Family Negotiation in the Supermarket - So Who Really Makes the Decisions?

Contributed by Emerald Insight
Tuesday, 01 April 2014

Shopping behaviour and food habits are closely related â€“ but only a limited number of studies have examined the behaviour and the strategies of children and parents during shopping.

In a new study to be published by global academic publisher, Emerald Group Publishing in its journal, Young Consumers, researchers have found that children constantly influence their parents purchasing decisions. The findings observe that children do this both directly and indirectly,Â by displaying various behaviours in the grocery store â€“ which raises the controversial question of just how do food brands ethically market to children at a time when childhood obesity is on the rise? In the article â€˜Strategies of Children and Parents during Shopping for Groceriesâ€™, researchers surveyed families on grocery shopping trips over a three month period, observing behaviour and interactions during each trip. They found that, as demographic and social structures within families are increasingly changing, the traditional power relation within the family is altering, leading to a significant change in family buying behaviour. As children are increasingly acting as initiators, idea generators and influencers â€“ they are deploying ever more sophisticated influencing strategies to get their own way. Interestingly, the research found that parents were more likely to deny childrenâ€™s requests when the product was aggressively advertised - even though these products proved highly popular among children. Of the requests that were granted, the majority were adapted by the parent to fit their own values and needs. Lead author of the study, Vanessa Haselhoff of the University of Applied Management Unna, Germany, comments: â€œIn todayâ€™s changing family situations in industrialized countries and an overload of offered products, family decision making needs to be analysed to enable us to market healthy food effectively.Â By learning about the joint decision making process, companies â€“ as well as public policy makers â€“ will be able to address this issue more successfullyâ€•.Â This paper forms p of an upcoming special issue of Young Consumers, with papers compiled from Child and Teen Consumption (CTC) Conference presentations.For more information please visit: www.emeraldgrouppublishing.comÂ