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Children's Coalition Strategies and Parental Purchase Decision Making for Family Products

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ABSTRACT

This study focused on children's coalition strategies and parental purchase decision making for family products. As children sometimes find it difficult to present their purchase requests for family products to parents they tend to resort to formation of coalitions to gain support instead of presenting such requests directly. Therefore, the justification for this study was to examine how coalition strategies help children to gain support when presenting their purchase request for family products to parents. Against this backdrop, the specific objective of this study was to examine the effect of children's coalition strategies on parental purchase decision making for family refrigerators and power generators. The survey research design was adopted for the study. A sample size of 400 was determined from the study population of 115,934 in the study area using the Yamane (1967) sample size determination formula. Responses from 386 respondents were considered valid and used. The responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The F-statistics was used to test the significance of the multiple regression model used in testing the hypothesis formulated. From the regression results the conclusion of the study was that children's coalition strategies have a significant effect on parental purchase decision making for family refrigerators and power generators. It was recommended that manufacturers and marketers of family products should constantly study parent-children relationships and develop strategies for enhancing family relationships in areas related to family purchase decision making for family products.

Keywords: children, parents, coalition strategies, purchase decision-making, family products.

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1. Introduction

While children appear to be very close to their parents in most families, they sometimes tend to find it difficult to present their purchase requests for family products directly to parents. As a result of such difficulties, they sometimes resort to formation of coalitions to make their presentations weighty for purposes of gaining approval. Children sometimes form alliances among themselves mostly on the basis of sex or with parents within the family; with other children or with adults within or outside the family, to help them get their requests approved. Such alliances used by children have been termed coalition strategies in this study as originally identified by Thomson, Laing and Mckee (2007). In the study carried out by Lee and Collins (2000) in New Zealand, one of the objectives was to determine whether observed coalition patterns have relationship with gender and position of the children; and it was observed that several coalitions emerged by gender-mix – father and daughter and mother and son working together among others. Again, Thomson, Laing and McKee (2007) in a study in Scotland, United Kingdom, examined children's behavior in family purchase decision making and observed that children teamed up to work together as a unit and formed coalitions with other children for purposes of exercising more influence on parental purchase decision making that affect them. Moreover, Salim and Praven (2010) carried out a study in Denmark to examine how brand consciousness among children affect family buying behavior. They observed that children do not enjoy independence in decision making for all items alike. They noted that while they enjoy independence for some, they seek the attention of a parent or older family members for others, thereby forming a kind of coalition.

Children have been categorized by different researchers into infants and babies (0 – 2 years); toddlers and preschoolers (2 – 5 years); school age children (6 – 12 years) and adolescents and teenagers (13 – 17 years), (Child Development Institute, 1999). For this study, however, the focus was on school age children (6 – 12 years) who are believed to have developed some skills to help them effectively communicate with their parents especially when making requests.

The process of buying any product starts with the recognition of a problem, the stage where the need to be satisfied arises. The buyer then moves to search for relevant information with respect to the alternative product or brand offerings. A purchase decision is taken after the evaluation. This is the stage payment is made for the chosen product or brand. The buyer may be satisfied or dissatisfied with the product or brand after making payment, resulting in the exhibition of post purchase behavior accordingly.

Figure 1: Buyer Decision Process (see page 52)

For this study, however, the emphasis was on parental purchase decision making for family products, as dependent variable and children's coalition strategies as independent variables, mirrored by support of siblings, support of family friends, support of teachers, support of family pastors and support of elders. The family in this regard is a set of people connected by blood, marriage or adoption and living together (Loudon and Della-Bitta, 1993). The products involved were family refrigerators and power generators. Both are

household products. While refrigerators are designed to preserve food and keep drinks and water cold, power generators are designed for generation of power (electricity).

