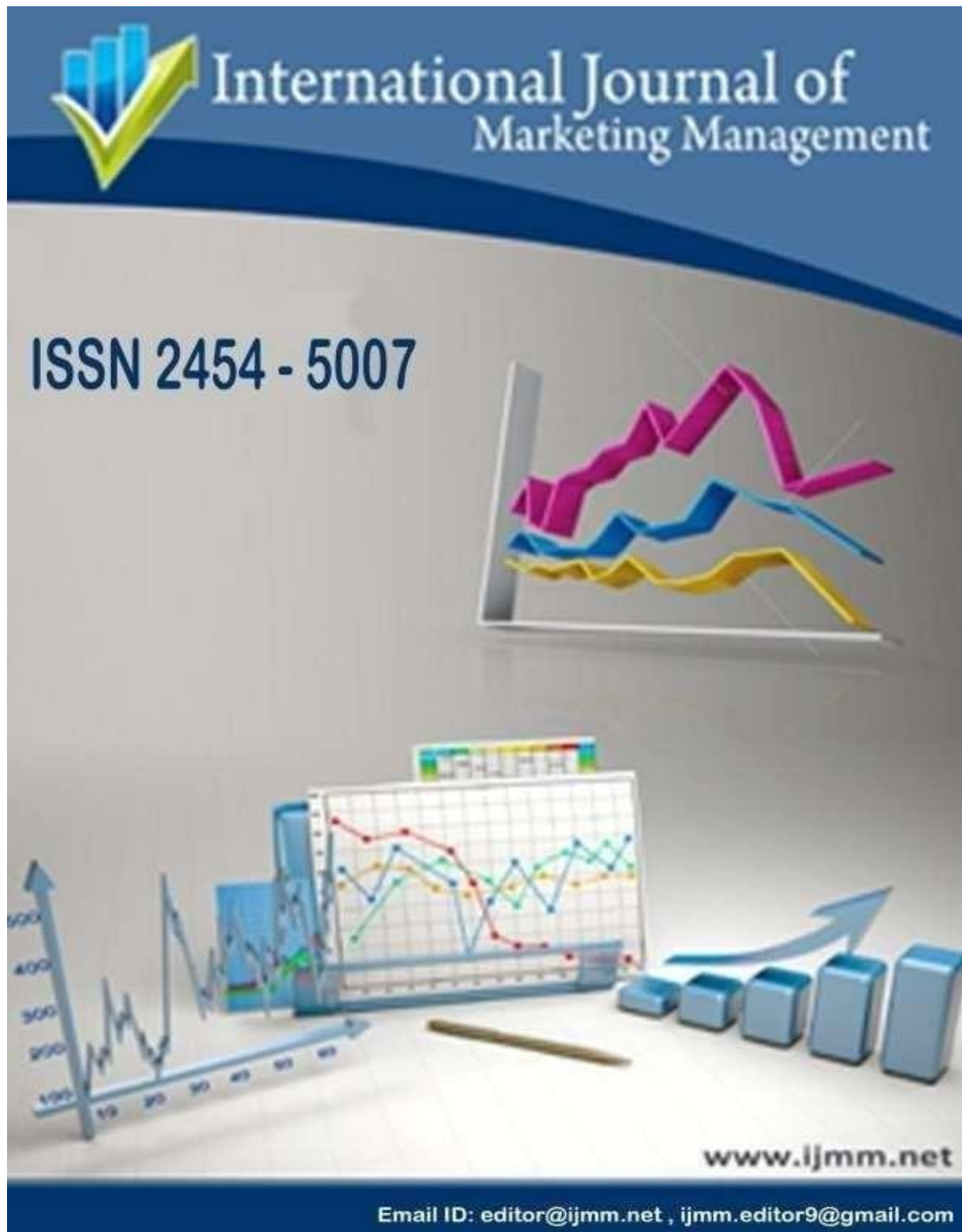




MARKETING MIX DYNAMICS: A MATERNAL CONSUMER PERSPECTIVE ACROSS RETAIL CHANNELS IN CHILD CARE SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

The childcare sector in India is expanding with mothers emerging as key decision-makers. This study, **“Marketing Mix Dynamics: A Maternal Consumer Perspective Across Retail Channels,”** explores how product, price, place, and promotion influence maternal buying behaviour. Primary data from 250 mothers was analyzed using percentage analysis, mean ranking, chi-square, and ANOVA. Results show that safety and quality are top priorities, while affordability and discounts strongly affect purchase choices. Mothers balance trust in traditional stores with the convenience of online and hybrid channels. Promotional strategies such as influencer marketing and doctor endorsements were found to enhance brand trust and purchase intentions. The study highlights the need for childcare brands to

align marketing mix elements with maternal expectations.

