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Perceptions of Children's Influence on Purchase Decisions Empirical Investigation for the U.S. and Egyptian Families

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The purpose of this paper is to explore parents' perceptions of children's influence on purchase decisions based on selected demographic variables between a U.S. and Egyptian sample. Currently Egyptians are following trendy and modern shopping habits. The new shopping lifestyle has been reflected in the country by new modern retailers and the availability of well-known international brands. The upward trend to modernization has been recently crowned by the Egyptian January, 25th, 2011 facebook revolution. This market/political background is moving Egypt from fragmented unstructured market to concentrated structured market. This switch represented the backbone to compare Egyptian and U.S. children's perceptions influence on parents purchase decisions. The U.S. market has been selected as an icon for concentration and modernization. Hypotheses were validated through surveys in Egypt and the U.S. 46 valid responses represented the U.S. and 38 valid responses represented Egypt. The paper focuses on parents' perceptions of child's influence (aged 4-18) on purchase decisions. Products included in the study were durable and nondurable products. The paper examined child influence in fifteen different products in three product categories (non-durable, durable and child-related. Results indicate that there are differences between product type, age and parent's communication style. In terms of gender, there were differences between women but there were no differences between U.S. and Egyptian men when it came to perceived children's influence. On another note the results indicated that the magnitude of the effect differs within the same country in relation to parent gender.

Field of Research: Marketing

1. Introduction

There is literature scarcity within the context of comparing children's influence between the U.S. and Egypt. Once ignored, children have become an important consumer group. Advertising to this group is growing as companies spend millions on marketing. Marketers are interested in children because they spend on themselves and are thus a primary market; they develop brand loyalty and attitudes toward brands, thus the group

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is a viable future market that influences household decisions in a variety of areas (McNeal 1992). For example, according to Szybillo and Sosanie (1977) when choosing fast food restaurants, 82% of the decisions were considered as parent-child interaction or an entire family decision. In both the U.S. and Egypt the influence of children on purchase decisions is being felt by time-starved parents.

The purpose of this research is to explore parents' perceptions of children's influence on purchase decisions and determine if there are differences based on country (United States vs. Egypt), product type, age of the child, gender of the parent and communication style of the parent (concept vs. socio-orientation). To examine these topics a review of literature is provided detailing the influence of children on purchase decisions and parental communication styles. Based on the review, hypotheses are presented. Next the results of the study are shown. Finally we conclude with discussion and suggestions for the future. The paper defined consumer socialization then stated the hypotheses and the validation methodology. Results, recommendations and managerial implications were provided next.

2. Consumer Socialization

Socialization is the process of learning about and adjusting to one's environment (Ward 1974; Moschis & Churchill 1978a). A subset of socialization is consumer socialization, defined as the process by which people develop consumer-related skills, knowledge and attitudes (Moschis & Churchill 1978a). Lackman and Lanasa(1993) contend that increasing child influence is the result of higher consumer socialization of children, in part due to the socioeconomic changes that have occurred. Parents are the most important source for children to learn consumer-related skills (Moschis & Churchill 1978a).

Due to the socioeconomic and structural changes, reciprocal socialization is occurring, a phenomenon where children also influence parents just as parents influence children (Meyerhoff 2010). Thus children are increasingly becoming active participants in family purchase decisions (Martin & Bush 2000).

3. Children's Influence

When one person acts in such a way as to change the behavior of another person in some intended manner, influence has occurred (Cartwright 1959). Thus influence can be applied to purchase decisions when the child has in some way affected their parents' consumption behavior. According to McNeal (1992) children's purchasing power can be direct, money controlled by the child, or indirect, relating to parental purchases that the child initiates or influences. Perceived influence occurs when one family member believes another member has affected a purchase decision (Wang, Holloway et al. 2007). Several studies have found differences in parental influence from families of different countries.

4. Product Type

Children are expected to have more influence on the products that they use themselves because of the personal relevance (Foxman, Tansuhaj et al. 1989; Mangleburg 1990; Beatty and Talpade 1994; John 1999). Conversely, children are expected to have less influence in products that are more expensive because parents will want to make these decisions without consideration of the child's desires. Therefore children's influence will be less with durable products which tend to be more expensive (Belch, Belch et al. 1985; Isler, Popper et al. 1987; Swinyard and Sim 1987; Foxman, Tansuhaj et al. 1989; Mangleburg 1990; Martensen & Gronholdt 2008). This finding has been contradicted by findings that children are influential in many products that affect the family, even in the more expensive durable products (Jenkins 1979; Verma & Kapoor 2003; Bosman 2006). Based on the above discussion the following are presented:

H1 There will be differences in Parents' perceptions of children's influence based on product type (nondurable, durable, child-related) between the U.S. and Egyptian sample.

