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# Product Packaging, Pester Power, & Preschoolers

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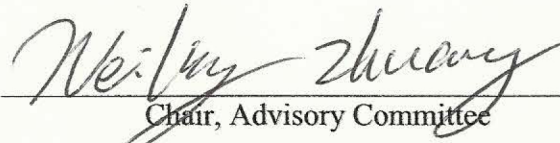
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PRODUCT PACKAGING, PESTER POWER, & PRESCHOOLERS

By

Casie Prible

Thesis Approved:



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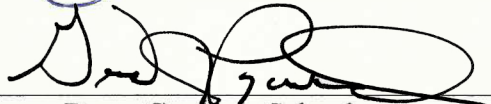
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PRODUCT PACKAGING, PESTER POWER, & PRESCHOOLERS

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Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of  
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in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
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## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my supportive family,  
especially my two children who served as  
inspiration for the research topic.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge my thesis committee for their willingness to support this project and provide guidance. Also, I would like to thank my close friends and family for their support and encouragement throughout this research process.

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to lay the groundwork that could lead to future research by exploring the pester power of preschoolers in reference to product packaging and grocery shopping and with regard to gender, age, and birth order. Preschoolers can act as powerful persuaders on parental spending, specifically through the use of nagging, pestering, or aggressive behaviors. Marketers often employ techniques such as using child-oriented packaging to attract a child to certain products in order to motivate a desire for purchase and thus affecting the buying decisions of parents. This study analyzes preschoolers (2 to 5 years-of-age) in the United States from the perspectives of parents.

The results of this study emphasize the following: that preschoolers can act as persuaders on parental spending and, due to requesting styles resulting from immature expressive language skills and egocentrism, can have an impact on purchase decisions made by parents during in-store grocery shopping trips; the importance of packaging to the marketing mix, especially with regard to preschoolers and their assessment of products based on visual cues; and the possible advantages of using birth order as a variable, in addition to age and gender, when segmenting the children's market.

Overall, the results suggest that packaging has an influence on the product preferences of preschoolers, and that preschoolers have moderate influence on the buying behaviors of parents. Preschoolers exert influence over parental purchases most often with pestering tactics, especially with the purchase of gummy snacks and boxed cereal, and toiletries like first-aid bandages, toothpaste, and bubble bath.



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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Generation Z (individuals born in 1996 or later) makes up nearly one-quarter of the U.S. population (Goodwin, 2013) and has a buying power and influence over parental and household purchases that totals nearly \$200 billion annually (Heller, 2015). Today's family dynamic is very much centered on inclusion and sharing which creates a type of household environment that is empowering to children, especially with influencing family purchase decisions while emerging as independent consumers. Children in the United States can influence up to 80 percent of all household purchases and are impossible to overlook as a market segment (Goodwin, 2013).

Marketers often employ techniques such as using child-oriented packaging to attract a child to certain products in order to motivate a desire for purchase and thus affecting the buying behavior of parents. The resulting phenomenon is commonly known as the “nag factor” or “pester power” and is the ability of a child to influence a purchase decision of a parent through the use of nagging, pestering, or aggressive behaviors (McNeal, 2007; Ogba & Johnson, 2010). Mothers often blame marketers for triggering the pester-power behaviors of children during grocery visits (McNeal, 1992). However, markets acknowledge the influence of “pester power” and the “nag factor” but largely view a child's in-store behavior as being the responsibility of the parent (Nicholls & Cullen, 2004). Children make up to 15 purchase requests during a typical shopping visit and parents yield to those requests nearly half the time (McNeal, 1992).

There are many existing studies that focus on the influence of children on the buying behaviors of parents. Ogba and Johnson (2010) performed a study in the United Kingdom and using a questionnaire to collect data on the impact of packaging on the product preferences of children and its ability to influence parental purchase decisions during in-store shopping trips. These researchers claim that children assess products based on a visual level and, as a result, marketers purposely try to design packaging to attract a child to a product. Ogba and Johnson approached the study from the perspectives of parents and focused on a child's attraction to certain elements of package design (color, characters, shape, and free gift), tactics children use to exert influence, and the likelihood of parents yielding to the requests of children. The research indicated the importance of packaging within the marketing mix and found that it did affect the product preferences of children, especially with the influence of free gifts with purchase, bright colors, and characters. The results of the study revealed that children most often try to influence the purchase of sweets, packaged yogurt, cereal, and carbonated beverages.

In a similar study performed in Scotland, Wilson and Wood (2004) used focus groups and in-depth interviews to gather information from students in upper-primary school and mothers to explore the influence of children on the purchase decisions of parents with regard to certain categories of supermarket products. The study found that both parent and child are aware of the pester power effect and its use as an influential tactic by children on parental purchase decisions. According to the children studied, the most common requesting style used to influence a purchase is a pestering method, although most children believe the tactic is only effective sometimes. The findings also suggest that children do not believe they have a major influence on the types of items that parents

purchase and feel that parents make most selections based on personal preference instead of those of the child. However, parents believe that packaging acts as an influencer on children.

Godhani, Khant, and Jadeja (2012) used a self-administered questionnaire to collect data and then examine the influence of children in India across several broad categories (clothes, toys, sweets, vegetables, family car, family vacation, etc.) with regard to gender, age, parent-child relationship, and sibling influence. The main findings of the study suggest that gender can play a role in the type of products requested, younger children use pressure and begging as tactics to influence parents while older children use more rational tactics, nagging behaviors differ by parenting style, and most parents feel that marketing to children is unethical.

Although there are many studies about the pester power of children in stores and in reference to packaging, the focus is largely on a broad age-range (approximately 0-14 years of age) or just older children like tweens (approximately 9-14 years of age) and not on preschoolers while in grocery stores, specifically. Furthermore, most of these studies consider variables such as gender, age, sibling influence, and parenting style. However, there is little to no research or literature pertaining to a child's birth order as an important variable in terms of attraction to packaging, methods of exerting influence, and the likelihood of parents yielding to requests.

The most strain on the parent-child relationship can occur while shopping at grocery stores (Gelperowic & Beharrell, 1994), and parents are increasingly giving into the demands of children to avoid conflict and the laborious process of controlling purchase desires (Godhani et al, 2012). Moreover, preschoolers are considered a secondary market

called “influencers” where they act as powerful persuaders on parental spending and, due to requesting style, can have a significant impact on purchase decisions made by parents during in-store grocery shopping trips (McNeal, 1992). During the preschool-age period, children experience a difficulty with resisting tempting products and its packaging, and this can lead to temper-tantrums while in stores when parents decline to yield to purchase demands (Giles, 2003). A preschooler's view of the world is egocentric and they are unable to understand the viewpoint of others. At this stage, expressive language skills are immature in comparison to receptive language skills. By the time a child is 2-years-old, the number of words they understand (receptive language) is in the thousands while they can only communicate (expressive skills) approximately 150-200 words. When a parent's desires clash with a preschooler's desire for autonomy and along with limited language skills, pester-power behaviors emerge (Mersch, 2015). Language is acquired very rapidly until 4-years-old, and after the preschool phase is over, egocentrism starts to decline and children are likely to become more social (Acuff & Reiher, 1997; McNeal, 2007). Also, they become more aware of the stages involved in the purchasing process – selection, payment, and consumption – and are likely to make independent purchases and using money from a personal savings (McNeal, 1992).

Furthermore, Claxton (1995) argues that birth order may influence social and consumer behavior and is extremely important for segmenting certain markets. The behavior of first-born and later-born children is different in the consumer decision-making process as a result of different personality types (Rink, 2012), and marketing tactics and communications may be perceived differently by each birth order group as well (Caxton, 1995; Rink, 2010).

Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is to lay the groundwork that could lead to future research by building upon the existing studies by Godhani et al. (2012), Ogba and Johnson (2010), and Wilson and Wood (2004), and exploring how packaging impacts the purchase requests of preschoolers (2 to 5 years-of-age) in the United States and thus the buying behaviors of parents during in-store grocery visits and with regard to gender, age, and birth order, specifically. This thesis will expand beyond packaging of food items to include other child-oriented product categories found in supermarkets such as toiletries, diapers/disposable training pants, and first-aid bandages.

Additionally, this study aims to emphasize how preschoolers can act as persuaders on parental spending and should not be ignored as a market segment. It also attempts to highlight the importance of package design to the marketing mix, especially with regard to its influence on preschoolers. Lastly, it tries to shed light on the possible advantages of using birth order as a variable, in addition to age and gender, when segmenting the children's market.

This research should hold importance to the following: marketers of child-oriented products trying to better understand preschoolers as consumers; to researchers in the process of developing an in-depth study centered on the topic of preschoolers and pester power; to lawmakers trying to protect children from unethical marketing practices of merchants; and to parents who may wish to understand the pester power of preschoolers in reference to product packaging and grocery shopping.

Chapter 2 offers a review of literature relating to the important aspects of this thesis. The topics include an overview of shopping with preschoolers, package design as part of the marketing mix, packaging of child-oriented products, developmental stages of



children in terms of consumer behavior, birth order and consumer behavior, package design with regard to gender and age, preschoolers' response to various aspects of packaging (such as color, shape, licensed character, and brand mascot), requesting styles of children, growth of pester power, parental response to children exerting influence, and a summary of the entire chapter. Chapter 3 explains the methods and procedures of this study, and Chapter 4 presents the results. Chapter 5 offers a critical evaluation of this study and a general discussion of the results in comparison to existing studies by Godhani et al. (2012), Ogba and Johnson (2010), and Wilson and Wood (2004). Lastly, Chapter 6 concludes this thesis with a discussion of suggestions for further work and explanation of the importance of this thesis to researchers, marketers, lawmakers, and parents.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter contains a literature review that covers three major themes: preschoolers as consumers, package design of child-oriented products, and pester power. These themes are presented in a variety of contexts to support the primary focus of this thesis: to explore the influence of product packaging on the product preferences of preschoolers and, therefore, the purchase decisions of parents during in-store grocery visits with regard to gender, age, and birth order.

#### **Grocery Shopping with Preschoolers**

Children are strongly motivated to learn the “art of asking” to get everything they want and need (McNeal, 1999). Through various confrontational and pestering techniques, children attempt to exert influence over parents during in-store shopping trips. Additionally, the imagination of a child both helps to direct and create consumer behavior, specifically with role-play activities such as pretending to be a “grown-up.” To satisfy the creative-thinking process, children are likely to make purchase requests to parents during grocery shopping visits (McNeal, 2007). In fact, most children enjoy accompanying parents to the grocery store as they believe it to be a “playful scenario” and fun experience (Baldassarre, Campo, & Falcone, 2016).

Parents make nearly all purchase decisions for children of 3-years-old and under. However, with an increased exposure to advertisements and growing familiarity with the grocery shopping process, a child’s frequency of purchase demands also increase

(McNeal, 1992). The parent-child relationship during in-store shopping experiences evolves as the child grows older. From birth to 6-months-old, children merely observe the parent's behaviors during shopping excursions. Before verbal speech is fully developed, a child relies on body language to communicate purchase requests such as pointing and making noises. From 2 to 4 years-of-age, children use pestering and aggressive behaviors to exert influence over a parent's purchase decisions in addition to grabbing and then putting items in the cart. By the time a child is between 4 to 6 years-of-age, they become aware of the shopping process and learn the various steps required to make a purchase as consumers (McNeal, 2007).

McNeal (1992) identified the top food items that a child expects to purchase during a shopping trip to the supermarket include vegetables, fruits, soft drinks, and cereal. The top non-food items include toys, clothing, video games, and cosmetic/toiletries. McNeal (1992) estimates that a child's influence on purchases, specifically those from grocery stores, is greatest with regard to bakery goods, bar soap, child-oriented beauty products, bottled water, bread, candy/gum, canned pasta, hot and cold cereals, packaged cookies, and dairy goods.

### **Marketers' Participation in the Consumer Behavior of Children**

Preschoolers are referred to by marketing researchers as "consumers in training" (McNeal, 1987) as they grow up in a highly sophisticated marketing environment that influences their preferences and buying behaviors (Calvert, 2008). Starting at 18-months-old, children can recognize corporate labels. At two-years-old children can make consumer choices and by three-years-old can identify specific brand logos. By four-years-old, a child is likely to have developed product preferences to certain brands

and use advertisements to evaluate product choices. At five-years-old, a child understands the various stages of the shopping process and can make purchases as independent consumers (Horgan, 2005).

