Children’s Influence in Family Decision Making
An updated and cross-national extension

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Abstract

This paper investigates the ways the determinants influence the children's role in the family purchasing decision making.

Given the changes on both society and economic, the determinants for children's influence in recent family decision making have been changing. In this paper, the influences of household's socio-economic status, children's characteristics and parental style are discussed. The findings from United States and China are compared and discussed in order to get a better understanding of children's influence in family decision making in different cultures.
Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction ........................................................................................................... 4
  1.1 Managerial relevance ................................................................................................. 4
  1.2 Academic relevance .................................................................................................... 5
  1.3 Problem statement ...................................................................................................... 5
  1.4 Conceptual Framework ............................................................................................. 6
    1.4.1 Graphical representation .................................................................................. 6
    1.4.2 Children’s influence in family decision: ......................................................... 6
    1.4.3 Culture differences ............................................................................................ 7
  1.5 Thesis structure .......................................................................................................... 7

Chapter 2: The effect of household socio-economics status ................................................. 7
  2.1 Definitions .................................................................................................................... 7
  2.2 Finding in United States families .............................................................................. 8
    2.2.1 Household income .............................................................................................. 8
    2.2.2 Parents’ educational level and occupation ....................................................... 8
  2.3 Findings in Chinese families ....................................................................................... 9
    2.3.1 Household’s income .......................................................................................... 9
    2.3.2 Parents’ Education and occupations .................................................................. 9
  2.4 Discussions .................................................................................................................. 10

Chapter 3: The effect of children characteristics ................................................................. 10
  3.1 Definitions .................................................................................................................... 10
  3.2 Findings in United States families ............................................................................ 11
    3.2.1 Age of children .................................................................................................. 11
    3.2.2 Children’s Gender ............................................................................................. 11
  3.3 Findings in Chinese families ....................................................................................... 11
    3.3.1 Age of children .................................................................................................. 11
    3.3.2 Children’s gender .............................................................................................. 12
  3.4 Discussion .................................................................................................................... 12

Chapter 4: The effects of parental style and power .............................................................. 13
  4.1 Definitions .................................................................................................................... 13
  4.2 Findings in US families ............................................................................................. 13
  4.3 Findings in Chinese families ....................................................................................... 14
  4.4 Discussion .................................................................................................................... 15

Chapter 5: Conclusion .......................................................................................................... 16
  5.1 Conclusion .................................................................................................................... 16
  5.2 Limitations and suggestions for further research ...................................................... 17
  5.3 Managerial implication ............................................................................................... 18

References .......................................................................................................................... 18
Chapter 1: Introduction

Family decision making has been largely confined to spouses, mainly focusing on investigating the decision making between couples. However, children as the users and influencers are playing continuously important role in family decisions and attract the attention of both scholars and marketers. In 2004, it was estimated that more than $1 billion were spent on media advertising to children. The advertising through youth-oriented marketing channels included television advertising, in-school marketing, internet, and kid clubs in the United States (Story and French, 2004).

Previous researches have expressed that the children constitute a major consumer market with direct purchasing power for snacks and sweets, and indirect purchase influence while family purchasing expensive durable or luxury goods. Therefore this thesis will provide an overview of most important factors that affect children’s influence in the decision process.

Contrast to the continuous growth in United States, in the last three decades, the economy grows rapidly in China. According to World Bank dataset, the GDP in China increase at an average growth rate of 9% since 1980 while the GNI in 2008 was 24 times more than that in 1980. During this time, children’s roles become more important in family consumer decisions. According to Guan (2003) and McNeal and Yeh (2003), in 85% of urban families in china, children’s average consumption is equal to one third or more of the family’s income and influence 68.7% of parents’ regular purchases, as well as 23.3% of family durable goods purchases. At the same time, China with its Confucian traditions, collectivist nature and the one-child policy for family planning, suggest the potential for meaningful differences in family decision-making process from the west countries. More specifically, in this paper I will analysis the factors within the household such as the age of children, the socio-economic status and the patterns of communication. By comparing the differences of Chinese and American on the factors determining children’s influence, we hope to get more insights into the children’s role in family decision making.