5. Age of Child

A child's age is the most commonly researched variable in research involving purchase decision influence (Mangleburg 1990). The influence that children have on parental purchase decisions appears to increase with age (Ward & Wackman 1972; Atkin 1978; Jenkins 1979; Moschis & Mitchell 1986; Swinyard & Sim 1987; Laczniak & Palan 2004).

While investigating cereal purchase behavior, Ward and Wackman's(1972) research found that parents yield more to older than younger children's requests for various products (food, child durables, toiletries). Atkin(1978) found that parents refuse younger children's requests more often than older children's requests. Nelson (1979) showed that younger children have less involvement than older children in choosing restaurants for family meals. Darley and Lim (1986) found that older children in general have more influence than younger children on family leisure activities (movies, family outings and participant sports). Finally, when it comes to influence in decision stages, Moschis and Mitchell (1986) found that older children have greater influence in all decision stages.

These findings are attributed to higher cognitive levels, greater experience as consumers and higher levels of development possessed by older children (Mangleburg 1990). As children get older, parents feel more confident in their child's decision-making abilities. Therefore it is expected that:

H2 The older the child the more influence the child will have in purchase decisions for all three product categories. This will hold true for both U.S. and Egyptian samples.

6. Country

The United States is often described as individualistic in orientation (Hofstede 1984; Triandis 1995). Consequently, Americans are said to focus primarily on individual traits and attributes and to view personal independence as an important value. In addition, Americans believe that individuals are defined primarily by their achievements, and believe that the individual is the causal agent, not his or her circumstance (Hofstede 1998).

The American value system has been influenced by the Judeo-Christian heritage with its emphasis on the Protestant work ethic (Sexty 1998), which focuses on the value of hard work and effort as well as a belief that those who succeed by means of hard work are morally good as well as successful. Core values underlying the Anglo-American culture are success, individualism, freedom, equality, competition and a strong work ethic (Valdés & Seoane 1995).

Egyptians are collectivist and value group membership and loyalty over individual orientations (Hofstede 1984). In Egypt 97% of the population are Egyptians. The major religion in Egypt is Muslim (90%). Family ties in Egypt are strong and family support is evident. Egyptian families dote on their children and children often take on adult duties at a young age. The number of children born to single parents is increasing in the United States. This trend is not evident in Egypt due to the emphasis on family structure. Egypt is a developing country and most children are more technologically savvy than their parents. Child consumer knowledge is also evident in other products such as sports and entertainment.

Although there have been many cross-cultural studies at the country level, there have not been many studies examining children's influence by country. The results of a few studies indicate that there are differences based on culture (Ogden & Ogden 1993).

In terms of gender, in the U.S. when families have two parents, both often work. The changes in gender-role expectations have also become blurred as men take on more traditional female roles such as cooking and child-care and women perform more traditional masculine roles such as money-management and work outside of the house. Traditionally Egypt has had specific gender roles. The husband is expected to provide financial support and the wife is responsible for most if not all the household work and childcare responsibilities (Aroian et al. 2009). Roles are changing as women become more active in the workforce. Because of the changes in the role expectations, the following is proposed:

H3 There will be no differences in the perception of children's influence based on parent's gender for all three product categories (nondurable, durable, child's personal use). This will hold true for both the U.S. and Egyptian samples.

7. Family Communication Styles

Parents are the primary influences on children (Moschis & Churchill 1978a). The communication occurring in families also impacts buying decisions (McNeal & Yeh 1998; Caruana &Vassallo 2003). Family communication patterns impact the degree of influence that children have on purchase decisions and how children behave as consumers (Moschis & Moore 1979a; Lackman & Lanasa 1993).

Family communication patterns are a set of norms governing the tradeoff between informational and relational objectives of communication (Ritchie & Fitzpatrick 1990 p. 524). Socio and concept orientations are types of family communication patterns between parent and child (McLeod & Chaffee 1972; Caruana &Vassallo 2003). A typology utilizing Newcomb's (1953) co-orientation model was developed by McLeod and Chaffee (1972) and classifies parent-child communication as either a socio-orientation or a concept orientation. This typology provides a useful tool for analyzing family communication in a consumer context (Moschis, Prahasto et al. 1986).

A parent with a high socio-orientation believes that children should respect him/her, should suppress opinions on areas not pertaining to them, that children should avoid disagreements with parents and be obedient (Moschis & Moore 1978b). Parents with this type of communication orientation tend to control their child's consumption-related learning (Moschis & Moore 1979a). A high concept-orientation means that parents encourage children to evaluate different alternatives when making decisions. Children in this orientation are allowed to discuss disagreements with parents and to develop their own consumer skills. They are also asked by their parents about purchase decisions even if the product is not directly for the child (Moschis & Moore 1979a; Moschis, Moore et al. 1984; Carlson & Grossbart 1988; Carlson, Grossbart et al. 1990a; Rose, Bush et al. 1998).

