Materialism: The Role Of Demographics And Media On The Increasing Materialistic Behaviour Of Children

Materialism means the extent to which an individual manages to maintain their identity with physical possessions. It is the love and possessiveness about the materialistic or worldly things. This paper aims to review the literature written in past to investigate the role of demographics and media on the increasing materialistic behaviour of children.

The paper helps to find out significant impact of income on this ever increasing materialism among young children i.e. Gen Z. Generation Z is the name given to all the human beings born from 1995 to 2012. The scope of this study is limited to children up to the age of 15 years.

The findings of the study reveal the consequences of materialism on psychological development and the resultant behavioural traits of young children. After analysing the sub traits of materialism, it was evident that income and educational qualification does play an important role in developing materialistic approach in Gen Z.

Keywords: Materialism, Children, Gen Z

Introduction

Materialism is be defined by the Cambridge International Dictionary of English as “The belief that having money and possessions is the most important thing in life”

Oxford dictionary defines it as “A tendency to consider material possessions and physical comfort as more important than spiritual values”. As seen from the above definitions, in brief terms materialism means the extent to which an individual manages to maintain their identity with physical possessions. Marketers are constantly targeting children for the pursuit of their objectives through advertisements on television, print media and social media tools. Various studies have identified that the level of materialism among children is increasing with time. A survey conducted in UK revealed that children have become more materialistic these days than to their previous generations (GfK Social Research, 2007). Similarly, in US the perception of students about living meaningful life as an indication of materialism, is found different in 1967 and 1997 (Kortan, 1999). This effect of materialism is also seen in India. According to a study conducted in India, the materialistic approach seen in younger generation is far more than what was seen in the older generations (Gupta 2011).

Factors affecting materialistic approach in Gen Z

Media

Print contributes a significant portion to the total advertising revenue, accounting for almost 41.2 per cent, whereas TV contributes 38.2 per cent, and digital contributes 11 per cent of the total revenue. Outdoor, Radio and Cinema make up the balance 10 per cent.

India’s digital advertisement market is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 33.5 per cent to cross the Rs 25,500 crore (US$ 3.8 billion) mark by 2020.*

The Internet's share in total advertising revenue is anticipated to grow twofold from eight per cent in 2013 to 16 per cent in 2018. Online advertising, which was estimated at Rs 2,900 crore (US$ 435 million) in 2013, could jump threefold to Rs 10,000 crore (US$ 1.5 billion) in five years, increasing at a compound annual rate of 28 per cent.

One of the most important factors affecting the rise of materialism or possessiveness towards belongings is rise in consumer centric advertisements. When it comes to advertisements, Television rules out all other forms especially in case of children, since it is easy to believe something which is seen rather than heard or read. Also, it hardly requires any level of education amongst the target audience.

In modern era internet is playing an important role in adolescent consumerism. It acts as one of the main sources of information for all age groups. There are advertisements on YouTube, mobile games and children learning applications which arouse the desire to possess worldly things or to satiate their needs from various luxurious services which can augment their status in the society.

Income

Income plays a significant role in affecting the buying patterns and the resulting materialistic behaviour of the children. The more the family income, the more are the chances of being attached to worldly things and less of emotional attachment. Materialism among the younger generation is important and interesting aspect of research because of the enormous purchasing power of the youngsters and their influences in family purchase decisions (John, 1999).

Education

The educational qualification of parents is yet another factor developing a materialistic approach among young children. Highly educated parents may develop a culture of social service and help the kids develop an emotional quotient but uneducated parents may not give time to such characteristics of security and social welfare. Also, there is a study conducted by Dogan and Torlak (2014), who highlighted that participants with lower levels of education have higher tendencies to see money as a cause of worry and security for an indefinite future as compared to those with higher levels of education. For this, they argued that higher level of education provides better career options and low probability of being unemployed in various economic conditions. Study carried by Abramson and Inglehart (1994) also results that individuals with higher education are less likely to be materialistic that those with lower level.

Gender

In many cases it is seen that gender also contributes to materialistic behaviour in individuals. Few of such studies are carried by Eastman et al. (1997), Browne and Kaldenberg (1997) and Kamineni (2005) which highlights that men are more materialistic than women. Study carried on primary to secondary school children by Flouri, 2004 and Goldberg et al., 2003 reflected that boys are more materialistic than girls. This could be a result to the male dominant culture in the

society which is developed from a very young age teaching them to earn money and money's worth in exchange of every activity they do.

Age

Since, children at a young age are very innocent and driven by all the forces around them such as information provided by media, peer pressure, imitating older siblings and many more, it is difficult to control their minds from developing a materialistic approach. Once they grow up and attain the age of maturity, the desire for worldly things may reduce up to an extent with increasing responsibility and rising emotional quotient.

Review of literature

Many researchers have given significant contribution in defining materialism. Chaplin and John (2007) have stated materialism as a significant determinant for pleasure and accomplishment in one's life. He states that the new success mantra which is inculcated in young minds from a very delicate age is one of the reasons giving rise to materialism.

Ward and Walkman (1971) have defined materialism as, "an orientation which views material goods and money as important for personal happiness and social progress." Most of the purchase decisions for young children are impulsive in the nature and majorly to maintain a status in their peers.

A noteworthy attempt has also been carried by Belk (1984), who defined materialism as a bundle of personality traits: possessiveness, jealousy, stinginess. Where possessiveness is the fear of losing one's possessions, jealousy is the unhappiness on someone else's achievements and stinginess is the unwillingness of sharing one's possessions. These traits are so often seen and so powerfully dominating the young generation that many of them turn to wrong deeds and actions due to jealousy and possessiveness.