Statement of the Problem

As children sometimes find it difficult to present their purchase requests for family products directly to parents, they tend resort to formation of coalitions to seek support for approval of such requests. Thomson, Laing and McKee (2007) noted that coalitions either among siblings or among children and parents add strength to children's purchase requests in families through the simple application of the majority rule in the decision making process. In consideration of the foregoing, the justification for this study was to examine how coalition strategies help children to gain support when presenting their purchase requests for family products to parents.

The Specific Objective of this Study

The specific objective of this study was to examine the effect of children's coalition strategies on parental purchase decision making for family refrigerators and power generators. The coalition strategies considered in this study were support of siblings, support of family friends, support of teachers, support of family pastors and support of elders.

Research Question

The key research question for this study was:

How do children's coalitions strategies affect parental purchase decision making for family refrigerators and power generators?

Research Hypothesis

The hypothesis formulated and tested in this study is stated as follows:

Ho₁: Children's coalition strategies do not have any significant effect on parental purchase decision making for family refrigerators and power generators.

2. Literature Review

Children's Coalition Strategies

Children use coalition strategies to get their purchase requests approved by parents (Thomson, Laing and Mckee, 2007). A strategy in this study is the exact behavior a child skillfully exhibits at a particular point in time to influence parental purchase decision making for a particular product or product category (Dibie, 2017). A coalition is an alliance (combination of forces) especially a temporal one, of people, factions, parties or nations involved in the pursuit of a common goal. In this study however, coalition is seen as the collaboration of children with respected individuals having close ties with their parents; whose support the children try to seek to get their purchase requests for special products approved promptly by their parents. In this regard, coalition strategies considered are: the support of siblings, family friends, teachers, family pastors and elders (within or outside) in the family. Third parties may play several roles in this regard ranging from helping the child to explain to the parents, the urgency and/or importance of a particular

request to the child, the negative implications not granting the request may have on the child and the overall long-term benefits granting such request to the child would have on the entire family among others. Third parties however, in most cases apply care and caution while playing such interventionist roles to ensure factors capable of creating possible assurances that parents are actually in a position that could support their compliance to such requests, are on ground before initiating any interventionist discussion.

Children's Coalitions with Siblings

Siblings are two or more children or offspring, a brother or a sister having one or both parents in common (Wikipedia.org). Although siblings are a part of family life, research on siblings relationship appear to be lagging behind much more than other family relationships (Whiteman, McHale and Soli, 2011). Siblings are central in the lives of individuals and families around the world and across the life span. They serve as companions, confidants and role models in children and adolescents (Dunn, 2007). Siblings are also strong sources of support to themselves throughout childhood (Connidis and Cambel, 1995). They are able to explore such opportunities to influence parental purchase decisions on items that are of interest to them among other benefits.

Children's Coalitions with Family Friends

Within each child there is a desire to have good relationships with adults they consider close to their parents who may simply be referred to as family friends for the purpose of this study. Most times, children appear to find solace in such family friends by way of approaching them to assist them present for special purchase request to their parents to get parental approval. Hoffses (2018) noted that friendship is an important part of kids' development; and the type of friends too. In this regard, children are even careful to know who their parents listen to very well among the numerous persons that come around; and then make friends with such persons. They are able to establish trust on such persons and then carefully and respectfully use them to get parental approval for special purchase requests (Dibie, 2017).

Children's Coalitions with their Teachers

A teacher is a person who teaches or instructs. The attention here is however on teachers who teach or instruct children. Parents sometimes may not know what exactly their children think or want but their teachers can help them connect more meaningfully with their parents to make them know more about what their children think or want (Galinsky, 2001). Moreover, kids do better in school when they know their parents are involved in their academic lives. So, for parents, attending back-to-school meetings at the beginning of the school year is a great way to know your child's teachers and their expectations. Another great way to stay informed about your child's general well-being is attending parent-teacher conferences (Hoffses, 2018). The conferences provide good opportunities for parents to fully interact with their children's teachers and discuss strategies on how to help the children do better. Some good teachers who are able to know their pupils one-on-one use such opportunities to present some of their purchase request to their parents and get the required approvals on-behalf of the pupils.