KEY WORDS

Maternal Consumer Behaviour, Marketing Mix, Childcare Products, Retail Channels, Consumer Decision-Making, Brand Trust

INTRODUCTION

Mothers today play a pivotal role as decision-makers in the childcare sector, shaping both household consumption and market trends. With changing lifestyles, growing nuclear families, higher disposable incomes, and the rise of digital retail, maternal consumers have more choices and greater influence than ever before. Their buying decisions extend beyond functionality, as factors such as safety, quality, trust, convenience, and emotional connection

significantly impact product selection. Unlike earlier times, when childcare purchases were guided by traditions or local availability, mothers now rely on organized retail channels, online platforms, and peer recommendations. This transformation has compelled brands to rethink their marketing mix strategies—product, price, place, and promotion—to remain competitive. From trusted traditional outlets to modern supermarkets, e-commerce sites, and hybrid models, mothers actively compare, evaluate, and adopt products that align with their expectations. Understanding these dynamics is essential for designing consumer-centric strategies in the rapidly growing childcare market.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The childcare sector in India is expanding rapidly due to urbanization, nuclear family structures, increased participation of mothers in the workforce, and higher disposable incomes. As primary decision-makers, mothers face a wide variety of retail channels, from traditional stores and supermarkets to e-commerce and hybrid platforms, each competing for their attention. Unlike earlier times when childcare purchases were influenced mainly by family traditions or local availability, today's mothers actively

compare products, evaluate brand promises, and demand safety, quality, and value. Marketing strategies in this sector have become more complex, involving not only pricing and promotions but also certifications, packaging appeal, and digital engagement. However, many businesses continue to adopt conventional methods without fully understanding maternal expectations. This creates a gap between consumer needs and market practices. Hence, it is essential to analyze how mothers perceive marketing mix elements across different retail channels to guide more effective strategies.

OBJECTIVES

- To examine how product attributes such as safety, quality, and innovation influence maternal preferences in childcare product selection across various retail channels
- To analyze the role of pricing strategies, including perceived value, discounts, and affordability, in shaping maternal purchase decisions in the childcare sector

NEED FOR STUDY

The childcare market is rapidly expanding due to rising incomes, urbanization,

and the growing role of working mothers. With retail channels diversifying into supermarkets, e-commerce platforms, and social media, mothers face numerous product choices, making them the primary decision-makers. However, many businesses still follow conventional marketing practices without fully addressing maternal expectations of safety, quality, trust, and emotional value. This creates a need to analyze how the marketing mix—product, price, place, and promotion—influences maternal consumers' purchase behavior. Such insights can help brands tailor strategies, build trust, and ensure long-term customer loyalty in a highly competitive childcare sector.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- 1 Area of study Coimbatore, Tamilnadu
- 2 Sample size 250 respondents
- 3 Sampling method Simple random sampling
- 4 Data collection Primary data
- 5 Period of study June 2025 – September 2025
- 6 Analysis Tools Simple percentage analysis, Descriptive Statistics, Chi-square, Mean Ranking, ANOVA, t-Test

LIMITATION OF STUDY

The study is limited to a specific geographic area, so its findings may not represent all maternal consumers across diverse regions. Responses may include personal biases since mothers' decisions are influenced by emotions and past experiences. The study also cannot fully capture external factors like family influence, cultural norms, or market shifts. Additionally, rapid changes in consumer preferences, retail formats, and childcare regulations may affect the long-term relevance of the results, making them context-specific.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The study by I Dyck titled 'pace, time, and renegotiating motherhood: an exploration of the domestic workplace', published in (1990)¹, revealed that the women's actions are linked to their identity as mothers and to broader social and economic processes. The researchers concluded that the study concluded that the category.

The study by Elizabeth Puhn Pungello and Beth Kurtz Costes titled 'Why and how working women choose child care: a review focus on infancy', published in (1999)², revealed that high-quality non-maternal child care does not necessarily negatively impact

preschool-aged children. The researchers concluded the paper with recommendations for future research and a discussion of public policy considerations.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS

Demographic profile of the Respondents

Table 4.1.1

Demographic profile of the Maternal respondents

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE	PARTICULARS	NO OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
AGE	Under 25	47	18.7
	26-30	133	52.8
	31-35	54	21.4
	36-40	18	7.1
	Total	252	100.0
EDUCATION	High School	25	9.9
	Graduate	113	44.8
	Post Graduate	84	33.3
	Professional Degree	30	11.9
	Total	252	100.0
OCCUPATION	Homemaker	92	36.5
	Working Professional	102	40.5
	Business	27	10.7