1.1 Managerial relevance

The children as active initiators, information seekers, and buyers, they influence purchases made by the parents. Both marketing expert and managers have noticed the important role of children in the family purchase decision (Beatty and Talpade, 1994; Foxman et al., 1989a, b). Especially for China, as a large potential market with huge population and rapid economy growth, the children’s role has become extremely important due to the population control policy. For companies, to survive and explore the potential market, it is necessary to have a clear idea of factors and how these factors affect the children’s influence in the family decision making.

The purpose of this paper is to explore how the factors within the family affect the children’s influence given the sustainable economy and social growth. The difference
in household’s socio-economic status, the age and gender of children, as well as the parental style have different effect on the children’s influence of the family decision making. From a managerial point of view it is important to figure out which factors and how do they affect the children’s influence in the family and how to explore the children’s influence to increase their sales of products or services.

1.2 Academic relevance

Several studies have been published on the children’s influence in family decision making through categories of products, family’s Sex Role Orientation, family structure and socializing agents for children such as family, peers, and media (Atkin 1978; Foxman, et al. 1989; Ahuja and Stinson 1993, Rose at al 1998). However, the theories and studies on children’s influence that published in 1990s and before may not be reliable for the current family decision making. The shifts from “traditional” families to the “new” family environment lead the results from previous cannot apply in the current market (Belch and Willis, 2002). In the “new” family, children make decision at earlier ages and take on more important roles and greater responsibilities in family purchases (Flurry, 2007). Given the changes on both society and economic, it is reasonable to believe there is a need to examine the determinants for children’s influence in recent family decision making. Since the findings from United States have limitations to apply to elsewhere in the world, I choose China as an example of oriental culture. By comparing with the American families, a better understanding of children’s influence in world-wide is expected to obtain.

1.3 Problem statement

The previous studies on the family structures, sex role orientation, categories of products may not apply given the change in economy and society. So there is a need to investigate the factors in current economic and social circumstance affecting the children’s influence in family purchasing decision. To avoid the limitation due to only United States families, the urban Chinese families are introduced to get a clear picture of the relations between variables.

Thus, the main research problem will therefore be:

What and how do the factors within the household affect the children’s influence in family purchasing decisions?

Research questions are:

Can household’s socio-economic status affect the children’s influence in the family decision making?

What are the effects of the age and gender of children in the process of family
decision making?

What is the relationship between parental styles and children’s influence in decision making?

How does the culture and traditions affect these relationships?

1.4 Conceptual Framework

In this paper, the factors that affect children’s influence in family decision making would be explained and compared in different culture environments. The effects of household’s socio-economic status, children’s characteristics and parental style would be analyzed in the following chapters.

1.4.1 Graphical representation

1.4.2 Children’s influence in family decision:

The children as active initiators, information seekers, and buyers, are involved in the family decision making processes. As defined in Szybillo and Sosanie (1977), the family decision has three stages: problem recognition, search for information and final selection. Since the children recently are highly exposed in the mass information and have significant effect on problem recognition (Belch et al, 1985; Belch et al 2002), in this paper, the problem recognition and search for information would be combined
together, considering as the initial stage. The final selection will be considered as the decision stage, making the final decision on purchase or not.

1.4.3 Culture differences

Culture is expected to affect the factors stated above differently in different regions. Hence, the children’s influence in family decision making varies in different culture circumstances. The individualist culture is much more loosely tied to the people to their social networks. The individuals are expected to fulfill their own interests, even if that would diminish the benefit of group. In this paper, United States is selected as an example of individualism and egalitarian culture. Thus, American children may have more conflict with their parents during the process of decision making and affect the final decision. In contrast, Chinese culture featured by its collective Confucian traditions and concepts, represent an interdependent-based culture. The collective culture emphasizes the tie between the individual and the social network. The individuals are expected to diminish their own interest to fulfill the group interest (Kitayama, 2000). Thus, Chinese children may scarify their own interest to follow the major family members’ decisions. On one hand, according to the Confucian culture, the parents’ authority and control over their children are absolute with no doubt. On the other hand, the future-oriented contents in Confucian culture forms the society exhibiting a pragmatic future-oriented perspective and extremely treasure the children. Consequently, the Chinese parents always consider their children as center of families.

1.5 Thesis structure

After this introduction, the factors and their effect will be discussed in the following chapters.