Children represent a great amount of market potential and are viewed by marketers as three markets in one: 1) primary market – starting around 4-years-old, children buy and then consume products made specifically for them; 2) influence market – children contribute to family purchase decisions and suggest or make demands to parents regarding which items to purchase; and 3) future market – children are seen as future consumers and targeted for products that may be consumed at a later point in life (McNeal, 2007).

Children are motivated to go to stores and ask for items that would satisfy personal wants and needs. Parent and marketers share an understanding of this motivation. However, parents blame marketers for children making too many purchase requests and the pestering behaviors associated with such demands (McNeal, 1999). In reality, both parents and marketers influence the consumer behavior of children. Marketers develop the product and its packaging and then parents bring the products in the home and, therefore, expose the child to the brand and media presentation. As infants, children depend on parents to satisfy needs but with growing age begin to realize that parents actually rely on supermarkets to fulfill many material needs. As a result, parents almost unknowingly teach children about becoming independent consumers through the shopping process (McNeal, 1987).

Some of the effective marketing practices used to attract children's attention include repetition, branded environments, and free gift with purchase. These tactics attempt to

make products memorable for children and to influence their purchasing choices.

However, immature cognitive development limits the ability of children younger than 8-years-old to understand the persuasive intent of such practices (Calvert, 2008).

According to McNeal (1992), marketers have four common viewpoints of the influence of children on the buying behaviors of parents:

1. Children have little influence on the buying behaviors of parents or little can be done about the influence that exists.
2. Parents are the main influencers of children so marketing efforts should be directed to the parents who then guide children.
3. Since parents have to be persuaded to make the ultimate purchase decision, both children and parents are influenced simultaneously.
4. Since children have a powerful influence over parental buying behavior, marketers influence parents through children.

Marketers who rely on the “pester power” effect for a marketing tactic are likely to possess the fourth viewpoint about influencing parents but through children (McNeal, 1992) in an attempt to control which products are bought and how dollars are spent (Calvert, 2008).

### **Package Design as Part of the Marketing Mix**

More money is spent on packaging than on advertising every year, and investments in package design continue to increase each year as packaging receives top priority by many companies (Meyers & Lubliner, 1998). Packaging has the potential to serve as a powerful force in the marketing mix if designed in an identifiable, unique manner, and can assist in attracting new customers and retaining existing customers (Hill & Helene, 2002). At one

time, packaging was not an important element of the marketing mix and only served on a strictly functional level, most specifically to contain the product and as a means of protection during the warehousing, shipping, and handling processes (McNeal, 1987; Meyers & Lubliner, 1998).

Presently, packaging serves as a convenient way for retailers to display the product at the point-of-sale, for consumers to store the product once at home, and for other purposeful means including: maintaining the freshness of the product if perishable; enhancing with convenient features such as easy-to-open and close lids and convenient storage and carrying capabilities to facilitate use and handling of the product; providing a reusable container for other purposes (ex. pickle jar becomes storage device for tiny odds-and-ends around the house or plastic container becomes means of food storage); and identifying the product's various attributes (flavor, size, variety, etc.) and other relevant information (health benefits, value, nutrition, directions for use, etc.) (McNeal, 1987; Meyers & Lubliner, 1998).

In addition to the functional purposes, package design can also serve as an effective selling tool for marketers to motivate the desire to purchase and create a competitive edge by differentiating the product and serving as a brand identifier. It serves as a "silent salesman" in the store (McNeal, 1987) and can improve the perception of value through the use of appealing and attractive design elements (Meyers & Lubliner, 1998). According to Meyers and Lubliner (1998), an ideal package design should speak to buyers by saying, "Take me home; I'm worth the money." To achieve a competitive edge, marketers should understand that the package is the product because it often delivers the first impression to consumers. Prospective buyers make purchase decisions in

ten seconds or less. Therefore, packaging should provide consumers with a mental image that plays to the emotions on a personal level – appealing to the heart and mind – to initiate a purchase decision. If a product has not been advertised to reinforce the desire of purchase, then the consumer must rely entirely on the package design to dispel uncertainty, inform, and educate.

### **Product Packaging Targeted at Preschoolers**

In 2008, the Federal Trade Commission reported that \$195 million was reportedly spent on packaging and in-store display material to target children. Marketers reported using a variety of design elements and visual cues to make product packaging more appealing to children, including: the incorporation of licensed characters and brand mascots; images portraying children with the featured food item; bright or contrasting colors; graphics that suggest speed or explosiveness; and themes that suggest athleticism or being “cool” and fun.

Ogba and Johnson (2010) investigated parents’ perceptions of the impact of packaging on children and found that the majority of respondents agreed that their child’s product preferences were influenced directly by packaging. This aligns with research findings by Gelperowic and Beharrell (1994) and Meyer and Lubliner (1998) in which parents reported that packaging had an influence on their children’s product preferences.

The package is not only intended as a selling tool but as a means of exciting both the buyer (parent) and receiver (child) (Meyer & Lubliner, 1998). Some marketers purposely target more children than parents with package design as to capture the interest of the child in order to influence the parent’s buyer behavior. Due to a lower ability to process information, children typically assess products on a visual level and by the packaging

alone. Marketers who understand this area of child development use a child's visual imagination and ability to recognize licensed characters, colors, and shapes to attract a child to a product (Ogba & Johnson, 2010). Younger children (2 to 4 years-of-age) are more attracted to cross-merchandizing techniques and fun shapes, but older children (5 to 7 years-of-age) have a greater appreciation for aesthetic qualities and overall design (Elliott, 2009). As a result, packaging targeted at younger children often includes bright colors, licensed characters, brand mascots, free gifts, and stickers (Ogba & Johnson, 2010; Roberto, Baik, Harris, & Brownell, 2010; Wilson & Wood, 2004).

The design process for packaging of products that are targeted to children requires a different approach for marketers than for packaging targeted at adult consumers, especially with regard to the recognition of brands and products by adolescences. Brand recognition is arguable the most important goal for marketing products that are meant to appeal to children. Adult consumers may be persuaded to purchase an alternative product, such as a store brand, that differs from the product originally intended for purchase. However, children are not as open-minded or flexible to substitute or alternative products. A child may likely reject a similar-looking, off-brand item if the initially requested or wanted item was name-brand (ex. off-brand doll vs. Barbie doll). As early as three-years-old, a child starts to recognize brands and logos (Meyers & Lubliner, 1998; Fischer, Schwartz, Richards, Goldstein, & Rojas, 1991), and that exposure can be the basis of product preference later in life (McNeal, 1987).

Packaging serves as a standing advertisement in stores (Elliott, 2012) and plays an important role in attracting a child's attention and creating motivation for them to ask a parent to purchase a product. However, parents are the ultimate authority and make the



final purchase decisions and, if the parent does not approve, the product is typically not purchased. Therefore, some marketers design packaging to attract both child and parent by first attracting the attention of the child to trigger the purchase request and then providing the parent with the necessary information to make a purchase decision (Azad, Rafiee, & Hamdavi-pour, 2012; Elliott, 2012). In a study by Elliott (2012) about “fun” food, nearly half of all child-oriented packaging in a grocery store appeals to both child and parent. For example, the package exterior of fruit-flavored gummy snacks may contain pictures of playful, cartoon sea creatures to target children but also displays a statement that promises to parents that the ingredients are all natural or contain certain healthy components.

Elliott (2012) also revealed that the package design of child-oriented foods usually included cartoonish or playful fonts that resemble a child’s handwriting, cartoon renderings of animals or children, and licensed characters (cross-merchandising). These elements of the package design help to start the process of meaning-making where the consumer builds a framework of expectations around the product, and by using a “fun” package design suggests to the consumer (most likely a child) that the experience of consuming the product is indeed fun.

### **The Development Stages of Children as Consumers: Birth to 5-Years-Old**

Children are not born as consumers with excessive needs but develop into that role over time as exposure to the material world increases (McNeal, 1987). According to Acuff and Reiher (1997), kids go through critical neurological and sociological changes as they move through childhood and adolescence, and these changes explain how children emerge as independent consumers.

### *Stage One: Approximately Birth to 2-Years-Old*

Infants and toddlers are in the exploratory stage and are heavily reliant on parents, specifically the mother or primary caregiver, not only for safety but for purchases. At this point, children understand more visual than verbal messages and have a dominantly instinctive and reflexive neurological make-up (Acuff & Reiher, 1997). Around 4 to 5 months-of-age, a child starts to notice television programs and cartoon characters. From birth to 6-months-old, children merely observe the consumer behavior of parents during in-store shopping trips, and by 2-years-old begin to make purchase requests to parents (McNeal, 1992; Valkenburg & Cantor, 2001). A child at this age is not likely to speak fluently and will rely on body-language tactics such as pointing to make purchase requests (McNeal, 2007). Children start to make more purchase demands with increased contact to shopping environments, consumption of products, and exposure to advertisements and mass media. At the same time, children are learning tactics to get parents to respond to demands and requests (McNeal, 1992). Overall, children are essentially scanning the environment for items they want (McNeal, 2007) and may find bright and colorful packaging the most attractive (Acuff & Reiher, 1997).

### *Stage Two: Approximately 2 to 4-Years-Old*

In this phase, toddlers still pay more attention to visual than verbal messages. However, language is acquired very rapidly until 4-years-old. Toddlers are likely to be self-centered rather than social (Acuff & Reiher, 1997; McNeal, 2007). They require a much slower-paced environment in order to focus on one object at a time. By 2-years-old, the attention span of toddlers begins to increase. They start to form preferences for familiar characters like animals and nurturing figures such as Mickey Mouse and Big

Bird. These types of characters have a rounded design, specifically curved lines and exaggerated features, and appear non-threatening mainly because of the absence of teeth (or at least sharp teeth). In general, these characters are perceived as “safe” to children in this age group (Acuff & Reiher, 1997).

Children in this stage are likely to be most attracted to packaging with characters and playful shapes. By 2-years-old, children are gaining a deeper understanding of the consumer role and recognize the grocery shopping process is a necessary way of satisfying for wants and needs (McNeal, 1987). At this stage, toddlers begin to use pestering behaviors to make purchase requests to parents and may even take a desired product without asking for permission (McNeal, 2007).

#### *Stage Three: Approximately 4 to 5-Years-Old*

By 4 years-of-age, children have preferences to magical characters, fantasy, pretend, and other imaginative role-playing (Acuff & Reiher, 1997). Behavior sequences can be played out in the child’s mind rather than through physical actions. However, children at this age do not know the difference between television programs and commercials (McNeal, 2007), and have a limited ability to distinguish fantasy from reality.

Preschoolers often believe that fictional characters viewed in media are indeed real and that leads to affection toward specific characters (ex. Disney princesses, Sesame Street characters, etc.) (Valkenburg & Cantor, 2001).

At this stage, preschoolers begin to appreciate faster-paced environments. They are still impulsive and largely egocentric and often do not recognize the boundary line between personal possessions and those of others. Although still developing analytical

skills (Acuff & Reiher, 1997), preschoolers are gaining more social skills and are better at reading the emotions of others (McNeal, 2007).

By 4 to 5-years-old, children also start to walk alongside the shopping cart instead of riding in it and begin to make selections independent of parents. Children have a greater recognition of brands and preferences to certain products. The role of product packaging is most important at this phase (McNeal, 1992). At a rate of 15 times per visit (around 3,000 product/service requests a year), children 4 to 12 years-of-age pester parents to make purchase requests, and parents honor request approximately 50 percent of the time (McNeal, 1999). With highly developed motor skills and memory, children between 2 to 4 years-of-age move beyond begging and now grab items and place them in grocery carts during shopping excursions. Children are likely to make links between favorite stores and favorite products. At this point, parents may begin to allow children the privilege of making the selection of some items. By the time a child is 5-years-old, they become more aware of the stages involved in the purchasing process – selection, payment, and consumption – and are likely to make independent purchases and using money from a personal savings (McNeal, 1992).

In terms of package design, marketers can target this age group by accomplishing the illusion of “fun” and “play” to facilitate imaginative thinking (Acuff & Reiher, 1997).

#### *Preschoolers' Development and the Parent-Child Conflict*

The in-store behavior of preschoolers is largely driven by the undeveloped willpower to resist temptation, especially when trying to distract attention away from a desirable product (Metcalfé & Mischel, 1999). Preschoolers focus attention on the pleasurable aspect of a reward (or “product” in a shopping context) and become increasingly

frustrated as gratification is delayed. The source of many parent-child conflicts and “embarrassing” situations during in-store grocery shopping trips are a result of this reaction of the preschooler, especially when it leads to aggressive behaviors (crying, temper-tantrum, etc.) (Mischel & Ebbeson, 1970). Although parents can teach preschoolers strategies to distract or delay gratification in attempt to resist a tempting product, children are not usually successful at such self-control techniques until 5-years-old or later (Mischel & Patterson, 1976).