The socio- and concept orientation scales were originally developed to measure political socialization (McLeod & O'Keefe 1972) but have been adapted and used extensively in marketing research during the past few decades (Moschis, Moore et al. 1984; Ritchie &Fitzpatrick 1990; Carlson, Grossbart et al. 1990a; Palan 1998; Rose, Bush et al. 1998; Geuens, Mast et al. 2002; Nardello 2002; Caruana & Vassallo 2003; Zhang 2007).

According to Moschis and Mitchell (1986), children from families with a high social orientation are less likely to be involved in family decisions and less likely to make consumption-related decisions for themselves. Conversely, children from families with a high concept orientation are likely to have higher product knowledge, better able to manage a family budget (Moschis & Moore 1979b) and have a higher regard for their parents' opinions (Moschis, Prahasto et al. 1986).

Children have more influence over family decision-making when socio-orientation is lower and concept orientation is higher (Geuens, Mast et al. 2002; Geuens, Pellemans et al. 2003). Caruana and Vassallo(2003) found that children of concept-oriented parents have greater influence on purchase decisions compared to the children of socio-oriented parents, who have very little influence.

Burns and Gillett (1987) found that socio-oriented family communication negatively affects children's participation in the purchase process of toys and games while concept-oriented family communication positively affects participation.

Because of the differences in culture and child-rearing practices between the USA and Egypt it is expected that:

H4 There are differences in a parents' perception of children's influence based on communication orientations of the parent (socio/concept) between the U.S.A. and Egypt.

8. Methodology

Many studies tested parents' perception of children's influence in the U.S. market, but almost none compared the findings with the Egyptian market. As mentioned hypotheses (H1 through H4) verified by using the quantitative approach. Only those people with children between the ages of 4-18 were asked to participate in the survey. To avoid confusion and multiple responses from a parent with more than one child, the respondents were asked to consider the eldest child only.

For the sample geographic range the east coast (Eastern Pennsylvania) and Cairo were targeted with the self-administered questionnaires. College students were utilized to distribute and collect surveys in both countries. Community groups were also utilized to gather data. Questionnaires were collected during the month following distribution. Only Egyptian families who read and speak English were included. For this reason the Egyptian sample size is small and for consistency the U.S. sample was determined accordingly. The samples from both countries were non-probability random samples. The survey instrument provided a brief description of the study, procedure, risks and benefits of participation and duration. The survey used for collecting the U.S. data was part of a larger study. Data collection ended in the first quarter of year, 2011. After incomplete questionnaires were omitted, the final count was 46 from the U.S. and 38 from Egypt.

9. Results

9.1 Reliability Test

At the beginning, reliability analysis was conducted to give an idea about the consistency of the items that make measurement scales up. Cronbach Alpha is used to test the reliability of the scales. Hinton suggested four cut-off points for reliability, 0.90 and above indicates excellentreliability,0.70-0.90 indicates high 0.50-0.70 indicates moderate reliability and 0.50 and below indicates low reliability (Weiss, 2011). Table 1- shows that items making up the none-durable products scale and the child related products are of high reliability, the items making up the durable products scale and the communication style scale are of moderate reliability.

Table 1: Test of Results Reliability

Variable	Number of items	Cronbach Alpha
Durable products	5	0.583
None-durable products	5	0.716
Child related products	5	0.835
Communication style	12	0.528

Table 2: Factor analysis

	Total Variance Explained					
	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
Component	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	6.12	22.668	22.668	6.12	22.668	22.668
2	3.499	12.96	35.628	3.499	12.96	35.628
3	2.337	8.654	44.282	2.337	8.654	44.282
4	1.725	6.388	50.67	1.725	6.388	50.67
5	1.581	5.854	56.524	1.581	5.854	56.524
6	1.427	5.285	61.809	1.427	5.285	61.809
7	1.114	4.126	65.935	1.114	4.126	65.935
8	1.044	3.867	69.801	1.044	3.867	69.801
9	0.958	3.547	73.349			
10	0.916	3.391	76.739			
11	0.775	2.871	79.61			
12	0.72	2.665	82.275			
13	0.656	2.43	84.705			
14	0.524	1.94	86.645			
15	0.497	1.841	88.485			
16	0.449	1.663	90.148			
17	0.417	1.546	91.694			
18	0.368	1.361	93.056			
19	0.34	1.258	94.313			
20	0.282	1.045	95.358			
21	0.235	0.87	96.229			
22	0.227	0.839	97.068			
23	0.216	0.8	97.868			
24	0.188	0.696	98.564			
25	0.147	0.546	99.11			
26	0.134	0.497	99.608			
27	0.106	0.392	100			
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.						