The second chapter will discuss the household’s socio-economic status and its effect on children’s roles in family decision making in United States and China. The effect of children’s characteristics such as age effect and gender effect in different cultures will be discussed in Chapter 3. Then, in Chapter 4, the parental style and its effects on the children’s influence in family decision making will be discussed in Chapter 5.

The last chapter will contain the conclusions from the study followed by suggestions for further research and managerial implications.

Chapter 2: The effect of household socio-economic status

2.1 Definitions

The household’s socio-economic status is defined as family’s economic and social position relative to others, based on income, education, and occupation. In this paper
the household’s socio-economic status refers to the household income and parents’ education levels and occupations.

Blood and Wolfe (1960) defined resources as “anything that one partner may make available to the other, helping the latter to satisfy his needs or attain his goals”. Love, service, goods, money, information and status are all social resources (Foa, 1993). The resources one have is directly positive related to the power possessed by the individual and the influence he/she may exert in decision making. Hence, the children’s influence is positively affected by the resources they can access. The children with more resources are likely to have more confidence and willing to exert more influence in the family decision making process. The household’s socio-economic status represents the resources one household would have in the society. The families with high socio-economic status are capable to access to more resources. Thus, the resources that children can access are closely related with the family resources and family socio-economic status.

2.2 Finding in United States families

2.2.1 Household income

Earlier studies (Atkin, 1978; Moschis and Mitchell, 1986; Nelson, 1978) found that the children who were members of middle class and higher income families had more influence in purchase decision than children in lower income, lower social classes families. Because the higher income families have more money to spend on fulfilling their children’s demand other than the lower income families.

From the children’s aspect, the children from higher income families may have more personal income from their parents than the children from lower income families. As stated by Flurry (2007), the income of children can affect the family decision making at some products such as food, clothing and toys. On the other hand, the children with higher personal income can significantly affect purchasing decision at the initiation stage and family purchasing decisions on some family using products, such as stereos and tourism (Beatty and Talpade, 1994; Wang et al 2004).

2.2.2 Parents’ educational level and occupation

The educational levels have a positive relation with the occupation and the income. From parents’ aspect, higher the parent’s educational attainment and occupational status, the more income one family is expected to have. With an unstinted financial situation, the parents are able to spend more money on the children and consider the children’s requirements. On the other hand, the parents with higher educational level show more egalitarian in the family, featuring by more liberal in their attitude towards family decision making, and more egalitarian tend to share responsibilities and decisions in the household (Lee and Beatty 2002). Hence, rather than one family
member, father in most cases, makes all the decisions, in an egalitarian family, the children are allowed to have more influence in the family decision making than that with lower educational levels and less income occupation parents. Meanwhile, in the decision making process, the subjective knowledge is more relevant and reliable than objective knowledge since it reflects confidence or perceived ability. (Brucks, 1985). A marginally significant effect from knowledge was reported in Foxman et al. (1989).

From the children’s aspects, the children’s influence in the family decision making is positively related to the children’s perceived knowledge on the product. The greater knowledge regarding the product leads the greater confidence and attempts to influence the final decision. The children from higher income, higher educated and families are expected to have greater achievement in United States (Davis 2005). They are provided and encouraged to access to the better education and more knowledge regarding the products and popular consumption habits. Hence, these children with high educational level parents and occupations will exert more influence in the family decision making.

However, in contrast to past research, no effects were found for children’s socio-economic status. In recent researches (Flurry 2006; Wang et al.2007) both household income and parents’ education were not significantly affecting the influence of children in family decision making. The insignificant effects suggest that in most American families the influences of children in family decision making are indifferent.

2.3 Findings in Chinese families

2.3.1 Household’s income

The rapid growing economy in China shifts the household in cities out of poverty in a short time. Only in 10 years from 1999 to 2006, the household income folded 2.5 times (China Statistical Yearbook 2007). According to McNeal and Ji (1996), the children of parents with higher-income occupations have more influence in the selection of some types of stores to purchasing. McNeal and Yeh’s research in 2003 again proof the direct relationship between children’s resources and consumption. Children’s spending increases as children’s personal income increases, which is positive relative with the household income increase (Ying 2003). The rapid increase on children’s personal income and spending money can be explained as the Chinese parents try to compensate their children by providing more material goods, since most women in Chinese family involve in full-time jobs and have less time to spend at home with their children (Bose and Kahana (1997); McNeal and Yeh(2003)).