### **Birth Order and Consumer Behavior**

The behavior of first-born and later-born children is different in the consumer decision-making process as a result of different personality types influenced by three environmental situations: expectations of parents, family structure, and siblings (Rink, 2012). Claxton (1995) argues that birth order may influence social and consumer behavior and is extremely important for segmenting certain markets. However, birth order is a rather unused variable.

Marketing tactics and communications may be perceived differently by each birth order group. First-born children are often leaders, achievement-orientated, and responsible. Messages that depict such themes may prove effective with this crowd (Claxton, 1995; Rink, 2010). The percentages of single-child homes have increased with the number of people delaying parenthood. Children with no siblings are likely to find appeal in marketing tactics that communicate one-on-one relationships with powerful figures. Last-born children or “babies” of the family and are often excessively nurtured and, therefore, messages that represent fun-loving, excitable, and adventurous aspects may be particularly effective with this group’s personality (Claxton, 1995).

Regarding the consumer decision-making process, the first-born typically seeks information from adult sources, extensively evaluates a product prior to purchase, and often requires approval of others post-purchase. Those in the later-born group seek information from peers, engage little in the evaluation of a product prior to purchase, and do not typically seek approval of others post-purchase (Rink, 2010).

### **Preschoolers' Response to Packaging by Gender and Age**

#### *Differences by Gender*

A child is not able to distinguish the difference between boys and girls, including their own gender, until approximately 2-years-old or later (McNeal, 2007). However, in a study by Elliott (2009), differences in gender emerged with regard to product selection. The study revealed that girls are more likely to select products on an emotional level. If a product evokes sentimental feelings or links to a memory, then a girl is more likely to form a preference to that particular item. Girls select products based on associational value. Contrary to girls, boys do not make emotionally-driven product selections, but instead pick products based on physical aspects and with more concrete explanations. Boys evaluate products based on its usefulness from a hands-on perspective such as determining if the product can be squeezed, stretched, twisted, and etc.

In terms of product preferences, both boys and girls exert influence over parents to purchase packaged candy and most sweet, sugary foods. However, boys are more likely than girls to make demands for certain fruits and vegetables, toys and games, books, and shoes. Girls are more inclined to make purchase requests of cosmetic-like items and clothing (Godhani et al, 2012).

Marketers understand that after 2-years-old, girls will most likely accept and interact with boyish characters and themes with regard to product packaging. However, boys are likely to find girlish characters and themes to be unappealing and formulate the response “this is for girls.” In general, boys will typically emulate boys, but girls will emulate both boys and girls (Acuff & Reiher, 1997).

### *Differences by Age*

Younger children, specifically preschoolers (2 to 5 years-of-age), use pestering and aggressive behaviors (ex. pressuring, nagging, temper-tantrums, etc.) as a means to influence the purchase decisions of parents. As a child grows older, they possess the ability to have more logical arguments and, therefore, adopt more rational techniques to persuade parents during shopping trips. Preschoolers lack the skills and abilities to plan and evaluate a purchase (Godhani et al, 2012). As a result, parents will typically yield less to the requests of preschoolers as compared to older children (Carruth, Skinner, Moran, & Coletta, 2000; Ward & Wackman, 1972).

### **Preschoolers’ Response to Package Shape**

Advancements in technology have allowed food manufacturers to design unique packaging to make products more “fun” and appealing for children (Gelperowic & Beharrell, 1994). The shape of a package serves as an opportunity for marketers to create strong brand recognition through both design appeal and handling features (ex. toilet bowl cleaners and mouthwash). A distinctive package structure that can be easily recognizable if the labels were removed (ex. Mrs. Butterworth’s syrup and Perrier sparkling water). Although many of the brands that are advertised in unique packaging have achieved market leadership, many companies dismiss the opportunity to

reengineer package into unique shapes because of the expense required to research, design, and change equipment. The financial risk associated with introducing a new package structure often outweighs the potential benefits (Meyers & Lubliner, 1998).

For preschoolers, “fun” and “playful” themes are important variables when making product selections. The child-oriented shape of the packaging, specifically with a cross-merchandizing tie-in, can increase a child’s perception of taste or enjoyment of a particular product. Preschoolers are attracted to fun shapes, especially when that shape is in the image of a beloved or familiar character and encourages interactive play (Elliott, 2009).

### **Preschoolers’ Response to Package Color**

Color is one component of package design that offers the most opportunities for communicating a product through imagery. It can identify a brand, set a mood, and differentiate products. Consumers are accustomed to color cues that identify certain flavors, varieties, quality, targeted gender, and etc. The color of packaging plays an important role in creating an image of the product in the minds of consumers and is one of the most critical design elements of child-targeted products. This component of package design is arguably the most emotional and subjective because of how it can be interpreted in both emotional and intellectual contexts. In general, humans are passionate about color and make conscious color choices on a daily basis and often without needing the approval of others (Meyers & Lubliner, 1998).

Regardless of perceived package contents, preschoolers rely on sensory methods to form product preferences, specifically visual cues such as color and size for dominant criteria when assessing packages (Léon, Couronne, Marcuz, & Köster, 1999; Marshall,



Stuart, & Bell, 2006). According to Marshall et al. (2006), preschoolers do not typically associate particular colors with specific brands or products and instead make package selections based on favorite color. The tendency of marketers is to use pink colors to target girls and blue colors to target boys. Older children are likely to select darker colors, and preschoolers normally gravitate toward vibrant colors that appear fun and exciting. However, this behavior could be a result of limited experience in a retail environment and exposure to product packaging. Marshall and colleagues studied the role of color in package selection among 43 preschool-aged children (36 girls and 7 boys) and found that pink was the most favored colored among preschoolers followed by purple, blue, and yellow. However, these color preferences may not be representative of the general population of preschoolers based on the larger proportion of female to male participants in the study.

According to findings in a study by Elliott (2012) of 354 child-targeted supermarket products, the colors of blue, yellow, red, and green are the most dominantly utilized. Blue is a predominant color largely associated with the packaging of dairy and refrigerated/frozen food items.

### **Preschoolers' Response to Licensed Characters & Brand Mascots on Packaging**

#### *Identification Patterns of Preschoolers*

Children are attracted to products in terms of how they relate to or associate with an item. Identification patterns can be placed into four categories: nurturing – the child does the nurturing (ex. playing “mom” with a doll) or is being nurtured (ex. the safe, comforting nature of Sesame Street’s Big Bird); Like Me – the child finds relatable

qualities in a character and perceives the product to be “like me”; Emulator – the child wants to be like certain character and wishes to possess specific characteristics (ex. affection for the magical-life of Disney princesses or heroism of Batman) and; lastly, Dis-identification - the child does not want to possess qualities of the animal or character but is attracted to the negative attributes (ex. villains like Darth Vader in Star Wars or the Joker in Batman comics) (Acuff & Reiher, 1997).

### *Licensed Characters*

The persuasive power of media characters is often used to make the associated brand appear more attractive to children. Marketers use cross-merchandizing strategies to create an intention in the child’s mind to own the product. The more recognizable the character, the greater are the chances of the child forming a preference to the associated product (Jose & Saraswathamma, 2014; Kotler, 2012). Children are more likely to choose food items branded with a favorite character over less preferred or generic character (Kotler, 2012).

Mothers serve as protectors of children, especially from birth to 2 years-of-age, and are the “gatekeepers” to infant and toddler’s media exposure. Almost instinctively, mothers select generic characters that are soft- and safe-like such as teddy bears, bunnies, and puppies and licensed characters such as Big Bird and Mickey Mouse. These characters offer child-like appeal because of non-threatening qualities like rounded bodies, toothless smiles, and friendly personalities (Acuff & Reiher, 1997).

Between 3 to 5 years-of-age, children still prefer characters that are relatively soft and safe. By 7 years-of-age, children rebel from youngish characters and begin to prefer more

complex, sophisticated characters with “edgier” appeal (ex. Darth Vader and Nina Turtle) (Acuff & Reiher, 1997).

Roberto, Baik, Harris, and Brownell (2010) concluded that children prefer the taste of foods with a favorite character over foods without a character. However, based on the analysis in a study by Kotler (2012), the presence of favored characters on healthier foods does not distract or lure children away from less nutritious foods when the items are competing in the same group. Although licensed characters do not have the power to steer children away from unhealthy foods, the presence of such characters on healthier foods may increase a child’s likelihood of trying the healthier option.

### *Brand Mascot*

A child’s recognition and favorable attitude toward brand mascots increases with age (Fischer et al., 1991; Richard Mizersk, 1995). Research by Fischer et al. (1991) proposed that the ability of a young child to form associations between brand identifiers such as mascots and the product could be a predictor of preferences to that product later in life.

According to Musicus, Tal, and Wansink (2014), brand mascots on cereal boxes generally make eye contact with customers in grocery stores. Strategically positioned on store shelves at the appropriate heights, adult-targeted cereals with mascots make eye contact with adults and child-targeted cereals with mascots make eye contact with children. Eye contact from the brand mascots connects the consumer to the product and increases the feeling of trust in order to persuade choice over competing products.

### **Children Exerting Influence & Requesting Style**

The power that children have through repeated nagging to influence parents to make a purchase of an item is called “pester power” (McNeal, 1992; Soni & Upadhyaya, 2007).

Marketers target parents but through children by relying on the child to nag or pester the parent to make a purchase (Soni & Upadhyaya, 2007; Wilking, 2011). Attempts to exert influence over parental purchases vary from repetitive pleading to more confrontational, aggressive techniques that are successful to some degree (McNeal, 1992). Pester power using pressure or begging techniques is most prominent among preschool-aged children (Baldassarre et al., 2016; Godhani et. al., 2012). In a recent study, parents confirmed that children (3 to 5 years-of-age) made persistent requests or impulsively inserted items in the shopping cart. Pester power tactics lose effectiveness as a child grows older and develops more cognitive abilities, specifically around the tween years (Baldassarre et al., 2016; Henry & Borzekowski 2011). In a survey of 64 mothers of preschoolers, Henry and Borzekowski (2011) found that packaging and presence of characters were sources of nagging for preschoolers. This supports the findings of research by Gelprowic and Beharrell (1994) that pester power can be derived from an attraction to product packaging.

As depicted in Figure 1, Nicholls and Cullen (2004) described the child-parent purchase relationship in a child-parent consumption matrix. In the first quadrant, the child tries to control and establish power over the parent's purchase decision but clashes with the parent's need of self-realization to teach the child appropriate behaviors. Both parties attempt to control the purchase situation in the second quadrant where children persistently plead and/or threaten and, as a result, parents typically deny the purchase request. In the third quadrant, consensual shopping is achieved and both parties fulfill self-realization needs. Pester power lies in the fourth quadrant where the child's necessity

for self-realization through consumption is challenged by the parent’s control over unnecessary spending.

Child	Desire for Control	1. Parental Power	2. Unresolved Conflict
	Self-Realization	3. Consensual Shopping	4. Pester Power
		Self-Realization	Desire for Control
		Parent	

**Figure 1. The Child-Parent Consumption Matrix**

(Source: Nicholls, A. & Cullen, P. (2004). The child–parent purchase relationship: ‘pester power’, human rights and retail ethics. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 11, 75–86.)

McNeal (1992) found that most popular request styles of children include repetitive pleading, persistently repeating request over and over, using loud and forceful words, demonstrating a feeling with actions such as crying or throwing a temper-tantrum, manipulating the situation by offering words of affection to parent, and threatening parent. The reactions of children when demands are rejected often include sulking, frowning, angry outbursts, and agreeability (Kumar et al., 2012).

**Reasons for Growing Pester Power**

There are many reasons for the rise of pester power, and one is called the “six-pocket syndrome” where the child is pampered by nearly six adults – mother, father, grandmother, grandfather, aunt, and uncle (Godhani et al., 2012). Also, many couples are delaying parenthood and thus having fewer children (Godhani et al., 2012; McNeal, 1992; Soni & Upadhyaya, 2007). As a result, children are receiving more extreme

attention in the home and becoming more involved in purchase decisions which leads to a reluctance of the child to take “no” for an answer (Godhani et al., 2012). Additionally, many working parents are “time poor” and turn to smothering children with gifts to compensate for the lack of time to spend together (Godhani et al., 2012; Soni & Upadhyaya, 2007) but also expect more household participation from children (McNeal, 1992). The pester power of children is inversely proportionate to the time available with parents (Soni & Upadhyaya, 2007). Parents are also increasingly giving into the demands of children to avoid conflict and the laborious process of controlling a child’s purchase desires (Godhani et al, 2012).