According to Yurdugü(2008), "*minimum sample size for estimating coefficient alpha is dependent on the level of the first (largest) eigenvalue obtained from PCA. If the value of that first eigenvalue of the sample data set is higher than 6.00, the sample coefficient alpha, even when n=30, is an especially robust estimator of the population coefficient alpha.*" Table 2 shows that the first (largest) eigenvalue value obtained from principal factor components (PCA) is 6.12, which means that Cronbach Alpha can be used.

9.2 Sample Description

US residences represented about 54% while the remaining 46% are Egyptians. The two means of the child age in the two countries are close to each other, 11 years in the USA and about 10 years in Egypt. The males – females ratio is not equal in the two samples, in Egypt more than 76% of the survey takers were females, while 55.6% of the American survey takers were females.

Table 3: The age of the child the parent was thinking about while filling the survey

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Egypt	38	4	17	10.05	5.041
USA	45	4	18	11.00	4.528

Table 4: The approximate yearly household income

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Egypt(LE)	31	1	18	11.58	6.254
USA ($)	41	2	20	7.90	3.929

9.3 Comparison between Egyptians' and Americans' Behaviors

Table 3shows a comparison between the variables median and percentiles in Egypt and USA. Table 4 shows the key to product related numbers. Table 5 indicates the communication style numbers.

Table 5: Median and percentile comparison

Variable	Country	Median	Percentile 05	Percentile 25	Percentile 75	Percentile 95	Mini	Max	Range
Durable Products	**US**	7.00	5.00	6.00	7.00	7.00	5.00	7.00	2.00
	Egypt	7.00	5.00	6.00	7.00	7.00	4.00	7.00	3.00
None-Durable	**US**	5.00	3.00	4.00	5.00	6.00	3.00	6.00	3.00
	Egypt	4.00	3.00	4.00	5.00	6.00	2.00	7.00	5.00
Child Related	**US**	4.00	2.00	2.00	5.00	6.00	1.00	6.00	5.00
	Egypt	3.00	1.00	2.00	4.00	5.00	1.00	7.00	6.00
Comm. Style	**US**	3.00	2.00	3.00	3.00	4.00	2.00	4.00	2.00
	Egypt	3.00	2.00	2.00	3.00	3.00	2.00	3.00	1.00

Table 6: Numbers describing the involvement of the child in the buying decision

#	Description
1	My child entirely
2	My child more than me
3	My child slightly more than me
4	My child and I jointly
5	I slightly more than my child
6	I more than my child
7	Myself entirely

Table 7: Numbers describing the communication style as the parent dictating the child what to do

#	Description
1	almost always
2	often
3	sometimes
4	seldom
5	never

Table 6 shows that the higher the number of the parent dictating the purchasing decision, the lower the child involvement in the purchasing decision, i.e. the number in table 6 is negatively correlated with the level of involvement of the child in the purchasing decision. This is not the case in table 7, while the higher the number the higher the child freedom given to the child in taking his or her decisions. Tables 3,4 and 5 show that in both Egypt and US, parents are taking or dictating the decisions when it is related to durable products, this dictating behavior gets softer and loser when moving towards to non-durable products, and loser when dealing with child related products. The unexpected was that in Egypt parents are less dictating especially for child related products.

Highlighted items in table 5 show that for durable products, very few Egyptian parents are involving the child more in the purchasing decision than the American parents, since only the minimum value is lower in the Egyptian sample. But for none-durable products, Egyptian parents are involving their children in the purchasing decision than the American parents; this is shown in the lower median. For child related products, Egyptian parents are considerably involving their children in the purchasing decision than the American parents; this is shown in the lower median, lower percentile 75 and lower percentile 95. So, for general products, Egyptian parents are considerably involving their children in the purchasing decision than the American parents; this is shown in the lower median, lower percentile 5 and lower minimum.

On the other hand, as dictating communication style, Egyptian parents are more dictating than the American parents; this is shown in the lower percentile 25, lower percentile 75, and lower maximum.

9.4 More Focus on Products

By studding the percentages of each behavior for each product type more information can be found. The following figures show the percentage of each behavior when dealing with durable, non-durable, and child related products in Egypt and USA.