2.3.2 Parents’ Education and occupations

Similar results were obtained in China as McNeal and Ji (1996) stated the children of
parents with higher-income occupations have more influence in the selection of some types of stores to purchasing. In addition, as stated by Tang and Parish (2000) and Bian (2002) that the disparity in occupational mobility, access to resources, and life opportunities grows with the expending economy in urban China, the parents prepared their children to prestigious, high-income jobs (Fong 2004). As a result, the availability of family resources should have its impact on children's influence in family decision making. The universal education and wild-spread of family egalitarian as well as the common usage of mass media and internet also contribute to the increasing importance of children’s influence in family and fix the gap caused by socio-economic status differences.

Similar to American families, Flurry and Veeck (2007) researched on urban Chinese families shows the same insignificant effect. The results indicate that the influences of children in family decision making are unrelated to the household’s socio-economic status in urban China.

2.4 Discussions

As the family income and educational levels of the parents increased, children were more likely to participate in the search for and decision to purchase family product. Parents with greater financial and educational resources may place greater importance on incorporating their children in the decision-making process for family product. However, the average income increases along the time, allowing the families have enough money to choose between products and spend on their children. when the household income and parents’ education are enough to afford the children’s spend and accept children’s opinions, the socio-economic status effect will diminish. The universal education and wild-spread of family egalitarian also diminish the effect of household’s socio-economic status on children’s influence in family decisions. Meanwhile, the common usage of mass media and internet also provides the children a less costly way to access to the product and knowledge on the popular consumption habits (Madden 2005)

Chapter 3: The effect of children characteristics

3.1 Definitions

Here in this paper, the children’s characteristics consist the age and gender of the children.

The age of children have a significant effect on the children’s influence of family decision making. As stated in Flurry (2007), the first born child have more influence than the other children in America, the same was proved by many studies such as McNeal and Yeh (1999) and Flurry (2009) in China. Under the one family one child policy of urban China, the influence of the children in the family decision making
increase rapidly with the increase of their ages.

The gender has effect on the children’s influence of family decision making. The gender effect is more significant in China given the preference of male child in China (Culter, 1993). However, as the concept of gender equity, the gender effect has diminished in both United States and China.

3.2 Findings in United States families

3.2.1 Age of children

In research on American families with children aged 9-11, the result shows a significant effect of children’s age (Flurry, 2007). The elder children have greater initiation and decision influence in the family. Among all children, the older children are more likely to voice their interest in and preferences for purchasing products for their own use.

In the individualism society, most adult children will leave the parents. Leaving family diminishes and eliminates the age effect on children’s influence in the family purchasing decision after they grow up.

3.2.2 Children’s Gender

Past research indicated that female children were more influential than were male children across all stage of decision making process (Aatkin, 1978; Moschis and Mitchell, 1986). With the changing of household size and egalitarian in the family, parents socialize their sons and daughters equally in terms of the amount of time spent with them, discipline and communication (Demo and Cox, 2000). Hence, the gender effects should be indifference on children’s influence in family decision making in United Stated given the egalitarian nature of US culture today.

3.3 Findings in Chinese families

3.3.1 Age of children

The same result as United States families in China was observed in Flurry and Veeck(2009). They studied 819 families located in urban China on variables such as children’s age, gender, family components and household income. The results suggest that the influence of children in china mainly attributed to the children’s age. As the children mature, they exert increasing influence in family decisions. Especially in the purchase of personal products, food for family, personal care products for the family and family entertainment, the older children have greater influence than younger children.
After launching the population control policy in China, since only one child is allowed in one family in urban China, the effect of the age was expected to be diminishing. However, the significant effect was found in urban Chinese families for increasing the age. The result indicates that the older children have greater influence than younger children in all decision aspects, including how much to spend, item selection, where and when to purchase and transportation mode. The same results was proved by Wang et al (2004) analyzing the influence of children in the vacation purchase.

In the collectivism culture, unlike western families, the young adult children would continue living with their parents at least until marriage. These young adult children play even more important role than their parents when purchasing a family product, since they are believed to have more accurate information about the product and popular consumption habits. Thus, the collectivism culture allows children increasing influence in family decision making as their age increase.