Additional driving forces of pester power include: the loss of authority resulting from the blurred line between parent and friend; more households with working couples and thus disposable income (Soni & Upadhyaya, 2007; McNeal, 2007); some parents may attempt to distract a child's attention from family difficulties; the desire of parents to help children keep up appearances with other children (McNeal, 2007); the increasingly involved role of the grandparents because of working mothers; an increased exposure to mass media, technology and advertisements (Soni & Upadhyaya, 2007); differences in parent-child relationships, specifically attitudes of passive versus authoritative parents regarding a child’s level of involvement in family purchase decisions (Godhani et al., 2012); and the desire to pamper (Kumar et al., 2012).

### **Parental Response to Children’s Requests**

Parents attempt to demonstrate authority over children in retail environments but are not always strong enough to resist the pester power (Gelperowic & Beharrell, 1994). The majority of children nag parents almost every day for one reason or another

(Kumar et al, 2012), but most parents do not want to yield to the demands of children in order to maintain control and avoid revealing signs of weakness (Gelperowic & Beharrell, 1994). Kumar and colleagues (2012) identified the influence of pester power on parents and found that more than half of the parents studied agreed with the demands of children on occasion and a third of parents agreed with demands on every occurrence. These findings are similar to those of McNeal (1992) who found that the majority of parents honor the purchase requests of children nearly half of the time. In general, parents who cannot deal with a rise in pestering and aggressive behaviors have a tendency to surrender to more demands of children and that leads to a child's expectation of a certain kind of lifestyle (Kumar et al., 2012).

Lawlor and Prothero (2011) identified the four kinds of reactions of parents to the pester power of children are as follows:

- Assent (agreement) – parents are likely to agree to a purchase request
- Dissent (disagreement) – parent refuse purchase request
- Procrastination – parent delays purchase decision
- Negotiation – child is to undertake some task in exchange for the requested product

The procrastination element of Lawlor and Prothero's research findings supports Gelperowic and Beharrell's (1994) claim that the postponement effect is evidence that children indeed influence parental buying behavior, although not in the short term as parents try to not surrender to a child's every request immediately. According to Wilson and Wood (2004), parents spend more money on grocery purchases than originally

intended when children are present, which is measure of a child's influence on the buying behaviors of parents.

McNeal (1992) identified four common responses by parents to the purchase requests of kids:

1. The parent makes the purchase but may blame marketers for the frequency of requests by child.
2. The parent offers an alternative or substitute product because the requested item may be too expensive or poor quality. Confrontation may occur between parent and child and lead a lost sale for marketer.
3. The parent postpones the request as also identified by Gelperowic and Beharrell's (1994) and Lawlor and Prothero (2011). This is likely to result in a lower satisfaction of the child and lost sale by the marketer whose product initiated the purchase request.
4. The parent ignores the purchase request and refuses to purchase the item demanded by child. This response by the parent often leads to aggressive behaviors by the child (ex. temper-tantrums, crying, yelling, etc.).

Most young children enjoy the act of grocery shopping and view the process as a "playful" scenario (Baldassarre et al., 2016). In an observational study, Gram (2015) found a seemingly pleasant parent-child relationship during grocery shopping excursions. Parents used grocery store visits to educate children on food selection and proper shopping practices. Gram found few examples of unruly behavior of children or parents disciplining children. In most instances, children were observed as active participants and respectfully interacting with parents. Buying food was viewed as a bonding experience,



and children were treated as contributing members of the family. Gram's observation corresponds with Wilson and Wood's (2004) assertion that many parents appreciate the educational benefit of grocery shopping with children in addition to the time spent as a family.

Western Media International (1998) identified four different parenting styles and how the nagging of children affects parents in each category. The following styles are:

- “Bare Necessities” - are the most resistant to the demands of children and, therefore, the least affected by nagging. These parents make the ultimate decision on all purchases and without the influence of children. They are the most affluent and the least likely to have babies or toddlers.
- “Indulgers” – are the most likely to be affected by nagging and are rather impulsive. These parents often yield to purchase requests of children and live in dual-income households.
- “Conflicted” – These parents are often indecisive and make purchase decisions driven by guilt.
- “Kid's Pals” – are young parents and the most susceptible to nagging. These parents like to have fun, if not more, than children.

In general, authoritative parents make the majority of purchase decisions for children. However, permissive parents allow or even encourage children to make the majority of purchase decisions (McNeal, 2007).

## **Summary**

This chapter sought to highlight important information from existing literature and relevant findings of current studies that relate to this thesis, which is dominantly focused

on how packaging influences the product preferences of preschoolers and thus the buying behaviors of parents. As identified in the literature review, preschoolers (2 to 5 years-of-age) are considered a secondary market called “influencers” and act as powerful persuaders on parental spending. Packaging plays an important role in attracting a child’s attention and creating motivation for them to ask their parents to purchase a product. Preschoolers rely on sensory methods to form product preferences, specifically visual cues when assessing packages. In terms of package design, marketers are trying to accomplish the illusion of “fun” and “play” to facilitate imaginative thinking. Preschoolers’ attempts to exert influence over parental purchases vary from repetitive pleading to more confrontational, aggressive techniques that are successful to some degree. Older children possess the ability to have more logical arguments and adopt more rational techniques to persuade parents during shopping trips and, as a result, parents will typically yield less to the requests of preschoolers as compared to older children. Parents attempt to demonstrate authority over children in retail environments, but the prime reasons that parents yield to demands include: the need to silence the persistent nagging of the child; feelings of guilt as a working parent and compensating by gift giving; and the desire to pamper. The most common responses from parents with regard to purchase requests of children include: making the purchase, offering a substitute product, postponing the request, or ignoring the request. Although some parents avoid taking preschoolers on supermarket excursions, others use grocery store visits to educate children on food selection and proper shopping practices. In general, parents spend more on grocery purchases than originally intended when children are present. This literature review identifies the different variables that influence the consumer decision-making

process of a child including birth order, age, and gender. It also reviews the various aspects of package design that draw a child's attention, specifically color, shape, brand mascot, and media characters.

## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH METHODS & PROCEDURES

Along with a literature review of secondary sources, this thesis includes primary research performed by the principal investigator and by using a questionnaire with both structured and unstructured elements for the data collection instrument. The data collected was from parents (18 years-of-age and older) and, more specifically, those with at least one preschool-aged child (2 to 5 years-of-age). The participants were both male and female and represented the United States.

The purpose of this research is to explore how packaging impacts the purchase requests of preschoolers and thus the buying behaviors of parents during in-store grocery visits and with regard to gender, age, and birth order. This study attempts to advance the knowledge base of those researching the phenomenon of pester power by adding to the scope of existing research with the variable of birth order and subject of preschoolers. As a result, an exploratory approach was used to provide direction for a more formal research effort and to gain new insights and a better understanding of this topic.

The intent of this thesis is to merely explore the following research questions to a degree of depth and does not aim to offer any conclusions. This research is simply for the purposes of determining if this research topic is worth pursuing in the future.

#### **Research Questions**

In order to reach the desired purpose, this study attempts to answer the following questions from the perception of parents:

1. How do certain package elements of various supermarket goods affect the product preferences of preschoolers?
2. How do these preferences vary by age, gender, and birth order?
3. How do preschoolers try to influence the buying behavior of parents during in-store grocery shopping visits?
4. What types of products do preschoolers look to exert influence over the parental purchase decision?
5. How do these influences vary by age, gender, and birth order?
6. To what extent do preschoolers influence the buying behavior of parents during in-store grocery shopping visits?

### **Uniqueness of Study**

Although there are many studies about the pester power of children while in stores and in reference to packaging, the focus is largely on a broad age-range or older children (ex. tweens) and not on preschoolers while in grocery stores, specifically. Furthermore, most of these studies do not consider birth order as an important variable in terms of attraction to packaging, methods of exerting influence, and the likelihood of parents yielding to requests.

Therefore, this thesis aims to lay the groundwork for future studies by emphasizing how preschoolers can act as persuaders on parental spending when grocery shopping based on requesting style due to egocentrism and immature expressive language skills; by attempting to understand the visual assessment of package design by preschoolers; and by shedding light on the possible advantage of using birth order as a variable when segmenting the children's market. Building upon the existing research of Godhani et al.

(2012), Ogba and Johnson (2010), and Wilson and Wood (2004), this study explores parents' perceptions of how packaging impacts the purchase requests of preschoolers (2 to 5 years-of-age) in the United States and thus parental buying behaviors during in-store grocery visits and with regard to gender, age, and birth order. This thesis also expands beyond packaging of food items to include other child-oriented product categories found in supermarkets such as toiletries, diapers/disposable training pants, and first-aid bandages.

### **Sampling**

Data was collected by interacting with the parents of preschool-aged children with the help of an online questionnaire and using a convenience sample, a non-probability sampling technique. Participants were required to be at least 18 years-of-age, the parent of at least one preschooler (2 to 5 years-of-age), and reside in the United States. The participants were both male and female and could be members of the same household. If the participant had more than one preschool-aged child, they were requested to complete the questionnaire once per child.

To eliminate monetary costs associated with recruitment and to conveniently locate participants who met the criteria, a referral approach was taken to recruit potential participants. An attempt was made to gather responses from differing social groups and a variety of areas in the United States. Approximately seven people, representing the states of Indiana, Kentucky, Nebraska, Tennessee, Virginia, and Vermont, were invited by the primary investigator by means of email (please refer to Appendix C for recruitment script) to participate in the research as an initial participant. These individuals were encouraged to complete the questionnaire and then forward an informative letter about

the study (please refer to Appendix D) to others who may be interested and also met the criteria. Those who were interested could then go directly to the online questionnaire after locating the link in the informative letter.

In order to verify that each respondent had a preschooler, lived in the United States, and was a legal adult, qualifying questions (please refer to Appendix A) were added to the introduction of the questionnaire that disqualified any respondent who answered “no” to being at least 18 years-of-age, to having a child between 2 and 5 years-of-age, or to living in the United States.

### **Data Collection**

To conduct this study and reach desired objectives, a questionnaire was administered for primary data collection using a web-based survey tool. The appropriateness of this approach was based on the methods and procedures of a similar study by Ogba and Johnson (2010). The electronic questionnaire was intended for parents who at least sometimes shopped for groceries with their preschooler.

The questionnaire was comprised of 26 core questions with a combination of closed questions to produce data that can be categorized and a few open-ended questions to generate descriptive responses (please refer to Appendix B). The questionnaire expands upon the data collection instruction used in the research of Ogba and Johnson (2010) and is organized into six sections: 1) qualifying questions, 2) demographics of parent and child, 3) opinions of parents about shopping with preschoolers, 4) influence of food packaging on child preferences, 5) influence of the child on the buying behavior of parents, and 6) likelihood of parents yielding to request of child.

## **Pilot Test**

A pilot test was performed before the main questionnaire was conducted to test the adequacy of the research instrument. The main focus was to examine the wording and the order of the questions and to determine the average time required to complete the questionnaire. A group of volunteers (total of 9) who shared similarities to the target population were used for the pilot and asked to give feedback to identify ambiguities and difficulties with questions. After the pilot test was completed, a few questions had not been answered as expected and were reworded as a result. Another question was found redundant and subsequently discarded. The average time that participants took to complete the pilot questionnaire was between 10 to 15 minutes and became the official time estimate for the main questionnaire.

## **Variables in the Study**

The following is an outline of the variables that were considered.

- Package characteristics/design and preschooler's preference in relation to gender, age, and birth order;
- Tactics a preschooler uses to exert influence over parental purchases in relation to gender, age, and birth order;
- Items over which a preschooler tries to exert influence in relation to gender, age, and birth order; and
- Likelihood of parents yielding to purchase requests of preschoolers.



## **Protection of Human Rights**

The participant responses were anonymous and no identifying information was collected with the questionnaire. Although the use of a web-based survey tool can sometimes allow researchers to trace data back to an individual's computer using IP addresses, such information was not collected in order to remove the ability of linking participants to his/her responses. Therefore, to maximize protection of the anonymity of the information collected, respondents were not automatically tracked by IP address.

Certain procedures were followed to ensure that potential participants were informed about the study and made aware that participation was voluntary. The email script, informative letter, and introductory paragraph to the questionnaire (Appendices C, D, and A, respectively) contained a summary of the study and a statement regarding consent. Participants were allowed to withdraw at any time and without penalty or consequence of any kind. However, by completing the questionnaire, the subjects were agreeing to participate in the research.