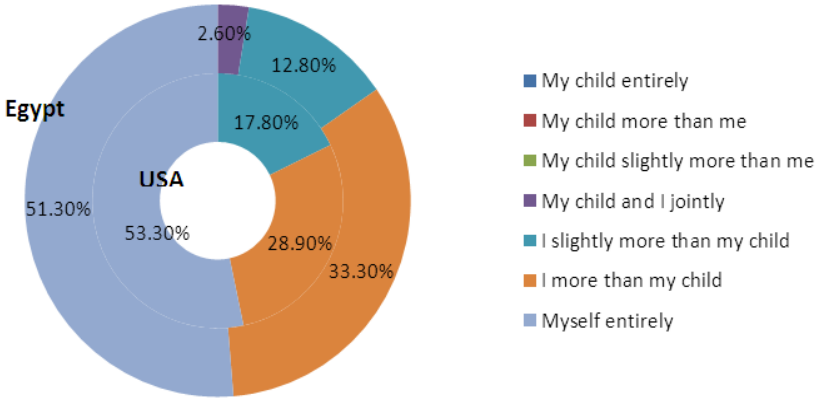

Figure 1: Behavior of the parent regarding the participation of the child when taking a buying decision of a durable product

The Egyptian parents shows slightly more engagement with their children when taking decision regarding durable products, 51.3% of the Egyptian parents are taking the buying decision by themselves entirely compared with 53.3% of the American parents, also, 2.6% of the Egyptian parents are jointly taking the buying decision of durable products with their children compared with 0% of the American parents. This is present in table 5 at the minimum and at the range fields, the range was one degree wider in Egypt than US, and the minimum was one degree lower in Egypt. This can be argued by the average age child in the Egyptian sample was older than in the US sample, and it makes sense that older children are more involved in durable products decisions.

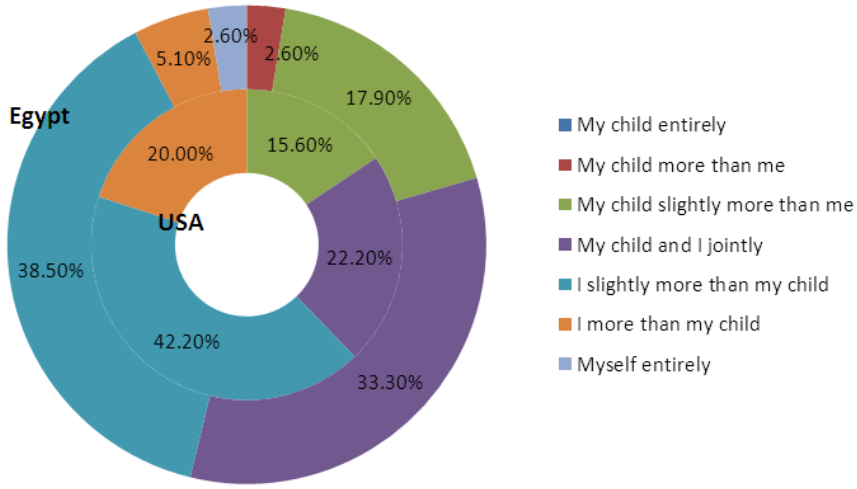

Figure 2: Behavior of the parent regarding the participation of the child when taking a buying decision of a none-durable product

Figure 2 shows also that the parents in the Egyptian sample are more likely to take the children opinion while buying non-durable products, and this is confirmed when comparing the percentages in the two samples. The same phenomenon appears for the same reasons again in the child related products.

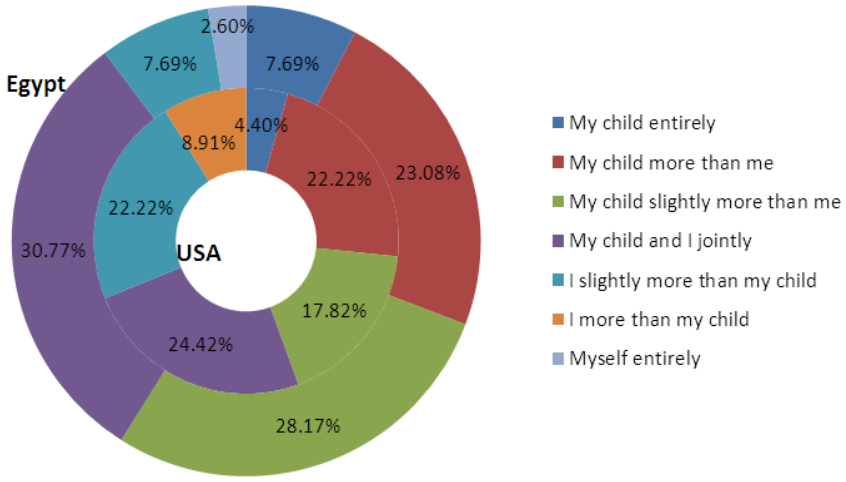

Figure 3: Behavior of the parent regarding the participation of the child when taking a buying decision of a child related product

9.5 The Age Effect

Deeper insights can be found by analyzing the correlation between the age, and the involvement of the children in buying decisions of the three products categories, and also the communication style between the parents and the children. Table 8 shows that the Egyptian parents show more appreciation for older children, they involve them more in the buying decision for all three products types, and also they use smoother communication style with older children. Although is true also for the American parents, except for the non-durable products and communication style, the relation between the age of the child and his or her involvement in the buying decision is insignificant at α less than .05.More details about the products affected by the age of the child are in table 9.