Children's Coalitions with Family Pastors

With the rise of the "efficiency movement" in the early twentieth century in the developed world there have been more emphases on specialization leading to the creation of experts considered more equipped to handle special responsibilities, especially as they relate to children. This has led people to have more confidence in trained ministers and pastors such that parents now look unto them for advice and counseling on issues concerning their children (Honeycutt, 2020). Sometimes, some parents may even want to seek the consent of a minister or a pastor on whether certain purchase request from their children should be approved or not. Children are aware of such regards their parents have for such ministers and pastors and therefore form coalitions with them where required.

Children's Coalitions with Elders

An elder is someone who exhibits certain qualities and traits that help another individual, group or a larger community in times of need (Eldership Academy, 2016). For this study, an elder is seen as a person who has been able to gather much knowledge and experience about various issues of life based on age which can help him or her counsel a child or a child's parents on relevant issues including helping the child presents certain requests to the parents. Elders could be in the family, in the family worship center, or within the neighborhood. From wherever they may come, they could play such roles provided they are known to the child or children and the family; and relate with them cordially. As kids get close to grand-parents and other elders, they learn fast. Unfortunately, they are more prone to mirroring aggressive and negative behavior. However, if an elder is able to create a positive environment for learning, the child would not have much chance to learn bad habits (Macdaniel, 2017). So, as the bond between a child and an elder gets stronger, love is built and the elder becomes very much interested in the child. The elder then sees it as a responsibility to keep teaching the child good virtues and presents the child in good light before the parents, including helping the child present special requests to the parents where required.

Figure 2: Images of Children's Coalition (see page 52)

3. Theoretical Framework

The social learning theory supported this study.

The Social Learning Theory

The major proponents of the Social Learning Theory were Albert Bandura and Richard H. Waters in 1986 (Bandura, 1997). This theory examines learning as a process of observation, admiration and imitation. The theory assumes that human beings learn through observation, imitation and modeling which may bring about vicarious reinforcement as in the case of children that try to form coalitions to help them get their requests approved by their parents when they feel presenting such requests by themselves may not yield the expected results.

The following facts must be noted about observational learning:

- i. the person whose behaviour is observed is called the model, hence modelling is normally used simultaneously with observational learning;

- ii. the learning takes place simultaneously with no deliberate effort on the learner's part to learn or any intention on the model's part to teach;
- iii. the speed of learning by the learner many depend on the characteristics of the model that make him more or less likely to be imitated and the conditions under which the learning process occur.

Implications of the Social Learning Theory to this study are highlighted as follows:

- i. the environment as in the case of children provides models for behaviour changes;
- ii. observational learning results as a child observes another child's actions and the reinforcements that the child gets;
- iii. the child may gain reinforcements through forming alliances (coalitions) with siblings, family friends, teacher, family pastors and elders.

Empirical Review

The study carried out by Thomson, Laing and McKee (2007) in Scotland, United Kingdom examined influence of children's behavior in the family purchase decision making process. Twenty households with 40 parents and 44 children were interviewed. Results from the study revealed that: rather than act on individual basis majority of the children teamed up to work together as a unit and formed coalitions with other children for purposes of exercising more influence based on increased strength of the coalition; children formed coalitions with either of the parents they perceived was more interested in a particular purchase, to gain support instead of presenting their requests directly to both parents; coalitions either among siblings or between children and parents add strength to children's purchase requests in families by simply applying the majority rule in the process of decision making.