The potential risks involved in this research included:

- *Loss of time* – some participants may have experienced discomfort toward the time required to complete the survey. Additionally, initial participants may have sensed a loss of time with referring other potential participants.
- *Emotional distress* – some participants could have possibly experienced various levels of stress during the questionnaire process when recalling/reliving shopping experiences with preschooler.
- *Confidentiality* – some participants may have wished to not reveal identity or be traced to responses.

The procedures to protect against or minimize any potential risks included: identifying the time needed to participate in the study in the introductory paragraph of the questionnaire. Also, initial participants were informed in the email recruitment script that they were under no obligation to pass along the study information; stating in the introductory paragraph of the questionnaire that if the participant feels emotional distress at any time, they may decide to withdraw from the research study; explaining in the introductory paragraph that all responses are anonymous and no identifying information would be collected with the questionnaire, including IP addresses.

### **Summary**

This chapter offers a detailed overview of the methods and procedures used in the primary research process. The purpose of the study is to understand how packaging impacts the purchase requests of preschoolers and thus the buying behaviors of parents during in-store grocery visits and with regard to gender, age, and birth order. In order to reach the desired purpose, this study attempts to investigate: how certain package elements of various supermarket goods affect the product preferences of preschoolers; how these preferences vary by age, gender, and birth order; how preschoolers try to influence the buying behavior of parents during in-store grocery shopping visits; what types of products a preschooler looks to exert influence over the parental purchase decision; how these influences vary by age, gender, and birth order; and to what extent preschoolers influence the buying behavior of parents during in-store grocery shopping visits. Data was collected using the help of an online questionnaire and using a non-probability sampling technique. A pilot test was performed before the main

questionnaire was conducted to test the adequacy of the research instrument. Participants included parents (18 years-of-age and older) of at least one preschool-aged child (2 to 5 years-of-age) and were both males and females representing the United States. The participant responses were anonymous and no identifying information was collected with the questionnaire. Certain procedures were followed to ensure that potential participants were informed about the study and made aware that participation was voluntary and of any risks involved. Participants were allowed to withdraw at any time and without penalty or consequence of any kind.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

The questionnaire was conducted over a four-week period and a total of 76 responses were gathered during that time. Only 64 responses were usable for analysis as one participant failed the qualifying questions and 11 submissions were incomplete where participants abandoned the questionnaire. By completing the questionnaire, participants were agreeing to consent but were allowed to withdraw from the study at any time. As a result, these partial submissions were eliminated from the analysis.

The preschoolers represented in this study include 23 males and 41 females, and the ages distributed as follows:

- 2-years-old: 13 total, 20.3%
- 3-years-old: 21 total, 32.8%
- 4-years-old: 16 total, 25%
- 5-years-old: 14 total, 21.9%

Collectively, the preschoolers represented in this study include five birth orders and distributed as follows: first born: 2-year-olds (7 total, 11%), 3-year-olds (9 total, 14%), 4-year-olds (12 total, 19%), 5-year-olds (8 total, 13%); second born: 2-year-olds (4 total, 6%), 3-year-olds (6 total, 9%), 4-year-olds (2 total, 3%), 5-year-olds (5 total, 8%); third born: 2-year-olds (2 total, 3%), 3-year-olds (5 total, 8%), 4-year-olds (1 total, 2%), 5-year-olds (1 total, 2%); fourth born: 4-year-olds (1 total, 2%); and fifth born or greater: 3-year-olds (1 total, 2%).

Those individuals who participated in the study represent the states of Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, Nebraska, Tennessee, Vermont, and Virginia. These parents represent both male (17 total) and female (47 total) with ages as follows:

- 25-34 years old: 44 total, 68.8%
- 35-44 years old: 19 total, 29.7%
- 55 years or older: 1 total, 1.6%

#### *Frequency of Preschoolers on Shopping Trips with Parents*

Parents were questioned about the frequency of taking preschoolers to the grocery store, and the largest group of respondents (50%) reported “at least once a month” and 45.3% indicated that preschoolers accompany them “at least once a week.” The unstructured responses included “once in a while,” “twice a month,” and “every time.” However, this study did not take into account the frequency that each household shopped for groceries on a monthly basis and the average number of trips that the preschooler attends out of all trips combined. A parent may shop for groceries once a month and have reported “at least once a month” but, in actuality, allows the preschooler to accompany them on every grocery trip versus only on occasion.

#### *Parents’ Attitudes about Grocery Shopping with Preschoolers*

The results show that attitudes of parents with regard to taking preschoolers grocery shopping are almost evenly mixed, according to the results. Overall, 45.3% of parents reported that they are “happy to bring” their preschooler shopping and 46.9% reported that they “often avoid bringing” their preschooler shopping. The remaining participants gave open-responses such as it being “inconvenient” but a situation that is not minded

although shopping without a preschooler is “easier.” Another parent stated they feel “nervous” about bringing their preschooler shopping but “have do it” as the situation is unavoidable. An amusing response was from another parent who reported that “quick trips are fine” but they would rather “leap into traffic” than take their preschooler on longer-lasting grocery trips.

Parents were asked about feelings towards the opinions of other customers when their preschooler displays aggressive behaviors in public (crying, temper-tantrum, etc.) in public. The majority of parents either reported that their preschooler “never displays aggressive behaviors in public” (21 total, 32.8%) or they “do not care about the opinions of strangers” (22 total, 34.4%). Seventeen (26.6%) of parents reported feeling “judged” by strangers when their preschooler displays aggressive behaviors in public and 6.3% (4 total) do not feel judged at all in such situations.

Totaling 35 responses, 55% parents reported not caring “about the opinions of strangers” when their preschooler displays pestering behaviors (begging, persistent nagging, etc.) in public. However, only 8 parents (13%) claimed that their preschooler “never displays pestering behaviors in public” as compared to 21 parents who indicated their preschooler never displays aggressive behaviors in public. Sixteen (25%) of the parents feel judged by strangers and 6 (9.4%) claimed to not “feel judged by strangers” when their preschooler displays pestering behaviors in public.

#### *Package Preferences of Preschoolers*

Participants identified the package design elements that most influenced the product preferences of their preschooler. The following list of percentages shows the frequency that parents reported “yes” for each element:

1. Media characters (93.8%)
2. Color (67.2%)
3. Brand mascot (46.9%)
4. Shape (21.9%)

*Preschoolers' Preference to Various Elements of Package Design – By Age*

As represented in Table 1, the results show that the presence of licensed media characters on packaging most often influences the product preferences of preschoolers in all age groups (2- to 5-years-old). Across all age groups studied, the design element of package shape was found to influence product preferences the least often.

The presence of characters is of major appeal for the two-year-olds studied as parents reported that brand mascots on packaging is the second most common design element to influence product preferences of this age group. The results show that preschoolers in the 3- to 5-year-old group have a secondary preference to color and a tertiary preference to brand mascot. The 2-year-old age group has a tertiary preference to color.

Table 1.  
Preference to Packaging by Age

Preschooler Age		Shape	Brand Mascot	Media Character	Color
2	Mean	.38	.54	.77	.46
	Std. Deviation	.506	.519	.439	.519
3	Mean	.24	.43	1.00	.76
	Std. Deviation	.436	.507	.000	.436
4	Mean	.06	.44	.94	.69
	Std. Deviation	.250	.512	.250	.479
5	Mean	.21	.50	1.00	.71
	Std. Deviation	.426	.519	.000	.469
Total	Mean	.22	.47	.94	.67
	Std. Deviation	.417	.503	.244	.473

*Preschoolers' Preference to Various Elements of Package Design – By Gender*

Table 2 shows the results of how commonly each gender is influenced by package design when making product selections. According to the results, the presence of media characters on product packaging most often influences the product preferences of both the male and female preschoolers of focus in this study. For both the male and female groups, the design element of package shape influences product selections the least often. In other words, both genders are primarily influenced by media characters on product packaging. As for secondary influencers, the female group is most commonly influenced by package color and male group by brand mascot. Tertiary packaging influencers are brand mascot for females and color for males. According to the results, package shape plays a limited role in attracting the attention of both genders of preschoolers as it influences product selections the least often. The preference of brand mascot on packaging influences the product preferences of male preschoolers more often than those of female preschoolers. The results did not show any statistically significant differences between genders with regard to preferences to color, media characters, and shape.

Table 2.  
Preference to Packaging by Gender

	Gender	Mean	Std. Dev.	t-test, (sig. level .05)		
				T	Sig. value (p)	Implication
Color	Male	.65	.487	-.248	.805	No sig. difference
	Female	.68	.471			
Media Character	Male	.91	.288	-.598	.552	No sig. difference
	Female	.95	.218			
Brand Mascot	Male	.70	.470	2.852	.006	Sig. difference
	Female	.34	.480			
Shape	Male	.22	.422	-.019	.985	No sig. difference
	Female	.22	.419			



*Preschoolers' Preference to Various Elements of Package Design – By Birth Order*

The birth orders represented in this study are first to fifth-or-greater. For the purpose of this analysis, the focus is on the responses of parents of first, second, and third born preschooler as the later birth order groups are only represented by one participant each and do not provide a large enough sample for examination. As represented in Table 3, all birth order groups (first, second, and third) are most often influenced by the presence of media characters on packaging when making product selections. For all groups, the secondary influencer is color and tertiary influencer is brand mascot. The results suggest that package shape has the least influence on product preferences among each birth-order.

Although the results of the fourth-born or fifth-or-greater born preschoolers are eliminated from this analysis, it is important to mention the responses as offered by parents. The parent of the fourth-born preschooler indicated that the presence of media characters on packaging most often attracts the attention of their child. The parent of the fifth-or-greater born preschooler indicated that both media characters on packaging and color are design elements commonly attracting the attention of their child.

Table 3.  
Preference to Packaging by Birth Order

Birth Order		Shape	Brand Mascot	Media Character	Color
1	Mean	.22	.44	.92	.67
	Std. Deviation	.422	.504	.280	.478
2	Mean	.24	.59	1.00	.76
	Std. Deviation	.437	.507	.000	.437
3	Mean	.22	.44	.89	.56
	Std. Deviation	.441	.527	.333	.527
Total	Mean	.22	.47	.94	.67
	Std. Deviation	.417	.503	.244	.473

### *Preschoolers' Influence on the Buying Behavior of Parents*

Parents were instructed to specify the tactics, if any, used by their preschooler to exert influence over purchase decisions. The following results show the percentage of parents reporting that each tactic is utilized by their preschooler:

1. Single verbal request (59.4%)
2. Pointing (53.1%)
3. Persistent nagging (46.9%)
4. Putting item in cart (35.9%)
5. Crying/temper-tantrums (20.3%)
6. Other (3.1%)

Those who answered “other” gave descriptive responses. One parent said, “My child holds onto the item and then will not let go.” The other parents stated that their child does not attempt to exert influence over purchase decisions during in-store grocery shopping trips.

### *Preschoolers' Influence on the Buying Behavior of Parents – By Age*

According to the results of this study and as displayed in Table 4, 2- and 4-year-olds most frequently use the tactics of single verbal requests and pointing to influence the buying behavior of parents. The 3-year-old group most commonly uses single verbal requests as a means to exert influence on parental purchase decisions. The 5-year-old group primarily relies on persistent nagging as tactical influence on parents.

The youngest preschoolers of this study (2-year-olds) exert influence on parental decisions the least often using the pestering tactic of persistent nagging. The preschoolers

aged 3- to 5-years-old attempt to influence the buying behaviors of parents the least often with the aggressive tactic of crying/temper-tantrums.

