and its surroundings. In this situation, the child was observed to be in the second and third stage of development of McNeal's shopping behaviour patterns.²⁹ In the second stage, the child accompanied the parents and requested the purchase of indulgence goods. Older children, who had progressed to the third stage, although accompanied by the parents, made independent decisions about the purchase. In both the stages there was a high interaction with the parent. The only variation was in the freedom given to the child for making independent decisions.

When a friend or a sibling accompanied the child, the Kirana store was converted into a playground. Both the children were interacting with each other, and also with the communication at the store. The accompanying sibling, however, was able to command greater attention than the communication at the shop. The limited financial

resources with which they came to the store curtailed the interaction with retail communication.

In situations where the child was accompanied by a visiting relative, the adult tried to prompt and prod the child to treat himself. However, the child showed reserved behaviour.

The most reserved behaviour was noted in cases where the child came to the Kirana store alone. Children in this situation are in McNeal's fourth stage of development of shopping behaviour.³⁰ They were at the upper end of the age group and were often sent alone to the shop on an errand. Children restrained themselves from exploring the shop, and consequently limited their exposure to the communication at the shop. The effectiveness of retail communication in this instance was minimised. Thus the comfort level was highest when the child was with the parent, and was lowest when the child was alone at the Kirana store. The level of comfort was one of the most important factors in determining the level of exposure to the communication at the shop.

The level of planning for the visit to the Kirana store

The exit interview supported by the observations indicated that the attention the child gave to the communication at the shop was highly dependent on the level of planning for the visit. Based on the level of planning, the visits to the Kirana store were of three kinds. These were unplanned visits, generally planned visits, and specifically planned visits. These categorisations correspond to POPAI³¹ definitions of the different kinds of shopping behaviour.

The child's main intention was to 'get something' in an unplanned visit. It was noted that retail communication generated a 'suggestion impulse' reaction, where the child was seen craving to buy 'just something' from the shop. Consequently, the child explored the maximum area in the shop. The request for an eraser, which caught the eye of the child initially, was replaced by a request for chocolate a few moments later. Here, the children were seen to change their purchase requests several times. It is in this instance that the effectiveness of retail communication is the greatest. All communication had an almost equal chance of exposure as the child was actively scanning the entire shop. However, unplanned requests were not well received by the parent. Thus the final outcome varied from request denial to purchasing the 'healthy' or the least expensive indulgence goods.

In the case of generally planned visits, the child had decided on a category and had indicated the same to the accompanying person. The role of impulse purchases was considerably reduced in this instance. Thus the area in the shop that was physically explored by the child was restricted to the place where the product category was stocked, which was in and around the cash counter. The verbalised request further confirmed the purchase plan. In this case, the outcome was positive, as the observation unit was predisposed towards the purchase of the indulgence goods.

In the case of specifically planned purchases, the child had already made the brand choice. Impulse purchases did not play any role in this instance. The child directly went to the area where the product of choice was

stacked and asked for it. Purchase of indulgence goods was certain in these instances.

The behaviour of the child at the Kirana store

Observation at the point of purchase found a high child-retail communication interaction. As shown in Figure 1, the retail experience was dependent on the planning for the visit. As stated earlier, the visits may be categorised as unplanned, generally planned or specifically planned.

The first interaction between the child and retail communication took place when the child first saw the shop. Here, the child reacted to the site of the store as a visual stimulus. The child would point towards the shop, and run towards it. In one observation, a child, passing the Kirana store, entered the shop on seeing a promotional poster outside.

The child would then direct their attention to the cash counter where the indulgence goods were usually kept, or to the intent of purchase. The child would peer at the jars, and point towards them. In cases where the indulgence goods were physically accessible, the child would try and get hold of them. Packs, which were gold in colour or had an odd shape, attracted the maximum attention. For younger children, colour was the main cue for identification. This was seen in the case of a child who incorrectly identified her chosen brand. The brand mentioned as intended for purchase and the brand finally chosen were both blue in colour. Even later, in the exit interview, the child was unable to identify the brands correctly.