	Other	31	12.3
	Total	252	100.0
MONTHLY HOUSEHOLD INCOME	Below 25000	84	33.3
	25001-50000	108	42.9
	50001-100000	41	16.3
	Above 100000	19	7.5
	Total	252	100.0
NUMBER CHILDREN	1	147	58.3
	2	98	38.9
	3+	7	2.8
	Total	252	100.0
AGE OF YOUNGEST CHILD	0-6 months	43	17.1
	6-12 months	63	25.0
	1-2 years	83	32.9
	2-5 years	63	25.0
	Total	252	100.0

- Total Respondents are 252 maternal consumers.
- The largest segment belongs to the 26–30 years age group, accounting for 52.8% of the survey participants.
- 18.7% of the respondents are in the age group under 25.
- 21.4% of the respondents fall into the age group of 31–35 years.

- The smallest segment, 7.1%, is represented by the age group of 36–40 years.

CHI SQUARE

Table 4.4.1

Frequency in purchasing baby care products

Demographic Profiles	Groups	Frequency in purchasing baby care products												Chi. square	Sig.
		P1		P2		P3		P4		P5		Total			
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Age	Under 25	2	4.2	7	14.8	28	59.5	8	17.0	2	4.2	47	100	21.944	.038
	26-30	3	2.2	30	22.5	70	53.8	23	17.2	7	5.2	133	100		
	31-35	3	5.5	18	33.3	23	42.5	7	12.9	3	5.5	54	100		
	36-40	1	5.5	4	32.2	5	27.7	3	16.6	5	27.7	18	100		
Education	High School	2	8.0	4	16.0	12	48.0	2	8.0	5	20.0	25	100	14.928	.245
	Graduate	4	3.5	31	27.4	55	48.6	17	15.0	6	5.3	113	100		
	Postgraduate	2	2.3	20	23.8	43	51.1	16	19.0	3	3.5	84	100		
	Professional Degree	1	3.3	4	13.3	16	53.3	6	20.0	3	10.0	30	100		
Occupation	Homemaker	2	2.1	22	23.9	43	46.7	15	16.3	10	10.8	92	100	5.483	.940
	Working Professional	4	3.9	24	23.5	53	51.9	16	15.6	5	4.9	102	100		
	Business	1	3.7	6	22.2	14	51.8	5	18.5	1	3.7	27	100		
	Other	2	6.7	7	22.5	16	51.6	5	16.1	1	3.2	31	100		
Monthly Household Income	Below 25000	2	2.3	17	20.2	39	46.4	18	21.4	8	9.5	84	100	22.620	.031
	25001-50000	4	3.7	32	29.6	57	52.7	13	12.0	2	1.8	108	100		
	50001-100000	3	7.3	9	21.9	18	43.9	8	19.5	3	7.3	41	100		
	Above 100000	0	0	1	5.2	12	63.1	2	10.5	4	21.0	19	100		
Number of Children	1	5	3.4	32	21.7	77	52.3	25	17.0	8	5.4	147	100	2.563	.959
	2	4	4.0	25	25.5	46	46.9	15	15.3	8	8.1	98	100		
	3+	0	0	2	28.5	3	42.8	1	14.2	1	14.2	7	100		
Age of Youngest Child	0-6 months	3	6.9	13	30.2	16	37.2	9	20.9	2	4.6	43	100	13.380	.342
	6-12 months	0	0	15	23.8	35	55.5	8	12.6	5	7.9	63	100		
	1-2 years	5	6.0	17	20.4	46	55.4	10	12.0	5	6.0	83	100		
	2-5 years	1	1.5	14	22.2	29	46.0	14	22.2	5	7.9	63	100		

(Source: Computed)

Most maternal consumers purchase baby care products frequently, regardless of their demographic profile. However, the age of the respondents and their monthly household income are the only demographic factors found to have a significant association with this purchasing frequency, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis in those cases. Conversely, educational qualification, occupational status, the number of children, and the age of the youngest child were all found to have no significant association with the frequency of purchasing baby care products. Therefore, the chi-square test results indicate that while frequent purchases are common across the board, only age and income significantly influence how frequently these purchases occur