The study carried out by Lee and Collins (2000) in New Zealand was to note dominant strategies used in the family purchase decision making process and to determine whether observed coalition patterns have relationship with gender and position of the children. Data were obtained from videotaped observations of family interactions conducted in the respondent families' own homes. 89 families were carefully chosen from a pool involving participants of European descents drawn from High schools within Auckland, New Zealand. The study involved respondents from nuclear families having two adolescents between 12 and 19 years old. Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was used to measure the extent of dominant decision making strategies used and members' influence scores over the three key stages of decision making - the configuration stage, the negotiation stage and the outcome stage. Results from the study showed that emotion based decision making strategies had more effect on children's influence scores than on the influence scores of the parents, particularly at the configuration stage of decision making; by gender mix several coalitions emerged – father and daughter working together; mother and son working together, etc.; coalitions exist within families in the purchase decision making process and are linked to demographic factors; where there are three children in the family (two females and one male), the coalition by the females would give more weight to their requests than the requests from the male; where there are two male children and a female, the coalition by the males would give more weight to the purchase requests

from the males than the requests from the female; and female children generally exercise more influence than their male counterparts during purchase decisions in the family.

The study carried out by Kiriinya, Bwisa and Orwa (2014) in Nairobi, Kenya, was to find out whether a child's relationship with a parent determines the child's influence on family purchase decision making in Kenya. The study targeted parents (only one) of 8-12years children in Nairobi, Kenya. Primary data for the study were generated from 200 parents using a semi-structured questionnaire which was interviewer administered. The results from the study indicated that a moderate relationship between a child and a parent influences family purchase decision making.

4. Methodology

Survey research design was adopted for this study and it involved the use of questionnaire to generate relevant data with respect to the variables in the study. The questionnaire contained close-ended structured statements based on the objective of the study. Likert scale rating of 1 to 5 was used to rate the responses as follows: Great Extent (GE) = 5; Considerable Extent (CE) = 4; Moderate Extent (ME) = 3; Little Extent (LE) = 2, and Slight Extent (SE) = 1.

The study was carried out in Umuahia, the capital city of Abia State, in Southeast Nigeria. Umuahia is located along the rail road that lies between Port Harcourt (to the South) and Enugu (to the North). Umuahia is composed of two Local Government Areas, Umuahia North and Umuahia South, with headquarters in Ibeku and Ubakala respectively (Federal Republic of Nigeria Official Gazette, 2007).

The population of this study was 115, 934 composed of married persons considered as parents in the study area (males or females), assumed to be parents with children/wards of ages 6-12 years, who could effectively communicate with them through the application of different coalition strategies while making purchase requests concerning family products. The population is presented in table 1.

Table 1: Population of Parents in the Study Area (see page 53)

The sample size was determined using the Yamane formula (Yamane, 1967) which is stated as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N (R)^2}$$

Where: n = sample size

N = Study Population

1 = Constant

R = Error Margin (5%)

n = ?

N = Study Population = 115, 934

1 = 1

R = (0.05)² = 0.0025

Thus:

$$\begin{aligned}
 n &= \frac{115,934}{1 + 115,934 (0.05)^2} \\
 &= \frac{115,934}{115,935 \times 0.0025} \\
 &= \frac{115,934}{289.8375} \\
 &= 399.99 \quad = 400
 \end{aligned}$$

Therefore, a total of 400 parents constituted the sample size for the study

Cluster sampling technique was first used to select populated spots (banks, schools, government ministries and parastatals) within the study area with enlightened married persons believed to have children/wards of 6 to 12 years of age, after which simple random technique was used to select respondents for the study based on the sampled size.

A total of 400 copies of the questionnaire were randomly administered on the respondents within a period of 30 days in a proportionate manner; 248 (62%) to respondents in Umuahia North Local Government Area and 152(38%) to respondents in Umuahia South Local Government Area. In the course of their return however, 247 (61.75%) from Umuahia North Local Government Area were validated with 1 (0.25%) discarded based on inconsistencies. Meanwhile, 139(35%) from Umuahia South Local Government Area were validated with 13 (3%) discarded based on inconsistencies. Therefore, a total of 386 (96.5%) were validated and used for the study.