The exposure to communication at

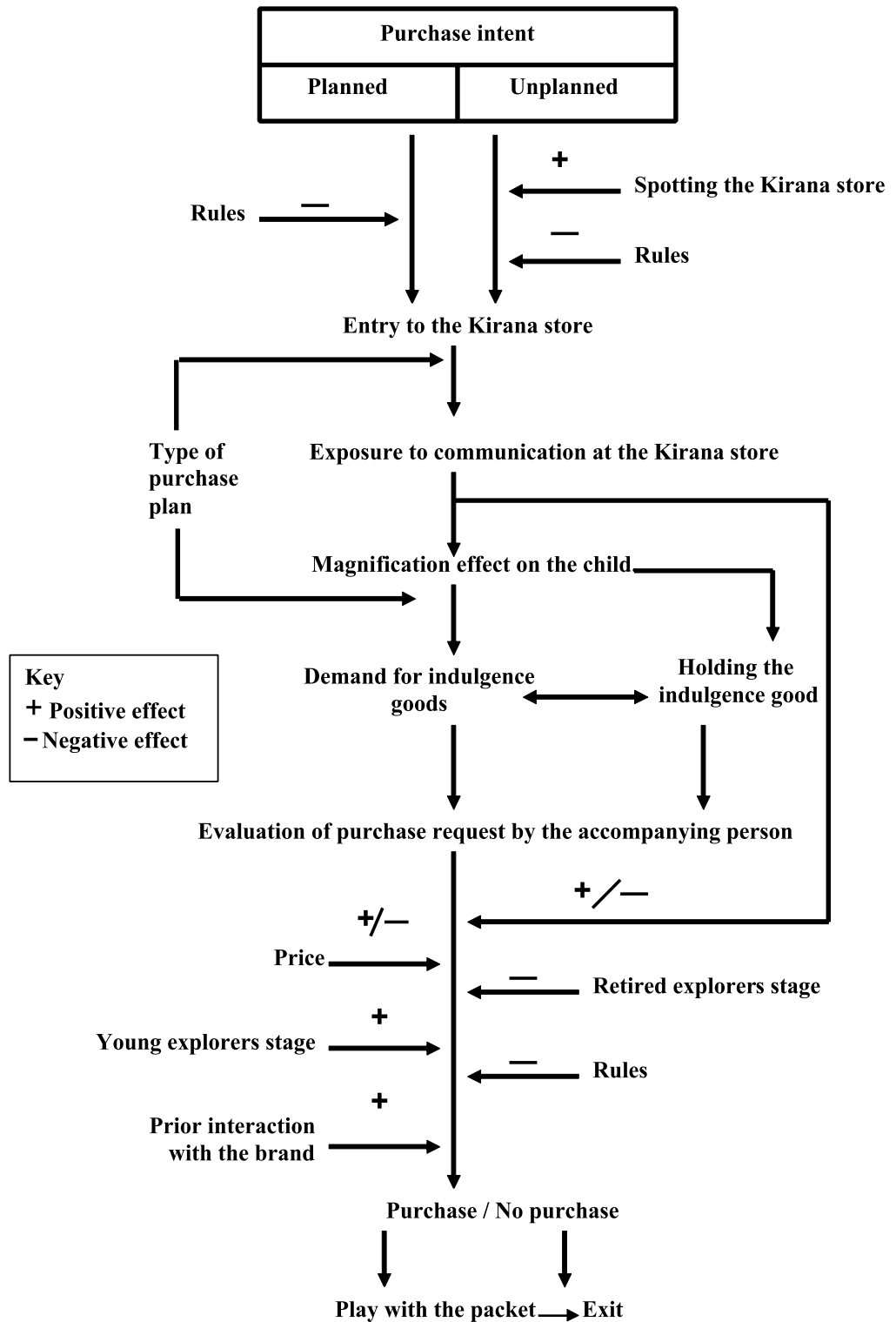


Figure 1 Child-retail communication interaction model

the shop triggered a magnifying reaction from the child. In one case, point-of-purchase material announced a three-dimensional sticker of a dinosaur, free with the purchase of Cadbury's Gems. A child, on seeing this poster, bought Cadbury's Gems thinking that they would get a toy dinosaur with it. In most cases magnification is an internalised reaction. This observation draws support from a previous study which described overcuing as an information-processing function peculiar to children of three to seven years.³² At this age, graphics, cartoon characters, colour and pack structure can have an important influence. Children actively seek entertainment and they will even look at the pack and the chocolate as a source of this.³³

In most cases, the accompanying person also directs their attention to the communication at the store; the time spent depends on the purpose of the visit to the Kirana store. The purpose of the visit also plays an important role in the purchase decision.

Acquisition is a key behavioural trait of children in this age group. Touching the jars of sweets or excitedly pointing at the netted bags holding the wafer packets was a part of communicating the purchase request. In one case, a child eagerly picked a fistful of sweets and chewing gum. In this shop, the indulgence goods were placed in open containers, on low-lying shelves. The child usually reacted to the communication by asking for the purchase of indulgence goods. How the child asked was dependent on the kind of planning for the purchase request. Thus in a specifically planned purchase, the request was verbalised with the mention of the

brand name. In a generally planned purchase, the request was verbalised with the mention of the category. The request was verbalised with the mention of need fulfilment in a generally planned purchase.

The response of the accompanying person was dependent on the family type. Thus young explorer parents gave in readily to the demands of the child, whereas the retired explorers were hesitant. The order processing involved interaction with the shopkeeper. Enquiring the price of the requested item was essential to the process. Exit from the shop was the highest point of interaction between the child and the merchandise. The child on acquiring the desired item held it like a treasure. The child would examine the item and play with it. Vacuum-sealed wafer packs were pressed and closely examined. Golden foils of chocolate packs were examined one last time before getting torn. In one instance, where the observation unit came for a repeat purchase, this entire process was repeated.