Table 8: Correlations between the age of the child and product types and communication style

		Durable	None Durable	Child Related	Comm. Style
The age of the child in Egypt	**Pearson Correlation**	-.495**	-.520**	-.501**	.320*
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.001	.000	.001	.025
	N	38	38	38	38
The age of the child in USA	**Pearson Correlation**	-.292*	-.247	-.692**	.204
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.026	.051	.000	.090
	N	45	45	45	45

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).**
****. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).**

Table 9: Correlations between the age of the child and main durable products categories

			The age of the child in Egypt	The age of the child in USA
Durable	**Family Television set**	**Pearson Correlation**	-.297*	-.145
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.035	.171
		N	38	45
	Household furniture	**Pearson Correlation**	-.229	-.017
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.083	.455
		N	38	45
	An appliance (i.e. refrigerator, stove, microwave, washer, etc.)	**Pearson Correlation**	-.227	.015
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.085	.460
		N	38	44
	Household tools (hammer, wrench, etc.)	**Pearson Correlation**	-.019	-.067
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.456	.333
		N	37	44
	A household computer	**Pearson Correlation**	-.614**	-.578**
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.000
		N	38	44
None Durable	**Soft drink for the household**	**Pearson Correlation**	-.527**	-.384**
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.005
		N	38	45
	Breakfast cereal for the family	**Pearson Correlation**	-.237	-.225
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.076	.068
		N	38	45
	Toilet paper	**Pearson Correlation**	.129	.086
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.223	.286
		N	37	45
	A family dinner	**Pearson Correlation**	-.544**	-.026
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.435
		N	36	44
	Snack foods for the family	**Pearson Correlation**	-.359*	-.279*
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.014	.033
		N	38	44
Child Related	**A clothing item for my child**	**Pearson Correlation**	-.519**	-.591**
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.000
		N	38	45
	A toy for my child	**Pearson Correlation**	-.353*	-.577**
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.015	.000
		N	38	45
	Perfume/cologne (or other	**Pearson Correlation**	-.500**	-.723**

	personal hygiene item) for my child	**Sig. (1-tailed)**	.001	.000
		N	37	44
	An item of furniture for my child's room	**Pearson Correlation**	-.576**	-.508**
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.000
		N	38	44
	A movie that my child wanted to see	**Pearson Correlation**	-.156	-.440**
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.175	.001
		N	38	44

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).**
****. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).**

9.6 Gender of the Parent Effect

Table 10 shows that in Egypt the gender of the parent effect appears only for child related products and communication style. But in the US, the effect of the gender of the parent appears only in the durable products, none-durable products, and in products in general.

Table 10: Correlations between the gender of the parent and products types and communication style

		Gender of the parent in Egypt	**Gender of the parent in USA**
Durable Product	**Pearson Correlation**	.065	.299*
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.348	.023
	N	38	45
None-Durable Product	**Pearson Correlation**	-.010	.386**
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.477	.005
	N	38	45
Child Related Product	**Pearson Correlation**	-.412*	.222
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.005	.071
	N	38	45
Communication Style	**Pearson Correlation**	-.402*	.245
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.006	.052
	N	38	45

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).**
****. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).**

Table 11 shows that the general behavior of the parents while purchasing a durable product is dictating, which is expected. But the unexpected is that female parents are more dictating than male parents when taking purchasing decisions of durable products. Also, it shows that the American female parent is the most dictating parent when taking a purchasing decision for a none-durable product, then come the American male parents, then come the Egyptian male and female parents with almost a tie.Even for child related products, again American female parent shows more dictating behavior then the American male parent, then the Egyptian male parent, then finally comes the Egyptian female parent.