Table 4.  
Tactics to Influence by Age

Preschooler Age		Crying/ temper- tantrum	Putting Item in Cart	Pointing	Persistent Nagging	Single Verbal Request	Other
2	Mean	.38	.38	.54	.31	.54	.00
	Std. Deviation	.506	.506	.519	.480	.519	.000
3	Mean	.29	.43	.62	.43	.67	.10
	Std. Deviation	.463	.507	.498	.507	.483	.301
4	Mean	.06	.31	.63	.44	.63	.00
	Std. Deviation	.250	.479	.500	.512	.500	.000
5	Mean	.07	.29	.29	.71	.50	.00
	Std. Deviation	.267	.469	.469	.469	.519	.000
Total	Mean	.20	.36	.53	.47	.59	.03
	Std. Deviation	.406	.484	.503	.503	.495	.175

*Preschoolers' Influence on the Buying Behavior of Parents – By Gender*

The results suggest that female preschoolers most frequently use single verbal requests as a tactic to exert influence on the buying decisions of parents. Male preschoolers most commonly use the pestering tactic of persistent nagging as an influence on parents. The second most common tactic used among the female group is pointing. The secondary tactics most frequently used by the male group are pointing and single verbal requests. The results did not indicate any statistically significant difference between gender and requesting style, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5.  
Tactics to Influence by Gender

				t-test, (sig. level .05)		
	Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	Sig. value (p)	Implication
Single Verbal Request	Male	.48	.511	-1.409	.164	No sig. difference
	Female	.66	.480			
Persistent Nagging	Male	.61	.499	1.692	.096	No sig. difference
	Female	.39	.494			
Pointing	Male	.48	.511	-.628	.532	No sig. difference
	Female	.56	.502			
Putting Item in Cart	Male	.30	.470	-.679	.500	No sig. difference
	Female	.39	.494			
Crying/temper-tantrum	Male	.26	.449	.851	.398	No sig. difference
	Female	.17	.381			

*Preschoolers' Influence on the Buying Behavior of Parents – By Birth Order*

As presented in Table 6, the results show that first-born preschoolers (eldest children) tend to use single verbal requests (a passive approach) as a primary influential tactic on parental purchase decisions. Second-born preschoolers (middle children) primarily use a pestering tactic (persistent nagging) to exert influence on parents. Lastly, third-born preschoolers (the “babies” of the family) most often use a mix of pestering and passive tactics like putting items in cart, pointing, and single verbal requests.

The responses eliminated from this analysis include those of two parents. The parent of a fourth-born preschooler indicated that their child often uses the requesting tactics of crying/temper-tantrums, putting items in the cart, pointing, and persistent nagging. The other response was from a parent of a fifth-born (or greater) preschooler who indicated that their preschooler often uses putting items in the cart and single verbal requests as tactics to exert influence.

Table 6.  
Tactics to Influence by Birth Order

Birth Order		Crying/ temper- tantrum	Putting Item in Cart	Pointing	Persistent Nagging	Single Verbal Request	Other
1	Mean	.17	.36	.50	.39	.64	.03
	Std. Deviation	.378	.487	.507	.494	.487	.167
2	Mean	.24	.18	.59	.65	.53	.06
	Std. Deviation	.437	.393	.507	.493	.514	.243
3	Mean	.22	.56	.56	.44	.56	.00
	Std. Deviation	.441	.527	.527	.527	.527	.000
Total	Mean	.20	.36	.53	.47	.59	.03
	Std. Deviation	.406	.484	.503	.503	.495	.175

*Types of Food Serving as Driving Forces of Pester Power*

Participants were asked to identify the food-related items that drive their preschoolers to exert influence on purchase decisions. The following are percentages of responses that reveal what parents believe are the food items that most frequently persuade the purchase requests of their preschoolers:

1. Packaged gummies (63%)
2. Boxed Cereal (44%)
3. Packaged Yogurt (42%)
4. Packaged Mac N' Cheese (39%)
5. Other foods (36%)
6. Canned Soups and Pasta (9%)

The parents who answered “other” gave descriptive responses and offered many examples of food items that encourage pestering and/or aggressive behaviors in

preschoolers during in-store grocery shopping trips. The following are additional food items described by parents that serve as driving forces of pester power:

- Candy (11%)
- Cookies (8%)
- Fruit (5%)
- Chocolate (3%)
- Graham crackers (3%)
- Chips (3%)
- Any food featuring Queen Elsa of Disney's Frozen (3%)
- Vanilla milk (2%)
- Popsicles (2%)
- Rice puffs for toddlers (2%)
- Cheddar-flavored, bunny-shaped crackers (2%)

*Types of Food Serving as Driving Forces of Pester Power – by Age*

The results in Table 7 show that all of the age groups (2- to 5-years-old) most often attempt to influence parents to purchase fruit-flavored, gummy snacks. Additionally, the results suggest that all of the age groups are least persuaded by canned soups and pasta to influence the purchase decisions of parents.

The open-ended responses provided by parents regarding additional food items as sources of pester power included 11 food items, but parents most commonly mentioned candy, cookies, and fruit. The item of fruit was only identified as a preference of 3- and 4-year-old preschoolers and was the only produce-related item identified by parents.

Candy was identified by parents for each age group as a food item that commonly

motivates purchase requests. The item of cookies was reported by parents as a common food item requested by all ages groups expect for 4-year-olds.

Table 7.  
Types of Food by Age

Preschooler Age		Packaged Gummies	Mac N' Cheese	Boxed Cereal	Packaged Yogurt	Soups and Pasta	Other
2	Mean	.38	.15	.31	.38	.00	.54
	Std. Deviation	.506	.376	.480	.506	.000	.519
3	Mean	.67	.48	.38	.38	.19	.33
	Std. Deviation	.483	.512	.498	.498	.402	.483
4	Mean	.69	.31	.50	.44	.00	.25
	Std. Deviation	.479	.479	.516	.512	.000	.447
5	Mean	.71	.57	.57	.50	.14	.36
	Std. Deviation	.469	.514	.514	.519	.363	.497
Total	Mean	.63	.39	.44	.42	.09	.36
	Std. Deviation	.488	.492	.500	.498	.294	.484

*Types of Food Serving as Driving Forces of Pester Power – by Gender*

Based on the data in Table 8, both male and female preschoolers are most often driven by packaged gummy snacks and least often by canned soups/pasta to influence the purchase decisions of parents while grocery shopping. Female preschoolers are driven to influence the purchase of packaged macaroni and cheese more often than male preschoolers. The results did not show any significant difference in gender with regard to packaged gummies, boxed cereal, packaged yogurt, and canned soups and pasta as driving forces of pester power.

Table 8.  
Types of Food by Gender

	Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-test, (sig. level .05)		
				t	Sig. value (p)	Implication
Packaged Gummies	Male	.74	.449	1.413	.163	No sig. difference
	Female	.56	.502			
Packaged Mac N' Cheese	Male	.22	.422	-2.172	.034	Sig. difference
	Female	.49	.506			
Boxed Cereal	Male	.52	.511	1.010	.317	No sig. difference
	Female	.39	.494			
Packaged Yogurt	Male	.52	.511	1.206	.232	No sig. difference
	Female	.37	.488			
Canned Soups and Pasta	Male	.09	.288	-.137	.891	No sig. difference
	Female	.10	.300			

The open-ended responses provided by parents lend some interesting insights into other food items that persuade preschoolers to influence the buying decisions of parents. Both genders were reported to influence the purchase of cookies and candy. Only parents of female preschoolers reported any preference for fruit as no parents of male preschoolers indicated that such a food was requested. However, these results may have been different if “fruit” was a structured option on the questionnaire.

*Types of Food Serving as Driving Forces of Pester Power – by Birth Order*

The data provided in Table 9 explains the results of food preferences by birth order with regard to items that preschoolers most often try to influence parents to purchase. According to responses from parents, packaged gummy snacks (fruit-flavored) are the most frequent motivator of pester power for each birth-order group. Canned soups and pasta serves as the least frequent driving force for pester power for each birth-order group.



Table 9.  
Types of Food by Birth Order

Birth Order		Packaged Gummies	Mac N' Cheese	Boxed Cereal	Packaged Yogurt	Canned Soups/ Pasta	Other
1	Mean	.58	.36	.42	.39	.11	.33
	Std. Deviation	.500	.487	.500	.494	.319	.478
2	Mean	.65	.47	.65	.41	.12	.29
	Std. Deviation	.493	.514	.493	.507	.332	.470
3	Mean	.78	.33	.11	.44	.00	.56
	Std. Deviation	.441	.500	.333	.527	.000	.527
Total	Mean	.63	.39	.44	.42	.09	.36
	Std. Deviation	.488	.492	.500	.498	.294	.484

The results not included in this analysis include those of two parents, including one of a fourth-born preschooler and one of a fifth-born (or greater) preschooler. The parent of the fourth-born preschooler reported that their child most frequently tries to influence the purchase of packaged gummy snacks, boxed macaroni and cheese, boxed cereal, and packaged yogurt. The other parent of a preschooler representing the fifth-or-greater group reported the food items that most often motivate pester power by their child include packaged yogurt and frozen popsicles.

Furthermore, the answers of parents who offered descriptive responses suggest that of the "other" foods that serve as drivers of pester power in preschoolers include candy for each birth-order group, cookies for the second- and third-born groups, and fruit for the first- and third-born groups. However, these results may have varied if the items of candy, cookies, and fruit were offered as structured option on the questionnaire.

### *Types of Non-Food Serving as Driving Forces of Pester Power*

In addition to food-related items that drive preschoolers to influence parental purchase decisions, parents were asked to also identify non-food related items. The goal of this question was to understand the types of products – other than food – that encourage preschoolers to exert influence over the purchase decisions of parents during a typical grocery shopping trip. The following are percentages of responses that reveal what parents believe are the non-food items that most frequently persuade the purchase requests of their preschoolers:

1. First-Aid Bandages (45%)
2. Children's Toothpaste (36%)
3. Children's Bubble Bath (34%)
4. Children's Body Wash/Shampoo (22%)
5. Toys (14%)
6. Diapers (6%)
7. Everything (3%) – descriptive response
8. Toothbrushes (2%) – descriptive response

The participants who answered “other” also gave descriptive responses to describe the non-food items, if any, that trigger pester power in their preschoolers. “Toys” was the most frequent response of parents. Two parents explained that their preschoolers want “everything” in the grocery store and another parent identified “toothbrushes” as a common item that leads to pester power. Approximately 13% of parents who responded believe that non-food items do not influence the purchase desires of their preschooler.

*Types of Non-Food Serving as Driving Forces of Pester Power – by Age*

Table 10 shows the non-food items that serve as sources of pester power for preschoolers, according to parents. The “other” category includes responses provided by participants, specifically the most common response of “toys.” Two parents indicated that their preschooler most often influences the purchase of “everything” and another identified toothbrushes as a common item that is demanded. In the 2- to 4-year-old groups, some parents indicated that preschoolers are not persuaded by non-food items including 15% of 2-year-olds, 10% of 3-year-olds, and 25% of 4-year-olds.

The results suggest that the items that serve as the greatest source of pester power by age are: bubble bath for 2-year-olds; first-aid bandages and toothpaste for 3-year-olds; first-aid bandages, toothpaste, and toys for 4-year-olds; and first-aid bandages for 5-year-olds. The results show that 3-year-olds are the only age group to influence the purchase of diapers/disposable training pants. However, this could be a result of non-use of the item by older age groups due to being both daytime and nighttime potty-trained.

Table 10.  
Types of Non-Food by Age

Preschooler Age		Diapers	Bandages	Wash/Shampoo	Bubble Bath	Toothpaste	Other
2	Mean	.00	.31	.23	.38	.15	.46
	Std. Dev.	.000	.480	.439	.506	.376	.519
3	Mean	.19	.57	.33	.43	.57	.24
	Std. Dev.	.402	.507	.483	.507	.507	.436
4	Mean	.00	.25	.13	.13	.25	.50
	Std. Dev.	.000	.447	.342	.342	.447	.516
5	Mean	.00	.64	.14	.43	.36	.07
	Std. Dev.	.000	.497	.363	.514	.497	.267
Total	Mean	.06	.45	.22	.34	.36	.31
	Std. Dev.	.244	.502	.417	.479	.484	.467

*Types of Non-Food Serving as Driving Forces of Pester Power – by Gender*

Table 11 shows the results of genders with regard to non-food items that serve as driving forces of pester power. The results suggest that female preschoolers most frequently influence the purchase of first-aid bandages, and male preschoolers most frequently influence the purchase of children’s toothpaste. In fact, the analysis of all the non-food items featured in this study show that male preschoolers attempt to influence the purchase of children’s toothpaste more often than female preschoolers. The results did not show any significant difference in gender with regard to packaged disposable diapers/training pants, first-aid bandages, children’s body wash/shampoo, and children’s bubble bath as driving forces of pester power. According to the results, the purchase of disposable diapers/ training pants is influenced the least often by both genders. The results did not show that preschool-aged boys had any influence of the purchase of disposable diapers/training pants, and attempts to influence this non-food item by female preschoolers are limited.

