

ROUNDTABLE
MIDDLEYEAR CHILDREN AS CONSUMERS

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Recent marketing studies document that children ages 6 to 12 are surprisingly independent and influential consumers. While many companies have studied children's reactions to their products and advertising, there has been a lack of systematic research that looks at middleyear children's preferences, income, spending, and how they influence purchases in the context of their family life.

Today, there are 20 million 6 to 11 year old children with a projection that there will be 23 million by the year 1995. Children, 9 to 12, spend nearly all of the \$4.75 billion dollars they receive annually from allowances, gifts and earnings. In addition, a considerable amount of money is spent on the average child as the 1988 estimate of the USDA is that such a child will cost more than \$100,000 to raise to age 18, while in 1980 that figure was less than \$75,000. Children gain early experience in those activities collectively termed the "consumer role" that are expected of them in the natural growth sequence characteristic of our society. They first play role at about age 4, and by 7 to 12 years are playing this consumer role in many dimensions.

Children's influence on buying goes beyond their own purchases. When it comes to purchasing power its kids who wear the pants in the family, according to the second annual Nickelodeon/Yankeeovich Youth Monitor. A respectable 13 percent of 6 to 11 year olds buy clothes with their own money. Factoring in the children who buy clothes accompanied by their parents, the figure is 66%. An even larger percent influence the brand of tennis shoes which they wear and influence where the shopping occurs.

The roundtable will address issues such as the following:

1. What areas of research are needed in considering the performance of children in the consumer role? Have the areas of television advertising and money management been too extensively researched with virtually no research in other important areas? What areas of children's performance are the most promising for future research? What are the ethical concerns in conducting research on children?
2. Which of the following theories holds the most promise for conducting research on children? Which of these theories has been used to date and in what areas?

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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS TO GUIDE CONSUMER BEHAVIOR
RESEARCH ON CHILDREN

Attitude Behavior theory
Attitude Consistency theory
Attitude Formation theory
Cognitive Components theory
Cognitive Processes theory
Cognitive Quality theory
Decision theory
Demographics
Developmental theory
Economics theory
Ethics theory
Information Processing theory
Learning theory
Motivation theory
Perception theory
Situational Variables
Social Class theory
Social Interaction theory
Socialization theory
Values

3. What educational programs exist for assisting children in the consumer role? How can teachers and parents be educated in order to assist in the education of children for the consumer role: What are the appropriate roles in consumer education of children for the parent, the school, the business person.

Participants in the roundtable represented a variety of professional positions and viewpoints. Considerable discussion lead to the development of a number of suggested avenues of pursuit of the topic.

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