Vandana (2014) has very rightly concluded that, due to enhanced role of children in family purchase decisions, marketers are making children sufferers of materialistic world. This materialism is leading to excessive consumption and impulsive purchase by children. To deal with these issues, sufficient attention needs to be given by parents to divert child's attention from materialistic to the real world. Thus, the role of guidance provided by parents has been found very significant in mitigating the effect of materialism among children.

Research methodology

The objective of the study

- Primary Objective: The purpose of this paper is to bring in light that does income have a significant impact on the increasing materialistic approach among young generation i.e. Gen Z.
- Secondary Objective: The research paper would also throw light on the problems faced by the parents with the ever increasing materialism in their children and the suggestions to overcome this behavioural change.

Source of Data

- Primary Source: Survey document or questionnaire was forwarded to the parents commenting on the behavioural pattern of Gen Z.
- Secondary Source: Books, magazine and websites.

Research Design

This is an Exploratory Research

Sampling Plan

This research is carried on with Convenient Sampling technique.

Limitations of the research

This research is limited to the city of Mumbai due to place limitation.

Further the data is collected from only 117 respondents due to time limitation.

Respondents may be biased towards personal details.

Sample Size

Total number of samples collected was 120 where 3 samples were incomplete and so not removed. A sample size of 117 respondents is taken into consideration for research purpose.

Data Analysis

Q1. Age?

- The findings state the out of the 117 respondents, around 87 falls in the age group of 25-40 and others belong to the different age groups.

Q2. Educational qualification?

- Out of all the respondents around 30.8% respondents fall in the category of post graduates and same in professional qualification. This shows that, Results that will be seen will be around 60% of higher educational class and 40% of the ones with basic education.

Q3. Annual family income?

- Since all most all the category of incomes are evenly distributed, the results will be clearly seen for assessing the results of impact of income on materialism.

Q4. Do you have children up to the age of 15 at home?

- Out of all the 117 respondents, 69 respondents have young children at home and 48 do not have young children at home.

Q5. How many quality hours do you spend with children at home?

- The number of hours spent at home with kids is inversely proportional to the educational qualifications and the annual income.
- But, Around 34% parents spend 5 hours and above with their children which is a sign that 66% parents approximately are not able to give quality time to their kids.

Q6. What type of media do you usually see children following?

- Out of all the responses, 68% respondents feel that Television is the major driver in behavioural change among young kids whereas, 24.78% says online advertisements also plays some role in the same.

Q7. How often do you buy gifts for them?

- 13.2% and 18.4% respondents buy gifts for the children very often without having a reason to buy. Whereas, around 23.7% and 21.1% bring once in three months and once in a year.

Q8. How important are the following gifts to the kids in your opinion?

- As seen from the above Bar chart, maximum respondents feel that gifts like Tab, Ipad, mobile phones, perfumes are not required at all. But still there are a few respondents who have replied in the favour of such gifts by saying that they are required at times or necessity.

Q9. How often do you take them out?

- 35.9% Respondents go out once in a week atleast followed by 12.8% parents go out almost every day.

Q10. Choice of place?

- Choice of place is in most of the cases decided by both the parents and the kids as seen in the data collected.

Q11. Which of the following traits are seen in the Gen Z children in your opinion?

- More than 90% respondents have either agreed or been neutral on the traits like being practical, social, carefree and audacious. This shows that these are the major behavioural traits seen in Gen Z.

Q12. Do you think the traits seen in Gen Z children are due to materialistic approach?

- Out of all the respondents, 90 respondents are of the opinion that the traits seen in Gen Z are due to developing materialistic approach in them.

Findings

1. Educational qualifications and Annual incomes are inversely proportional to the number of hours parents are spending time with their children.
2. In turn, the number of hours spent with each other by parent and child is the major factor affecting the gifting patterns and ultimately resulting in developing the traits seen above.
3. Audio Visual Media i.e. Television is one of the most dominating factor behind the behaviour and attitude of Gen Z. This is followed by online advertisements.
4. It is seen that most of the parents are of the opinion that Ipad, Tab, Mobile phones are not required at all for children below the age of 15, still few of them have supported the above gifts.
5. With the busy schedule of working parents, they are unable to spend more than 2 to 5 hours with the kids but still on the contrary a very high percentage of these go out atleast once every week.
6. Out of 117 responses, more than 75% parents feel that the traits like being audacious, practical, not open to religion, social and loving themselves are the results of this ever increasing materialistic approach in them.

Conclusion

As per the above findings, it can be concluded that

- Annual family income does play a major role in increasing materialism in Gen Z. But this is seen in two forms: High income groups have a tendency to fulfil the needs of the children by gifting them often and that results into developing a love for worldly attachments in them. Whereas, also the incomes being below Rs. 3,00,000; most of the desires in the kids remain unfulfilled which in turn also makes them money minded.
- Other than income there are other drivers too to this force such as media, educational qualification and the working hours, time spent by the parents and kids, authority given by the parents to kids for decision of gifts or places to go out for and many more.

Suggestions and recommendations

Materialism is rising at a high speed because of the increasing role of of children in family purchase decisions. The marketers know that children easily get fascinated towards unrealistic belongings endorsed by their promotional offers and persuade their parents to purchase those belongings. However, the unfulfilled requests of children for materialistic things make them dissatisfied and unhappy, which later on cause conflicting situation in family.

In order to avoid or reduce this materialistic approach, parents need to give time and attention towards development of child. Parental regulation and care have been found very significant in mitigating the effect of materialism among children.

If neglected, the rise in materialistic approach will inculcate some serious traits among young children towards their belongings such as possessiveness, stinginess, non generosity, envy and jealousy.