Table 11.  
Types of Non-Food by Gender

	Gender	Mean	Std. Dev.	t-test, (sig. level .05)		
				t	Sig. value (p)	Implication
Diapers	Male	.00	.000	-1.552	.126	No sig. difference
	Female	.10	.300			
First-Aid Bandages	Male	.39	.499	-.736	.465	No sig. difference
	Female	.49	.506			
Children's Body Wash/Shampoo	Male	.13	.344	-1.276	.207	No sig. difference
	Female	.27	.449			
Children's Bubble Bath	Male	.30	.470	-.490	.626	No sig. difference
	Female	.37	.488			
Children's Toothpaste	Male	.52	.511	2.063	.043	Sig. difference
	Female	.27	.449			

The descriptive results indicate that 13% of the male group is not driven by non-food products to influence the buying decisions of parents, and 12% of female group is not motivated by such items. One parent of a girl identified "toothbrushes" as a commonly requested non-food item, and two parents who represent one girl and one boy explained that every non-food item motivates pester power in their preschooler. The item of toys was most commonly described by parents as a driving force of pester power and was reported for both genders.

*Types of Non-Food Serving as Driving Forces of Pester Power – by Birth Order*

As seen in Table 12, the results suggest that during a typical grocery shopping trip the following occurs: first-born preschoolers most frequently influence the purchase of first-aid bandages; second-born preschoolers most often demand children's toothpaste for purchase; and third-born preschoolers most often influence parents to purchase children's bubble bath and toys.

The responses of those eliminated from this analysis include a parent of a fourth-born preschooler and one of a fifth-born (or greater) group. The parent of a fourth-born preschooler reported that first-aid bandages and body wash/shampoo are the most requested items for purchase. The parent of a fifth-born (or greater) preschooler indicated that first-aid bandages and toothpaste are commonly requested items for purchase.

The descriptive responses provided by parents included additional non-food items identified by parents, including the most commonly described item - toys. The only preschoolers identified to not be motivated by non-food products are representative of the first- and second-born groups. In the third-born group, all parents identified some non-food item that fueled the pester power of their preschooler. One parent identified

“toothbrushes” as a commonly requested item of their third-born preschooler, and two parents explained that every non-food item encourages pester power in their preschoolers who are representative of the first- and second-born groups.

Table 12.  
Types of Non-Food by Birth Order

Birth Order		Diapers	Bandages	Wash/Shampoo	Bubble Bath	Toothpaste	Other
1	Mean	.06	.53	.17	.28	.36	.28
	Std. Dev.	.232	.506	.378	.454	.487	.454
2	Mean	.06	.41	.29	.47	.53	.29
	Std. Dev.	.243	.507	.470	.514	.514	.470
3	Mean	.11	.11	.22	.44	.00	.56
	Std. Dev.	.333	.333	.441	.527	.000	.527
Total	Mean	.06	.45	.22	.34	.36	.31
	Std. Dev.	.244	.502	.417	.479	.484	.467

*Likelihood of Parents Yielding to Purchase Requests of Preschoolers*

Parents were instructed to indicate the frequency to which they take into consideration the purchase requests of their preschooler, and the results are as follows:

- Sometimes: 59.4%
- Often: 17.2%
- Rarely: 14.1%
- Always: 7.8%
- Never: 1.6%

The majority of parents only sometimes consider the purchase requests of preschoolers while shopping at grocery stores. However, in order to understand the likelihood that parents would move from the consideration to purchase stage, participants

were asked to specify the frequency to which they buy products that their preschooler requests. The results reveal the following:

- Sometimes: 57.85%
- Rarely: 20.3%
- Often: 17.2%
- Always: 3.1%
- Never: 1.6%

Most parents only sometimes consider buying the products requested for purchase by preschoolers. However, a sizable amount of parents indicated “rarely” and also “often” with regard to frequency of purchase. The percentage of parents who “often” consider purchase requests of parents is the same as those who “often” follow through with purchase (17.2%). Based on the results, most parents will sometimes consider the purchase requests of preschoolers and also sometimes purchase the requested item.

The results of this study also consider the frequency that parents actually purchase requested items of preschoolers during in-store grocery trips in order to avoid conflict.

Parents indicated the following:

- Rarely: 43.8%
- Never: 29.7%
- Sometimes: 18.8%
- Often: 7.8%
- Always: 0%

Most parents rarely or never purchase products requested by preschoolers to avoid conflict. However, a collective 26.6% of parents more than seldom purchase items in order to avoid conflict while shopping with preschoolers.

Lastly, parents were asked to offer opinions about child-oriented packaging in terms of grocery shopping with preschoolers. The most common response (48.4%) was that packaging is a “nuisance” when grocery shopping with preschoolers. Other parents believe that packaging is “helpful” (17.2%) or had another opinion. The 34.4% of parents who answered “neither” offered open-ended responses, and the most common was that packaging did not affect their preschooler. The other responses from parents include:

- My child “only requests items that I have introduced to him.”
- “I feel [pestering] is my and my child’s issue and do not blame it on packaging.”
- “Companies try to influence children when they know that's all the children can see. They don’t know that parents have the child’s best interest in mind.”
- “If it's a required product to buy and happens to have a child-related theme, I'll buy it versus another.”
- “Disney characters are on everything but beer and I'm sure that’s coming. I think there should be limits on what types of grocery items can be directly marketed to children using packaging tricks.”



## CHAPTER V

### GENERAL DISCUSSION

The results of this study emphasize how preschoolers can have an impact on purchase decisions made by parents during in-store grocery shopping trips, particularly due to requesting styles resulting from immature expressive language skills and egocentrism, and should not be ignored as a market segment. This study also highlights the significance of package design to the marketing mix, especially with regard to preschoolers and their assessment of products based on visual cues. Lastly, it also sheds light on the possible advantages of using birth order as a variable, in addition to age and gender, when segmenting the children's market and understanding preschoolers as consumers.

#### *Parental Attitudes*

According to the results, fewer parents reported caring about the opinions of strangers when their preschooler displays pestering behaviors (34.4% total) than aggressive behaviors (55% total) in public. Nearly a quarter of respondents reported feeling judged by strangers when their preschooler displays either pestering or aggressive behaviors in public. Based on the results, most respondents will sometimes consider the purchase requests of preschoolers and also sometimes purchase the requested item. However, most parents rarely or never purchase products requested by preschoolers in order to avoid conflict, but a collective 26.6% of parents more than seldom purchase items in order to avoid conflict while shopping with preschoolers. These outcomes suggest that

preschoolers have moderate influence on the buying behaviors of parents. Additionally, these outcomes supplement those of Ogba and Johnson (2010) that the majority of parents do not give into the requests of children in order to avoid conflict but not those of Wilson and Wood (2004) that propose children have a significant impact on the purchase decisions of parents. This study did not test for statistically significant differences in terms of the impact of pester power; however, based on the frequency of responses, the results suggest that preschoolers have some level of influence on the purchase decisions of parents and that most parents do not yield to requests in order to avoid conflict. However, the outcomes of this study could be a result of parents not willing to admit to yielding to the pester power of preschoolers and answering based on social expectations, in addition to the small sample size. These outcomes could also be a consequence of the age differences of the children being studied. Wilson and Wood's study has a focus on children in upper-primary school where as this study has a focus on preschoolers (2- to 5-years-old).

The most common response from parents is that packaging is a "nuisance" when grocery shopping with preschoolers. The attitudes of parents with regard to taking preschoolers grocery shopping are almost evenly mixed as most parents either feel "happy to bring" their preschooler shopping or they "often avoid bringing" their preschooler shopping. Godhani et al. (2012) claim that parents find the practices adopted by marketers to be unethical. Although this study did not investigate parental beliefs of such ethical issues, parents were asked to offer opinions about marketers' use of child-oriented packaging. The results of this research found that the majority of parents

believe that such packaging is a nuisance, and these findings supplement the claim by Godhani et al. (2012).

#### *Preschoolers and Package Design*

For all age groups, the presence of media characters on packaging is the most appealing design element and package shape is the least. The presence of characters is of common interest for the two-year-olds studied as parents reported that brand mascots on packaging is the second most common design element to influence product preferences of this age group. The presence of media characters on product packaging most often influences the product preferences of both the male and female preschoolers, and package shape influences purchases the least often. However, male preschoolers are attracted to brand mascots more often than female preschoolers. All birth order groups (first, second, and third) are most often influenced by the presence of media characters on packaging and least often influenced by package shape when making product selections. Overall, these outcomes support those of Ogba and Johnson (2010) and Wilson and Wood (2004) where parents identified packaging as a product characteristic that acted on their child, especially characters and color.

#### *Preschoolers and Requesting Style*

The results suggest that preschoolers exert influence over parental purchase decisions most often with pestering tactics than with aggressive tactics. However, these results could be influenced by parents answering based on socially acceptable beliefs as opposed to personal beliefs and opinions. In terms of age, the results show that 2- and 4-year-olds most frequently use the tactics of single verbal requests and pointing (passive tactics) to influence the buying behavior of parents. The 3-year-old group most commonly uses

single verbal requests (passive tactics) as a means to exert influence on parental purchase decisions, and 5-year-olds primarily rely on persistent nagging (a pestering tactic) as an influence on parents. Few parents reported that their preschooler uses temper-tantrums as an influential tactic. However, the preschoolers in the study aged 3- to 5-years-old influence the buying behaviors of parents the least often using the aggressive tactic of temper-tantrums/crying. The youngest preschoolers of this study (2-year-olds) exert influence on parental decisions the least often using the pestering (nagging) tactic. The results suggest that female preschoolers most frequently use single verbal requests (a passive tactic) as an approach to exert influence on the buying decisions of parents, and male preschoolers most commonly use persistent nagging (a pestering tactic) to influence parents. As for birth order and requesting style, the results suggest that the following: first-born preschoolers (eldest children) most often use passive approaches to influencing parental purchase decisions; second-born preschoolers (middle children) most commonly use a pestering tactic; and third-born preschoolers (the “babies” of the family) most often use a mix of pestering and passive tactics.

Ogba and Johnson (2010) found that children commonly make verbal requests for products to influence purchases, and this research supports that claim as 59.4% of respondents reported that their preschooler uses such a tactic. These results supplement the assertion by Godhani et al. (2012) that children of lower age generally use pressure and begging tactics to influence parents. The results of a study by Wilson and Wood (2004) suggest that putting items in the cart and pester power (nagging and whining) are common techniques used by children to influence parents, and the results of this study align with those outcomes. Approximately 46.9% of parents reported the use of persistent

nagging by their preschooler as an influential tactic and 35.9% reported that their child put items in the cart to exert influence.

### *Food Items of Influence*

The results of this study suggest that packaged fruit-flavored, gummy snacks stimulate purchase desires the most often and canned soup/pasta the least often of each age group studied (2- to 5-year-olds). Both male and female preschoolers are most driven by packaged gummy snacks and least driven by canned soups/pasta to influence the purchase decisions of parents. The results did show that female preschoolers are more often driven than male preschoolers to influence the purchase of packaged macaroni and cheese. Only parents of female preschoolers reported any preference for fruit as no parents of male preschoolers indicated that such a food was requested. However, these results may have varied if “fruit” had been made a structured option on the questionnaire. Packaged fruit-flavored, gummy snacks are the most frequent source of pester power for each birth-order group studied (first- to third-born) and canned soup/pasta serves as the least frequent driving force.

Ogba and Johnson (2010) claim that children are particularly interested in influencing the purchase of unhealthy foods like sweets, and the results of this research support that assertion as 63% of parents reported that their preschoolers influence the purchase of packaged gummy snacks. Additionally, the results of this thesis align with those of Ogba and Johnson (2010) that a large number of parents believe that children most often attempt to influence foods like boxed cereal and packaged yogurt but less often attempt to influence canned foods. According to the results of this study, 44% of parents reported an influence on the purchase of boxed cereal, 42% reported an influence on the purchase of

packaged yogurt, and 9% reported a frequent demand of canned soups and pasta.

Godhani et al. (2012) suggest that boys and girls exert similar pressure over the purchase of sweets, and that claim is supported by this study as results suggest that gummy snacks are the most frequently demanded item by both genders when grocery shopping.

### *Non-Food Items of Influence*

The most common non-food items reported by parents to have an influence on the purchase desires of their preschooler include: first-aid bandages (45%), children's toothpaste (36%), and children's bubble bath (34%). Disposable diapers/training pants were the least reported by parents, and the results show that 3-year-olds are the only age group to influence the purchase of the item. However, this could be a result of non-use of the item by older age groups due to being both daytime and nighttime potty-trained. The results suggest that the non-food items that serve as the greatest source of pester power by age are: bubble bath for 2-year-olds; first-aid bandages and toothpaste for 3-year-olds; first-aid bandages, toothpaste, and toys for 4-year-olds; and first-aid bandages for 5-year-olds. Female preschoolers most frequently influence the purchase of first-aid bandages and male preschoolers most frequently influence the purchase of children's toothpaste. In terms of the most frequent source of pester power by birth order, the results suggest the following: first-aid bandages most often stimulate the purchase desires of first-born preschoolers; toothpaste most often motivates purchase demands for second-born preschoolers; and bubble bath and toys most frequently drive third-born preschoolers to influence the purchases of parents.