Table 11: Effect of gender of the parent in Egypt and USA on the level of involvement of the child

		US				Egypt			
		Male		Female		Male		Female	
		Count	N %	Count	N %	Count	N %	Count	N %
Durable Products	My child entirely	0	.0%	0	.0%	0	.0%	0	.0%
	My child more than me	0	.0%	0	.0%	0	.0%	0	.0%
	My child slightly more	0	.0%	0	.0%	0	.0%	0	.0%
	My child and I jointly	0	.0%	0	.0%	0	.0%	1	3.4%
	I slightly more	5	25.0 %	3	12.0 %	2	22.2 %	3	10.3 %
	I more than my child	8	40.0 %	5	20.0 %	3	33.3 %	10	34.5 %
	Myself entirely	7	35.0 %	17	68.0 %	4	44.4 %	15	51.7 %
None-Durable Products	My child entirely	0	.0%	0	.0%	0	.0%	0	.0%
	My child more than me	0	.0%	0	.0%	0	.0%	1	3.4%
	My child slightly more	6	30.0 %	1	4.0%	3	33.3 %	4	13.8 %
	My child and I jointly	6	30.0 %	4	16.0 %	2	22.2 %	11	37.9 %
	I slightly more	5	25.0 %	14	56.0 %	3	33.3 %	11	37.9 %
	I more than my child	3	15.0 %	6	24.0 %	0	.0%	2	6.9%
	Myself entirely	0	.0%	0	.0%	1	11.1 %	0	.0%
Child Related Products	My child entirely	1	5.0%	1	4.0%	0	.0%	3	10.3 %
	My child more than me	5	25.0 %	5	20.0 %	1	11.1 %	8	27.6 %
	My child slightly more	6	30.0 %	2	8.0%	1	11.1 %	9	31.0 %
	My child and I jointly	4	20.0 %	7	28.0 %	5	55.6 %	7	24.1 %
	I slightly more	3	15.0 %	7	28.0 %	1	11.1 %	2	6.9%
	I more than my child	1	5.0%	3	12.0 %	0	.0%	0	.0%
	Myself entirely	0	.0%	0	.0%	1	11.1 %	0	.0%

9.7 Communication Style Effect

Table 12: The relation between communication style and level of involvement of the child in the purchasing decision

		Egyptian Communication Style	American Communication Style
Durable Products	**Pearson Correlation**	.023	-.159
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.445	.148
	N	39	45
None-durable Products	**Pearson Correlation**	-.091	-.063
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.291	.341
	N	39	45
Child Related Products	**Pearson Correlation**	.190	-.264*
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.123	.040
	N	39	45

Table 12 shows that there is no relation between the Egyptian communication style and the level of involvement of the child while taking the purchasing decision at α less than .05. This is true for the American communication style as well except for child related products, there is a relationship between the American communication style and the level of involvement of the child in the purchasing decision taken.

9.8 Hypotheses Testing

To test the hypotheses a p-value of less than .05 was used to determine significance. The first hypotheses stated that there would be differences in parents' perceptions of children's influence based on product type (non-durable, durable, child-related) between the U.S. and Egyptian sample.

An independent samples t-test was used to compare perceptions of children's influence to product type (H1 and H2). The results indicate support for the hypothesis. The lower the mean score, the more influence a parent perceives his/her child to have. There was a significant difference in influence perception scores for non-durable and child-related products between the U.S. and Egyptian sample. There was no difference between samples for durable products. Closer examination of the means show that Egyptian parents perceived children to have more influence in all product categories in comparison to the U.S parents.

Table 13: Results H1 – Product Type

Product Type	Mean		Significant (.05)
Non-durable	U.S.A.	4.70	Yes
	Egypt	4.15	
Durable	U.S.A.	6.32	No
	Egypt	6.25	
Child-related	U.S.A.	3.74	Yes
	Egypt	2.99	
Total of all Types	U.S.A.	4.92	Yes
	Egypt	4.47	

A t-test was used to test hypotheses two. Support was found for this hypothesis. As can be seen by examining the means more closely, in general, the older the child, the more perceived influence (lower means = more influence). There were differences between the U.S. and Egyptian scores. Except for the 10-12 year range, Egyptians perceived children to have greater influence in purchase decisions in comparison to U.S. parents. When looking more closely at product categories, Egyptians perceive more influence in the younger ages than do parents from the U.S.

Table 14: Results H2 - Age

Child's Age	Mean USA	Mean Egypt	Significant .05
Age 4-6	5.31	4.47	Yes
Age 7-9	4.69	4.31	Yes
Age 10-12	4.44	4.80	Yes
Age 13-15	4.88	4.43	Yes
Age 16-18	4.23	3.36	Yes
Total	4.70	4.15	Yes

Table 15: Results – Age and Product Type

	Child's Age Product Type	Mean USA	Mean Egypt
Age 4-6	Non-Durable	5.31	4.47
	Durable	6.56	6.43
	Child-Related	5.16	3.47
Age 7-9	Non-Durable	4.69	4.31
	Durable	6.53	6.60
	Child-Related	4.51	3.40
Age 10-12	Non-Durable	4.44	4.80
	Durable	6.15	6.60
	Child-Related	3.53	3.10
Age 13-15	Non-Durable	4.88	4.43
	Durable	6.58	6.50
	Child-Related	3.35	2.97

The third hypothesis stated that there will be no differences on perceptions of children's influence based on parent's gender for all three product categories (non-durable, durable, child's personal use). This will hold true for both the U.S. and Egyptian samples. This was significant for males but not for females. The women in Egypt perceived children to have more influence in comparison to the U.S. women.