Model Specification

In this study, the descriptive statistics such as frequency counts with mean scores were used to analyze data from respondents on children's coalition strategies and parental purchase decision making for family refrigerators and power generators. Meanwhile, the multiple regression model (MRM), $Y = b_0 + b_1 X_1 + b_2 X_2 + b_3 X_3 \dots b_n X_n$ (Tusian and Thunjhnuwala, 2010) was modified to suit the variables of the study and used to carry out the analysis. The modified model used for the study is thus presented as follows:

$$PPDFP = f(CS)$$

$$PPDFP = b_0 + b_1 SS + b_2 SFF + b_3 ST + b_4 SP + b_5 SE$$

where: PPDFP = Parental Purchase Decision Making for Family products

f = "Function of"

CS = Coalition Strategies

b_0 = Constant

b_1 = Coefficient of SS (SS = Support of Siblings)

b_2 = Coefficient of SFF (SFF = Support of Family Friends)

b_3 = Coefficient of ST (ST = Support of Teachers)

b_4 = Coefficient of SP (SP = Support of Pastors)

b_5 = Coefficient of SE (SE = Support of an Elders)

5. Presentation of Results

Table 2: Children's Coalition Strategies (Item by Item) and Parental Purchase Decision Making for Family Refrigerators and Power Generators for items 1-5 (see page 53).

Table 3: Children's Coalition Strategies (En bloc) and Parental Purchase Decision Making for Family Refrigerators and Power Generators for item 6 (see page 54).

Test of Hypothesis

Ho₁: Children's coalitions with siblings, family friends, teachers, family pastors and elders do not have any significant effect on parental purchase decision making for family refrigerators and power generators.

Table 4: Regression Results for Children's Coalition Strategies and Parental Purchase Decision Making for Family Refrigerators and Power Generators. (see page 54)

6. Discussions

Table 4 shows the regression results for coalition strategies of children and parental purchase decision making for family refrigerators and power generators. The regression results showed that the estimated coefficient of the regression parameter has both negative and positive signs and thus conform to our a-priori expectation. The coefficient of determination R-square of 0.895 implied that 89.5 percent of the sample variation in the dependent variable, parental purchase decision making for family products (PPDFP) (refrigerators and power generators) is explained or caused by the explanatory variable while 10.5 percent is unexplained. This remaining 10.5 percent could be caused by other factors or variables not built into the model. The very high value of R-square is an indication of a good relationship between the dependent variable, parental purchase decision making for family products (PPDFP) and the independent variable, children's coalition strategies, mirrored by support of siblings, support of family friends, support of teachers, support of pastors and support of elders (SS, SFF, ST, SP & SE). The value of the adjusted R² is 0.894. This shows that the regression line which captures 89.4 percent of the total variation in parental purchase decision making for refrigerators and power generator (PPDFP) is caused by variation in the explanatory variable specified in the model with 10.6 percent accounting for the error term. The f-statistic was also used to test the overall significance of the model. The f-value of 649.557 is an indication that the model is statistically significant at 5 percent level of significance at degree of freedom df₁ = 5 and df₂ = 380. Finally, the test of autocorrelation using Durbin Watson (DW) test showed that the DW value of 0.862 falls within the inconclusive region of DW partition curve. So, it can be clearly said that there is a degree of autocorrelation in existence.

With reference to table 4, the f-statistic value was 649.557 (p = .000). This implies that the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative accepted, meaning coalition strategies of children have a significant effect on parental purchase decision making for family refrigerators and power generators.

7. Conclusion and Recommendation

Based on the regression results the conclusion of this study was that children's coalition strategies have a significant effect on parental purchase decision making for family refrigerators and power generators. This conclusion is in agreement with the finding from the study carried out by Thomson, Laing and McKee (2007) that coalitions either among siblings or among children and parents add strength to children's purchase requests in families. It is also in agreement with the findings from the study carried out by Lee and Collins (2000) which among others indicated that gender-mix coalitions exist within families in the purchase decision making process, to give more weight to a specific gender in a particular case. It is therefore recommended that manufacturers and marketers of family products should constantly study parents-children relationships and develop strategies for enhancing family relationships in areas related to family purchase decision making for family products.