3.3.2 Children’s gender

The gender is expected to play a role in Chinese children, since the boys are still preferred in China, noting the gender discrimination is still present (Cutler, 1993). Unlike the egalitarian nature in American culture, historically, the male children in Chinese families have been well-documented (Croll 1993, Shao and Herbig 1994). They are encouraged to pursue an education and take greater proportion of their parents’ saving than the girls (McNeal and Yeh 1997). And given the preference on male children in Confucian tradition, the male children in Chinese families are expected to have more influence in decision making.

However, in study held by Wang et al (2006), they examined the gender effect on adolescent aged between 11 and 15 in both United States and China. There is no difference in perceived relative influence between males and females were observed either initial states or family product in both countries. A study by Flurry and Veeck (2009) on urban Chinese families also shows the same result.

3.4 Discussion

In both American families and urban Chinese families, the age of children is able to significantly affect the family decision making. The increasing important influence are positively related to the children’s age.

The preference for male children is not as obvious in the urban China, comparing with the rural and less developed families (Wong and Yu, 2002) diminishes the effect of gender different. The indifferent preference on gender leads the parents treat their children equally without discrimination. The female children hence are able to voice their interests and participate in the family decision making. Further, the economic development and better education may lead to more egalitarian attitude to the
As a consequence of gender equality in society, the parents are willing to treat the female children as important as the male children in the decision making. In addition, the “one family one child” policy has also led the parents to have more equal professional and educational aspirations for male and female children (Veeck, Flurry, and Jiang 2003). Therefore, the female children can access to much more resources both in the household and in the society. As the increasing important female children in the family, the gender discrimination in family decision making has eliminated.

In sum, children’s age have a positive relationship with their influence in the family purchasing decisions, especially in the initiations. As the family structure change and gender egalitarian in the modern society, the children’s genders have no significant effect on their influence in the family decision making.

Chapter 4: The effects of parental style and power

4.1 Definitions

McLeod and Chaffee (1972) developed a typology that characterizes parent-child communication structure. They classify families as having socio-oriented communication or concept-oriented communication. The socio-oriented communication emphasizes parental control. The concept-oriented communication encourages children to develop their own ideas and express their views more openly. Future, Four different types of communications are developed by Moschis et al (1986): “Laissez-faire,” “Protective,” “Pluralistic” and “Consensual” according to levels of two above-mentioned orientations. When both levels of socio- and concept- orientation are low, it is classified as “Laissez-faire” families. Yet the parent-child communication is lack in these families. When socio-orientation is high but concept-orientation is low, the families are characterized with a protective parental style. In the protective families, obedience and social harmony are stressed. Pluralistic families have high level of concept-orientation and low socio-orientation level, encouraging open communication and child’s independent thinking. Consensual families emphases on both concept-orientation and socio-orientation.

4.2 Findings in United States families

Family parental style is expected to affect children’s influence in family decision making through the power distribution in the family. Power is defined as the ability to influence other to do things they would not have done spontaneously (Blood and Wolfe, 1960). Children’s power in the family can affect their choice of influence strategy and their degree of influence.

According Moschis and Moore (1979) parents are the main source of influence on children. By applying different parental style, the parents can influence the power
distribution in the family and children’s influence strategies in the decision making process (Bao et al. 2007). Therefore, the parental style is an important factor affecting children’s influence in family purchasing decision. As Caruana and Vassallo(2003) stated, socio- and concept-orientations are two important parental styles that are likely to affect the perceived influence that children believe they hold. Further, four different types of communications are developed by Moschis et al (1986): “Laissez-faire,” “Protective,” “Pluralistic” and “Consensual” are classified according to levels of two above-mentioned orientations.

For pluralistic and lassie-faire parental styles, children are encouraged to express their idea and choose for themselves. Hence, children are expected to have making their own decisions. The children under pluralistic and lassie-faire parental styles would have more influence in the family decision making, especially in the information seeking and evaluation stage. For consensual and protective parental styles, the parents’ powers are emphasized. Under the consensual and protective parenting, the children are encouraged to make their own choice and decision, but their choices are highly correlated with parents’ preference and less effective in the decision stage. However, the children’s influences in the decision stage are similar in these four different types of parental styles (Flurry, 2007).