Godhani et al. (2012) found that boys have more demands for toys, and while this study did not test for significant differences with regard to gender and toys, the

descriptive responses of parents indicate that toys may be a source of pester power when grocery shopping. If the item of toys had been added to the questionnaire as a structured item, then results may have been of greater support to this claim. Additionally, Godhani et al. (2012) found that girls often demand cosmetic-like items, and this study suggests similar results as parents identified toiletry-like items that female preschoolers frequently requested for purchase.

### *Strengths and Limitations*

There are limitations to this study to acknowledge. First, the findings are representative of a generalized sample population of a small size and with an unequal balance of gender, ages, and birth orders. An enlarged sample could have produced more significant findings and accurate results while achieving a more grounded explanation of the pester-power phenomenon in relation to preschoolers and packaging. Also, a larger sample size would have been more representative of the general population. Second, the referral sampling method is a non-probability technique and offers no guarantee that the sample is representative of a larger population. Third, self-reporting is a limitation of this study as participants are assumed to be demonstrating authenticity and consistency when answering questions. The focus of this study is mostly on the behaviors of preschoolers but the data is based on the parents' perceptions instead of the opinions of preschoolers. Subsequently, the data is subject to biases since it was received from parents and not preschoolers, and responses may have been influenced by social expectations. In other words, parents may have dismissed personal beliefs and opinions for those believed to be socially acceptable.

This study also has strengths worth mentioning. In addition to closed-ended questions, the questionnaire contained open-ended questions which helped to limit unintended information error. Respondents were given the flexibility of providing a descriptive response instead of making a selection based on the structured options. Also, an attempt was made to select the initial participants from different states and social circles in order to improve generalizability. Lastly, the data collection method was cost efficient and had minimal monetary requirements.



## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

This exploratory study attempts to emphasize that more work should be done to better understand the pester power of preschoolers in reference to product packaging, grocery shopping, and birth order. Existing studies have already found relationships between packaging and product preferences of children. However, the goal of this thesis is to supplement the knowledge base of those researching the phenomenon of pester power by including the focus of preschoolers and variable of birth order and while leaving room for more in-depth studies.

#### *Recommendations for Future Research*

Based on the limitations of this thesis, future researchers may want to take different approaches. First, future studies should seek to accumulate a larger sample size in order to produce more reliable and generalizable data. Second, in moving forward with future studies, a different sampling technique could be used for data collection that allows for random sampling and a better representation of a general population. Third, future researchers may want to strive for greater accuracy by developing hypotheses to test for significant differences and draw conclusions. Fourth, future studies could use focus groups to gather more in-depth knowledge about the attitudes of parents with regard to shopping with preschoolers and to reduce the influence of any social expectations. Also, instead of interacting with participants through questionnaire, first-hand observation of

the parent-child interaction during in-store grocery trips may be a more effective technique to directly involve preschoolers and eliminate bias of parents.

In terms of other directions, future researchers could explore the influence of preschoolers on parental purchase decisions of large-ticket items for the household such as vacations, cars, houses, and etc. Future researchers could also focus on the relationship between pester power with regard to household income and parent's age, specifically with the likelihood of yielding to a preschooler's purchase requests. Additionally, the focus could be on the influence of culture on parenting style and thus the pester power of preschoolers. Lastly, future researchers could consider the social learning theory when developing research objectives, specifically with regard to sibling influence and the possibility of preschoolers learning pestering style and forming product preferences through observation.

#### *Contributions of the Study*

This thesis holds its importance to researchers since it was largely built upon existing research and, most importantly, promotes further studies into the pester power of preschoolers in relation to product packaging and birth order. This thesis is indication that many aspects of pester power have yet to be explored.

Marketers would also benefit from this thesis since it highlights the significance of package design to the marketing mix, especially with regard to preschoolers and their assessment of products based on visual cues. It also sheds light on the possible advantages of using birth order as a variable, in addition to age and gender, when segmenting the children's market and understanding preschoolers as consumers.

On a practical level, this thesis emphasizes how preschoolers can have an impact on purchase decisions made by parents during in-store grocery shopping trips, particularly due to requesting styles resulting from immature expressive language skills and egocentrism. Therefore, this thesis holds importance to parents who wish to gain a better understanding and new insights of the phenomenon of pester power with regard to their preschooler.

Lastly, this thesis holds importance with lawmakers, specifically those opposed to unethical marketing practices to target children. This study focuses on children in the preschool-stage and could lend some new insights to anyone wishing to push legislation to restrict and regulate such practices by marketers.

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APPENDIX A:  
Introductory Paragraph to Questionnaire & Qualifying Questions

The data gathered from this questionnaire will be used for a thesis research project exploring how packaging impacts the purchase requests of preschoolers and thus the buying behaviors of parents during in-store grocery visits. This questionnaire consists of 23 multiple-choice questions and should take approximately 10 - 15 minutes to finish. Participation is entirely voluntary, all responses are anonymous, and no identifying information will be collected. You may decide to withdraw at any time without penalty or consequences of any kind. If you begin to feel any emotional stress, you may opt to discontinue participation from this research study. However, by completing this questionnaire, you are agreeing to participate in the research.

**If you are the parent of more than one preschooler, please complete one questionnaire per child.**

#### Qualifying Questions

- 1) Are you the parent of at least one preschooler, 2 to 5 years of age? (yes or no)
- 2) Do you live in the United States? (yes or no)
- 3) Are you at least 18 years of age? (yes or no)

APPENDIX B:  
Questionnaire

- 1) What is your age?
  - a. 18-24 years old
  - b. 25-34 years old
  - c. 35-44 years old
  - d. 45-54 years old
  - e. 55 years or older
  
- 2) What is your gender?
  - a. Male
  - b. Female
  
- 3) What state do you reside in? \_\_\_\_\_
  
- 4) What is the age of your preschooler?
  - a. 2 years old
  - b. 3 years old
  - c. 4 years old
  - d. 5 years old
  
- 5) What is the gender of your preschooler?
  - a. Male
  - b. Female
  
- 6) How many siblings does your preschooler have?
  - a. 0
  - b. 1
  - c. 2
  - d. 3
  - e. 4
  - f. 5 or more

- 7) What is the birth order of your preschooler?
- a. First
  - b. Second
  - c. Third
  - d. Fourth
  - e. Fifth or greater
- 8) How often does your preschooler accompany you to the grocery store?
- a. Never
  - b. At least once a week
  - c. At least once a month
  - d. At least once every two months
  - e. Other (please specify):\_\_\_\_\_
- 9) How do you feel about bringing your preschooler grocery shopping with you? (pick the answer that is most true about your feelings)
- a. I am happy to bring my preschooler grocery shopping with me.
  - b. I often avoid bringing my preschooler grocery shopping with me.
  - c. Neither
- If neither, please explain:\_\_\_\_\_
- 10) How do you feel about the opinions of other customers when your preschooler displays aggressive behaviors (crying, temper-tantrum, etc.) in public? (pick the answer that is most true about your feelings)
- a. My preschooler never displays aggressive behaviors in public.
  - b. I feel judged by strangers when my preschooler displays aggressive behaviors in public.
  - c. I do not feel judged by strangers when my preschooler displays aggressive behaviors in public.
  - d. I do not care about the opinions of strangers with regard to my preschooler's aggressive behavior.

11) How do you feel about the opinions of other customers when your preschooler displays pestering behaviors (begging, persistent requests, etc.) in public? (pick the answer that is most true about your feelings)

- a. My preschooler never displays pestering behaviors in public.
- b. I feel judged by strangers when my preschooler displays pestering behaviors in public.
- c. I do not feel judged by strangers when my preschooler displays pestering behaviors in public.
- d. I do not care about the opinions of strangers with regard to my preschooler's pestering behavior.

12) Are your preschooler's product preferences influenced by package color?

- a. Yes
- b. No

13) Are your preschooler's product preferences influenced by a media character (ex. characters by Disney, Sesame Street, Nickelodeon, etc.)?

- a. Yes
- b. No

14) Are your preschooler's product preferences influenced by a brand mascot (ex. Cap'n Crunch, M&M Characters, etc.)?

- a. Yes
- b. No

15) Are your preschooler's product preferences influenced by package shape?

- a. Yes
- b. No



16) Does your preschooler try to influence the purchases that you make during in-store grocery visits?

- a. Yes
- b. No

17) How does your preschooler try to exert influence over your purchases? (select all that apply)

- a. Single verbal request
- b. Persistent Requests (ex. begging)
- c. Pointing
- d. Putting item in cart
- e. Crying/temper-tantrum
- f. Other

If other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

18) Which food products does your preschooler try to influence you to purchase when grocery shopping? (select all that apply)

- a. Packaged gummy fruit-flavored snacks
- b. Packaged macaroni and cheese
- c. Boxed cereal
- d. Packaged yogurt
- e. Canned soups and pasta (ex. Campbell's soups, SpaghettiOs)
- f. Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

19) Which non-food products does your preschooler try to influence you to purchase when grocery shopping? (select all that apply)

- a. Children's diapers/disposable training pants
- b. First-aid bandages
- c. Children's body wash/shampoo
- d. Children's bubble bath
- e. Children's toothpaste
- f. Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

20) How frequently do you take your preschooler's purchase requests into consideration when grocery shopping?

- a. Always
- b. Often
- c. Sometimes
- d. Rarely
- e. Never

21) How frequently do you buy the products that your preschooler requests?

- a. Always
- b. Often
- c. Sometimes
- d. Rarely
- e. Never

22) How frequently do you buy the products your preschooler requests in order to avoid conflict?

- a. Always
- b. Often
- c. Sometimes
- d. Rarely
- e. Never

23) How do you feel about child-oriented packaging in terms of grocery shopping with children? (pick the answer that is most true about your feelings)

- a. I find child-oriented packaging to be a nuisance when grocery shopping with my preschooler.
- b. I find child-oriented packaging to be helpful when making purchase decisions in supermarkets.
- c. Neither

If neither, please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX C:  
Recruitment Script to Initial Participants

Dear [Mr. / Mrs./Ms. LAST NAME],

Thank you for your interest in my thesis research project exploring how packaging impacts the purchase requests of preschoolers and thus the buying behaviors of parents during in-store grocery visits. Participation in this research includes completing a questionnaire of 26 multiple-choice questions about your attitudes toward grocery shopping with your preschooler and will take approximately 10-15 minutes to finish. All responses are anonymous and no identifying information will be collected. To meet the criteria as a research subject, you must be the parent of at least one preschooler (2 to 5 years of age), be at least 18-years of age, and live in the United States.

Participation is entirely voluntary. You may decide to withdraw at any time without penalty or consequences of any kind. If you begin to feel any emotional stress, you may opt to discontinue participation from this research study. However, by completing this questionnaire, you are agreeing to participate in the research. If you would like to participate in this research study, please click on the following link and complete the questionnaire - <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LFGJRF2>.

Lastly, if you are willing, please pass along the enclosed informative letter to friends and/or family members who may also be interested in participating in this research study. You are under no obligation to share this information with others.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me by email at [casie\\_prible@mymail.eku.edu](mailto:casie_prible@mymail.eku.edu).

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Casie Prible

APPENDIX D:  
Informative Letter

Dear potential research participant,

I am a graduate student in the Master of Business Administration program at Eastern Kentucky University. I would like to invite you to participate in my research study to explore how packaging impacts the purchase requests of preschoolers and thus the buying behaviors of parents during in-store grocery visits. Participation in this research includes completing a questionnaire of 26 multiple-choice questions about your attitudes toward grocery shopping with your preschooler that will take approximately 10-15 minutes to finish. All responses are anonymous and no identifying information will be collected. To meet the criteria as a research subject, you must be the parent of at least one preschooler (2 to 5 years of age), be at least 18-years of age, and live in the United States.

Participation is entirely voluntary. You may decide to withdraw at any time without penalty or consequences of any kind. If you begin to feel any emotional stress, you may opt to discontinue participation from this research study. However, by completing this questionnaire, you are agreeing to participate in the research. If you would like to participate in this research study, please click on the following link and complete the questionnaire - <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LFGJRF2>.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me by email at [casie\\_prible@mymail.eku.edu](mailto:casie_prible@mymail.eku.edu).

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Casie Prible