CONCLUSION

The study looked at the child-retail communication interaction from a holistic perspective. It took into account the forces external to the interaction that affected it. It also looked at the interaction between the child and the retail communication at the Kirana store. It was observed that the age of the child, the relationship of the accompanying person to the child, and the kind of planning were the important factors influencing the interaction. The study showed that the children enjoyed their visit to the Kirana store. The child and the retail

communication had a strong positive interaction. However, there are factors outside this interaction which need to be addressed.

This study builds a case for a shift in retail communication. A Kirana store, which was earlier considered only as a point of purchase, has a strong communication potential. This was seen in the high interaction that the observation units had with the communication at the retail outlet. Unlike the traditionally used communication media, such as television and radio, the Kirana store offers the consumer an opportunity to touch and feel the brand. This touch factor gives the Kirana store an edge over other media.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS OF RESEARCH

This research used the unstructured observation technique along with the exit interview to understand the child-retail communication interaction. Further research needs to concentrate on the magnification process to understand the processing of communication at the point of purchase. This would make the point-of-purchase material and packaging more effective. Several structured observation sheets can be used to understand further the individual components of child-retail communication interaction. The same study could be repeated on other groups to understand the impact of retail communication on them. Better tools of data collection, like video cameras, could be used to improve the data collection.

References

- (1) Piaget, J. (1983) 'Piaget's Theory', in Mussen, P. (Ed) *Handbook of Child Psychology*, Wiley, New York.
- (2) McNeal, J. U. (1990) *Kids as Customers*, Lexington Books, New York.
- (3) Acuff, D. S. and Reihner, R. H. (1997) *The Psychology of Marketing to kids: What Kids Buy and Why*, Simon and Schuster, New York.
- (4) Launders, C. 'Early childhood, development from two to six years of age', <http://ecdgroup.harvard.net/archive/ecd>
- (5) Rust, L. (1994) 'Please Please Please. Understanding the purchase influence', speech to the SRI Marketing to Kids conference, 22nd September, www.langrust.com/pleasepl.htm.
- (6) Moore, S. E. and Lutz, R. J. (2000) 'Children, advertising, and product experiences: A multi-method inquiry', *Journal of Consumer Research*, No. 27 (June), pp. 31-48.
- (7) Rust, ref. 5 above.
- (8) Rust, ref. 5 above.
- (9) Rust, ref. 5 above.
- (10) POPAI News Marketplace (1990) 'AC Neilson research reveals cheese sales skyrocket with in-store promotions', quoted in Shimp, T. A. (1997) *Advertising, Promotion and Supplemental Aspects of Integrated Marketing Communications*, The Dryden Press, Orlando, FL.
- (11) Smita, G. (1987) *Children's Food*, Chapman and Hall, London.
- (12) Popper, E. T. and Ward, S. (1987) 'Children's purchase requests and parent's response: A diary study', *Journal of Advertising Research*, October-November, pp. 28-38.
- (13) Atkin, C. (1978) 'Observation of parent-child interaction in supermarket decision making', *Journal of Marketing*, pp. 63-72.
- (14) Meyers, H. M. and Lubliner, M. J. (1998) *The Marketer's Guide to Successful Package Design*, NTC Business Books, Lincolnwood IL.
- (15) Kollat, D. T. and Willet, P. R. (1969) 'Is impulse purchase really a useful concept for marketing decisions?', *Journal of Management*, Vol. 33, pp. 79-83.
- (16) POPAI Consumer Buying Habits Study (1995) *The Point of Purchase Advertising Institute*, Englewood, NJ.
- (17) Gordon, W. and Valentine, V. (1996) 'Buying the brand at the point of choice', presentation at the Market Research Conference, 4-6th March, Aussare.
- (18) Moore and Lutz, ref. 6 above.
- (19) Rust, ref. 5 above.
- (20) Launders, ref. 4 above.
- (21) Baumrind, D. (1991) 'The influence of parenting style on adolescent competence

- and substance use', *Journal of Early Adolescence*, Vol. 11, No. 1, pp. 56–95.
- (22) Rust, ref. 5 above.
- (23) Rust, ref. 5 above.
- (24) Rust, ref. 5 above.
- (25) Baumrind, ref. 21 above.
- (26) Rust, ref. 5 above.
- (27) Rust, ref. 5 above.
- (28) Rust, ref. 5 above.
- (29) McNeal, ref. 2 above.
- (30) McNeal, ref. 2 above.
- (31) *POPAI Consumer Buying Habits Study*, ref. 16 above.
- (32) McNeal, ref. 2 above.
- (33) Jewer, A. J. (1998), 'Targeting the kids' chocolate market', <http://www.kidsmarketing.com/kidpulse/readkidpulse.php?id=TA00121207KPL/>