Table 16: H3 Results

Gender	Country	Mean	Significant (.05)
Male	USA (N=21) Egypt (N=8)	4.69 4.66	No
Female	USA (N=24) Egypt (N=29)	5.12 4.41	Yes

The fourth hypothesis examined communication style and stated that there will be differences in a parents' perception of children's influence based on communication orientations of the parent (socio/concept) between the U.S.A. and Egypt. A two-tailed t-test revealed significant differences between the two countries based on communication style. The U.S. sample tended to be higher in concept orientation (mean=16.64) in comparison to the Egyptian sample (mean-15.70). U.S. parents tended to be higher in socio-orientation (mean=19.56) in comparison to the Egyptian sample (mean=15.41).

Table 17: H4 Results

Orientation	Country	Mean	Significant (.05)
Socio Score	USA Egypt	19.56 15.41	Yes
Concept Score	USA Egypt	16.64 15.70	Yes

10. Discussion and Suggestions For Research

The purpose of this research was to explore parents' perceptions of children's influence on purchase decisions on selected demographic variables between U.S. and Egyptian parents. On the basis of the findings it can be concluded that the type of product and the age of the child impact parents' perceptions of children's influence on purchase decisions. The perception of children's influence was highest for products that related directly to the child. This supports the findings in previous studies (Foxman, Tansuhaj et al. 1989; Mangleburg 1990; Beatty & Talpade 1994; John 1999). Egyptian parents percieved greater child influence in purchase decisions across product categories in comparison to the U.S. parents. This may be due to the emphasis that Egyptians place on family and the special attention given to children in the family unit. Perhaps Egyptians are overindulgent with their children in comparison to the U.S.

Overall, both samples showed that child-related products had the most influence from children. Non-durables came in second and durable products last. Non-durable products are often not as expensive and have little relevance to children. Conversely, durable products are more expensive and parents will often want to make these more important decisions with little input from children. The results support previous studies (Belch, Belch et al. 1985; Isler, Popper et al. 1987; Swinyard & Sim 1987; Foxman, Tansuhaj et al. 1989; Mangleburg 1990; Martensen &Gronholdt 2008). Children appear to have a minor say in durable products.

The age of the child also influenced a parent's perception of influence. The older the child the more influence he/she is perceived to have. As children get older parents

become more confident in their decision making abilities. It appears that children are becoming more influencial at a younger age. This pattern may be explained by the increase in both parents working outside of the home (Geuens, Pellemans et al. 2003). Younger children are relied upon more often to make/influence purchase decisions. Other family structural changes such as more single families, higher rates of divorce and smaller family size (McNeal 1992; Hahlo 1993; Lackman & Lanasa 1993; Gunter & Furnham 1998) may also increase the influence children have starting at younger ages. With Egyptian families, children had greater influence at younger ages in comparison to the U.S. sample. This may be explained by the differences in technological expertise that children in Egypt have in comparison to their parents. As explained earlier, children in Egypt take on adult responsibilities at a younger age in comparison to U.S. children. There were differences in perceptions based on the male parent's perceptions between samples. There were significant differences based on females. Egyptian mothers percieved higher levels of influence in comparison to U.S. mothers.

11. Research Limitations& Further Research

Although the study utilized a broad range of products there are several limitations. The study only measured one parent's perceptions of influence. Future research could collect pairs of parents (assuming two parent households) and make comparisons of the communication styles with the perceived influence of each parent to determine if there are differences between the two parents. Future research could also examine the children's perception of their own influence in comparison with their parent(s'). Although acculturation level was not measured, because the survey was administered in English, it can be assumed there were higher levels of western acculturation in the Egyptian sample. Future studies should incorporate surveys in both English and Arabic to capture a lower acculturated sample for comparison.

12. Managerial Implications

Egyptian children are more influential than their American counterparts. This may be due to the special attention given to Egyptian family unit and the collectivistic nature of the society. Egyptian children especially the older generation are more technologically savvy than their parents. Thus technological sophisticated products are a flexible platform for Egyptian children to practice their influence more than American children. Children influence on child related products is perceived the highest product category. Egyptian females are influenced more than American mothers by their children. These findings entail focusing on Egyptian children when designing marketing programs for technologically oriented products. Special attention should be given to older children as they practice heavier influence on their parents purchasing decisions. However younger children influence is moving upward. Marketing programs for child related products in both countries should consider the potential capacity of children influence with a special attention to Egyptian children.

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