The American families tend to employ the pluralistic and lassie-faire styles of parenting and giving their children more power in the family given the egalitarian nature. And the individualism culture encourages the children to speak out their preference and argue for their own interests. An evidence is that the American children were reported tending to overstate their influence relative to their parent’s attributions. The conflicts between children and parents exist commonly in United States (Foxman, Tansuhaj and Ekstrom 1989).

However, although power received by children varies between the different parenting, the parents still keep most power in the family in their hands regardless the parental styles. When children and parents hold different views about consumption decision, parents can influence their children more than the influence made by children on parents. (Bao et al, 2007). Since the parents are more likely to change their children view and more influence the purchase decision, in the decision stage the children’s influences are not significantly different across different parenting style families.

4.3 Findings in Chinese families

In contrast to American families, Flurry (2009) study in Chinese families shows that the Chinese children often agree with their parents decisions. Although the one child policy has shifted the power and authority within families from older to younger generation (Yan 2003), children are taught to compromise their own wishes in consideration of parental needs and wants (Yau, 1993). The parents are still with the most power in the family and employ the consensual style in parenting their children.
and try to take a strict control on their children on purchase. Chan and McNeal (2003) reported that Chinese parents are mostly consensual with both high scores on socio-and concept-orientations. The Chinese parents have strict control over their children on purchase but leave the freedom to choose of brands. Meanwhile, the Chinese culture also has a modesty bias at work for the Chinese adolescents more so than the US teens, which future reduce the influence the children’s influence in Chinese families (Chan and Rossiter, 1998).

As Bond et al (1987) explained, the Chinese culture has a dynamic Confucian dimension. This culture indicates a distinctly future-oriented mentality such as persistence, hard work, thrift, shame, and regard for relationships. Such future-oriented mentality encourages Chinese parents to sacrifice their present enjoyment for the future fame brought by the success of their children. This change results that the Chinese parents generous on the education product but strictly constraint their children spending on entertainment. According to three national surveys, Chinese families put their children’s needs at the top of their list of spending priorities (Scarry, 1996) and nearly half of a family’s income is spent on its child (Shao and Herbig, 1994). Consequently, children’s power and influence in the family rapid increase with the parents increasingly treat their children in a more democratically and interactive way. For example, China Youth and Children Research Center found that 66% of children believe that they play a part in most decision in the household (Sun, 2003). Another study (Chan and McNeal, 2006) reported the Chinese children are regularly exposed to new product information via word-of-mouth, internet, television, movies, magazines and the point of purchase. With children are emerging as a source of information in the family, they began to exert more influence in the family decision making.

4.4 Discussion

From the power distribution aspect, power is the ability to influence others to do things they would not have done spontaneously (Blood and Wolfe, 1960). In family decision making process, the parents distribute the power within the family. When the children’s power is high, the children’s relative influence will be high. In the pluralistic and lassie-faire families, the children are assigned more power in the searching and evaluating stage. Whereas in the consensual and protective parenting, the parents have more power and tend to control, gives their children less opportunity in the initiation stage. However, the children cannot significantly influence the decision stage regardless of the parental styles. The less-controlled parental styles can only significantly increase the children’s influence the family purchase decision on the initial stage such as collecting information and evaluating brands, but not the outcome decision. Thus, the parental styles affect children’s influence in family decision making significant in the initiation stage, such as collecting information, evaluation between brands, and initial use.
The collective culture has a negative effect on the children's effect in family decision making due to emphasizing the family interest and parents' power and control over their children. Meanwhile, the dynamic Confucian culture with a future-oriented mentality increases the importance of children in the family and pushes the parenting to the styles allowing more interaction and democracy, which increases the children's influence in the family decision making.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

In the last chapter, the conclusion, limitations, suggestions for further research and managerial implication will be given. The first section will deal with the conclusions that can be drawn from the literature study. Section two will discuss the limitations of this study and will give suggestions for further research. And the final section will give the managerial implication from the results of this study.

5.1 Conclusion

The research question has been: What and how do the factors within the household affect the children's influence in family purchasing decisions?

Three variables (household's socio-economic status, children's characters, and parenting style and power) have been identified and analyzed in the paper. By comparing the American and Asian culture differences on these factors, the potential difference in children's influence in family decision are discovered. The conclusions are as follows.