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Appendices

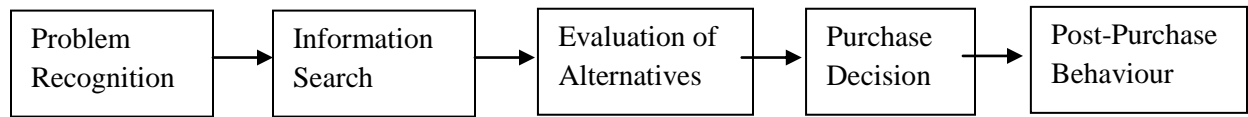


Figure 1: Buyer Decision Process

Source: Nwokoye, N.G. (2000).



Figure 2: Images of Children’s Coalition

Source: i. www.theartechurch.com

ii. www.livescience.com: (Retrieved on 18th August, 2016)

The images depict children’s coalition. “A coalition is an alliance (combination of forces), especially a temporary one, of people, factions, parties or nations involved in the pursuit of a common goal. Children use coalition strategies to get their purchase requests approved by parents” (Thomson, Laing and Mckee, 2007).

Table 1: Population of Parents in the Study Area

Local Government Area (LGA) Population	
Umuahia North L.G.A	71, 303
Umuahia South L.G.A	44, 631
Total	115, 934

Source: Adapted from National Population Commission (2006).

Table 2: Children's Coalition Strategies (Item by Item) and Parental Purchase Decision Making for Family Refrigerators and Power Generators for Items 1-5

S/ N	Item	GE	CE	ME	LE	SE	Total	Mean Score
1.	A child may seek the support of siblings to influence his parents to purchase refrigerators and power generators for the family and the request may be granted.	29 145	53 212	69 207	104 208	131 131	386 903	2.340
2.	Through the support of family friends, a child's request for the purchase of refrigerators and power generators for the family may be granted by the parents faster.	33 165	57 228	63 189	101 202	132 132	386 916	2.373
3.	When a child's teachers join the child to talk to the parents about the purchase of refrigerators and power generators for the family, the request may be granted faster.	27 135	53 212	69 207	110 220	127 127	386 901	2.334
4.	Through the support of the pastors of the church the family attends, the parents may easily grant the child's request for purchasing refrigerators and power generators for the family.	57 285	61 244	73 219	81 162	114 114	386 1024	2.652
5.	Elders within or outside the family may easily support the child to	61 305	67 268	77 231	83 166	98 98	386 1068	2.767

get his request of purchasing refrigerators and power generators for the family granted by the parents.

Source: Field Survey (2016)

Table 3: Children's Coalition Strategies (En bloc) and Parental Purchase Decision Making for Family Refrigerators and Power Generators for Item 6

S/N	Item	GE	CE	ME	LE	SE	Total	Mean Score
	Coalition strategies of children	36	69	75	99	107	386	2.554
	make parents to purchase refrigerators and power generators for the family.	180	276	225	198	107	986	

Source: Field Survey (2016)

Table 4: Regression Results for Children's Coalition Strategies and Parental Purchase Decision Making for Family Refrigerators and Power Generators

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.762	.193		-3.941	.000
	SS	1.835	.105	2.254	17.511	.000
	SFF	-.626	.029	-.762	-21.774	.000
	ST	.729	.022	.886	33.686	.000
	SP	-1.666	.102	-2.192	-16.299	.000
	SE	.733	.026	.869	27.840	.000

Dependent Variable: PPDR

R	=	.946
R-Square	=	.895
Adjusted R-Square	=	.894
SEE	=	.42648
F – Statistic (df1=5 & df2=380)	=	649.557
Durbin Watson Statistic	=	.862

Source: Researcher's Estimation (2016)