ANOVA

Table 4.5.1

Influence of Buying Behaviour Steps for Baby Care Products

Demographic profiles	Groups	Influence of Buying Behaviour Steps for Baby Care Products					
		N	Mean	SD	F-value	Sig. value	S/NS
Age	Under 25	47	3.3026	1.04712	3.547	.015	S
	26-30	133	3.7109	.78388			
	31-35	54	3.7366	.96341			
	36-40	18	3.3086	.86197			
Education	High School	25	3.1600	1.09012	5.360	.001	S
	Graduate	113	3.4907	.89405			
	Postgraduate	84	3.8452	.79228			
	Professional Degree	30	3.7889	.81459			
Occupation	Homemaker	92	3.6461	.89995	1.007	.390	NS
	Working	102	3.6808	.88994			

	Professional						
	Business	27	3.4527	.87648			
	Other	31	3.4194	.92327			
Monthly Household Income	Below 25000	84	3.4392	.93168	2.802	.041	S
	25001-50000	108	3.6193	.79432			
	50001-100000	41	3.7507	1.00117			
	Above 100000	19	4.0292	.92507			
Number of Children	1	147	3.6145	.91812	1.777	.171	NS
	2	98	3.5635	.83671			
	3+	7	4.2222	1.14396			
Age of Youngest Child	0-6 months	43	3.5530	.94794	.588	.624	NS
	6-12 months	63	3.5115	.83924			
	1-2 years	83	3.6479	.83217			
	2-5 years	63	3.7037	1.00040			

(Source: Computed)

The analysis reveals that age, educational qualification, and monthly household income all have a significant influence on the buying behaviour steps for baby care products ($p < 0.05$). Specifically, the highest mean influence scores were observed among postgraduates, those with income above ₹1,00,000, and consumers aged 31–35 years, suggesting these groups are most influenced by the buying process. Conversely, occupational status, the number of children, and the age of the youngest child were found to have no significant difference in their influence on buying behaviour steps ($p > 0.05$), leading to the acceptance of the null hypothesis for these demographic variables.

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Table 4.2.1

Influence of various sources in the decision to purchase baby care products (BCP)

Statement	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	S.D
Advertisements (TV, print, digital)	252	1	3	2.08	.762
Friends	252	1	3	2.26	.538
Doctors / Pediatricians	252	1	3	2.53	.688
Self-search (e.g., internet, blogs)	252	1	3	2.24	.657
Family members	252	1	3	2.33	.679
Company representatives / brand promoters	252	1	3	1.90	.701
Sales promotions at point of sale	252	1	3	1.89	.789

Professional medical advice is the primary factor influencing maternal consumers' purchase decisions for child care products, with doctors/pediatricians recording the highest mean influence score (2.53). This is closely followed by trusted personal networks like family members (2.33) and friends (2.26). In contrast, direct marketing activities such as advertisements across various media (2.08) and company representatives/sales promotions at the point of sale (1.90 and 1.89) were rated as the least influential factors. The data clearly shows that professional and relational trust outweighs promotional efforts in this sector.

MEAN RANKING**Table 4.3.1****Important factors while purchasing baby care products**

Particulars	N	Mean	Rank
Safety	252	2.29	1
Quality	252	2.58	2
Innovation	252	3.02	3
Brand Reputation	252	3.37	4
Packaging Design	252	3.73	5

From the table 4.3.1 - It has been evident from the mean ranking that the higher important factor considered by mothers while purchasing baby care products is “Safety” (mean 2.29) followed by, “Quality” (mean 2.58), “Innovation” (mean 3.02), “Brand Reputation” (mean 3.37), “Packaging Design” (mean 3.73). **Thus, it has been determined that the most important factor considered by mothers while purchasing baby care products is Quality.**

SUGGESTIONS

Brands must ensure maximum product safety and transparency by clearly displaying certifications, quality testing details, and ingredient lists, as safety and quality are paramount to mothers. Simultaneously, they must introduce affordable product ranges and discounts (like combo packs and loyalty programs) to satisfy the crucial role price sensitivity plays in purchase decisions.

Strengthen online and hybrid retail channels by providing rich product information, while leveraging experiential

marketing (free samples and in-store demonstrations) to build product confidence. Brands must also utilize professional medical advice and peer recommendations (influencers, parenting communities, and collaboration with pediatricians) to build trust and increase brand awareness among maternal consumers.

CONCLUSION

The study confirms that safety and quality are the most critical factors for mothers when selecting childcare products, although affordability and discounts

significantly influence their final purchase decisions.

Mothers are gravitating towards online and hybrid retail channels for the convenience and abundant product information they offer. However, in-store experiences remain vital for building essential trust and ensuring quality.

Targeted promotional strategies—such as influencer marketing and free samples—are highly effective in shaping awareness, particularly among younger, more educated mothers (ages 26–30). To achieve long-term market growth and customer loyalty, providers must focus on transparent information, value-for-money offerings, and seamless integration of digital and physical channels.

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