The household's socio-economic status has a positive relationship with the children's influence in the families. The higher income and education not only allowing parents to spent more and be democracy to their children, but also provides children to more resource and confidence to exert their influence. Thus, higher socio-economic status improved the children's influence in the family decision making during the early economic grow and social development stage. As the sustainable development, household no longer struggling to survive and the family income and parents' education are enough to afford the children's spend and accept children's opinions, the socio-economic status effect will diminishing in the world wide.

The children's age have a significant positive effect on the children's influence in family purchase decision, especially in the Chinese families, the age can be considered to make the major contribution to the relationship between children's characteristics and their influence in family purchase decisions. Meanwhile, the gender differences are diminishing during the economy and social development. As the family structure change and gender egalitarian in the modern society, there is no significant effect of gender of children on the influence in family decision making even
in China which has a historical tradition with preference on male children.

The parental style and parents' power still affect children's influence and their strategies to influence the family purchase decisions. The collective culture that emphasizes the family interest and parents' control over their children has a negative effect on the children's effect in family decision making. In contrast, the pluralistic and lassie-faire styles of parenting allow more power to children; hence the children's influences in these types of families are relatively high. Owing to the major power is still held by the parents in the family, the children cannot significantly influence the family decision in the decision stage regardless the parental style differences. The parental styles can only significantly influence the family purchase decision on the initial stage such as collecting information and evaluating brands, but not the final outcome decision. However, the dynamic Confucian culture emphasizing the importance of children in the family and pushes the parenting to the styles allowing more interaction and democracy, which increases the children's influence in the family decision making.

5.2 Limitations and suggestions for further research

In this paper, American families and Chinese families are selected to represent the western developed countries and Asian developing countries. But only urban Chinese families are analyzed, left almost two thirds of Chinese population excluded to the study. On one hand, a comparison to the children from rural areas might reveal very different patterns and characters in children’s purchase influence. The large income gap between urban and rural areas in China and difference in birth policy make children’s influence in family decision making quite different. In addition, the stronger traditional preference on male children in rural area can also change the result on gender effect (Fram, Le, and Reid 2004). On the other hand, United States and China cannot represent the world hence the findings from totally apply to the other countries all around the world. The cultures, traditions, values and concepts vary a lot even within the country, besides the counties with different geographic and demographic characteristics.

For future research it is suggested that the proposed explanation for the findings on the effects with samples including the Chinese families in rural areas. Hence the urbanization should become a key factor affect the children's influence in family purchasing decisions. Also, to explore the general pattern of the children's influence in family purchasing decisions, more counties and larger samples should be selected in the study as comparisons and control groups.

Another limitation is that most of the analysis is based on the sample with children age under 15, and the households may not go through the decision stages stated in the paper (Davis, 1976; Corfman, 1990). Thus the studies should examine the children's influence in the family decision with a broader range of children’s age and other
research methods, such as interactive role-playing scenarios (Lee and Beatty, 2002),
game theory perspective (Gentry, Stoltman, and Coulson, 1990), or family focus
groups (Stoltman and Gentry, 1992).

5.3 Managerial implication

The findings of this study support the notion that children are a viable target markets,
not only for products for their own personal use, but also for products for entire family
use. Given that children are influential in the family purchase decision, the marketing
designed to target only traditional family will be less effective in covering all household.
The product design, advertising and promotions hence should increase and innovated
with more children-related components to attract more children through the mass
media and internet, even for the durable goods such as home furnishings, automobiles,
and electronics which are traditionally considered as family-orientate products.

Children’s influence in family decisions differs due to the children’s age, patterns of
parenting and the culture. The age and culture characters should be used in defining
the target market hence increase or decrease the children related components in the
product designs and advertising.

The socio-economic status effect on children’s influence was diminishing due to
absolute income increases and wide use of internet. The trend parents allowing more
power to their children also increases the children’s influence in family decision
making. Nowadays, the children are explored to the marketplace much earlier with
more resources than before. Thus, to develop the brand image and loyalty to the
children is increasing important to the managers. Marketing strategies should be set
to reach this segment, such as premiums, attractive packaging, and co-branding with
licensed characters.

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