Determinants of Children's Influence on Family Purchase Decisions in Kenya

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Abstract

Purpose The purpose of this paper is to find out the amount of children influence on family purchase decisions. It considers product types as being the influencing agents that enhance children’s influence to family purchase decisions. The paper acknowledges children as being consumers in their own right and not an extension of their parents. Therefore the amount of children influence in this paper is direct influence which is characterized by other family members taking the child into account when going through the purchase decision process. This therefore implies that, consumer roles being played by family members are seen as being of equal measure, such that children are equal participants of family decision making just as parents. This is opposed to the child passively influencing the decision itself as is in the domain of majority of Kenyan families.

Approach The study was based on an extensive literature review and qualitative and quantitative study designs. Using a questionnaire, a survey was conducted with parents of children aged 8-12 year olds in Nairobi Kenya. The sample size was 200 parents.

Findings The study confirmed a positive and significant linear relationship between family purchase decisions and product types. The findings of this research indicate that children’s influence on family purchase decisions vary across different product types, whether the product is for a child’s own use or weather the product is used by the whole family.

Practical implications The study will benefit advertisers in formulating policies that improve service delivery, by addressing the identified factors and following the researcher’s recommendations. Marketers will benefit from the acquired knowledge when directing their marketing efforts at families. Knowledge about children's influence on the idea generation and choice stage should be used to attract children's awareness of new products and to focus on specific products in order to impact children.

Article Type: Research paper

Keyword(s): Children; Family; Family purchase decisions; Influence;
1. Introduction
Successful marketing requires that companies fully connect with their customers. Adopting a holistic marketing orientation means understanding customers, gaining a 360 degree view of both their daily lives that occur during their lifetimes so that the right products are marketed to the right customers in the right way. Consumer buying behavior refers to the buying behavior of final consumers i.e. individuals and households who buy goods and services for personal consumption. All of these final consumers combined make up the consumer market. Consumers around the world vary tremendously in age, income, education level, and tastes. They also buy an incredible variety of goods and services. How these diverse consumers connect with each other and with other elements of the world around them impact their choices among various products, services, and companies (Kotler, 2008).
Consumer purchases are influenced strongly by cultural, social, personal and psychological characteristics. For the most part, marketers cannot control such factors, but they must take them into account. Family members can strongly influence buyer behavior. The family is the most important consumer buying organization in society. Marketers are interested in the roles and influence of the husband, wife, and children on the purchase of different products and services (Norgaard, 2007).
Ekstrom (1995) defines the concept of influence in family decision-making as a change in a person's dispositions, as a result of interaction between parents and children. In her definition of influence, Gronhøj (2002) talks about a competence enabling the achievement of specific results. What is interesting in these definitions is that influence means making a person change his or her decisions via, for example, interaction or direct confrontation. Interaction is part of the active or direct influence, where for instance the child interacts with his/her parents by using various influence techniques to achieve what he or she wants. Influence can also be more passive or indirect, where parents are aware of the child's preferences and try to comply without direct interaction with the child (Belch et al., 1985; Grønhøj, 2002; Jensen, 1990).
In general many studies on consumer behavior focus on the individual consumer's decision making, and only sometimes include the influence from other relevant persons through factors such as the subjective norm (the theory of reasoned action – Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). As a result, such factors only take indirect influence into account, for example when parents know what their children want and they are willing to comply with these wants. Another aspect is that the individual buying agent is not always able to predict precisely what other family members want him or her to buy (Gronhoj, 2002). A successful choice may also require direct interaction, for example where parents can ask their children what they want.
Pursuance of this research was precipitated by my personal experience where our 9 year old son pushed and influenced us to purchase a Nissan Tiida Latio similar to his friend's family car, instead of my choice for a Toyota Fielder. When I shared this experience with my Professor, he also shared how his 8 year old daughter influenced them to have a choice of Blue Band Margarine instead of Butter, after watching the Blue Band advert whose user became the winner in a race. The child wanted to take part and win during their school's athletic competition. Children influence to family purchase decision is also getting much recognition in Kenyan businesses. We encountered a supermarket in Kakamega town by the name "Mama Watoto Supermarket" (see appendix I).
Kenyan marketers therefore need to move beyond the traditional predictable techniques that worked for generations. There is hardly any empirical exploration into the course and effects of the child's role in the family buying process in Kenya. Most of the empirical studies have been conducted in developed countries and less is known about children's influence elsewhere (Showham and Dalakas, 2006). Available literature has also failed to identify any comparable studies in Kenya. It is in this view that this study focuses on finding out children’s influence on family purchase decisions in Kenya.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Categories of Consumers

Customers play the most significant part in business. In fact the customer is the actual boss in a deal and is responsible for the actual profit for the organization (Kotler, 2008). A customer is the one who uses the products and services and judges the quality of those products and services. Hence it's important for an organization to retain customers or make new customers and flourish business. To manage customers, organizations should follow some sort of approaches like segmentation or division of customers into groups because each customer has to be considered valuable and profitable (Kotler, 2008).

Customers can either be; buyers only, users only or buyers and users. Sometimes the customer who chooses a product or service is not the end-user or the person who uses it. For example, one might create a computer game for children. But children are not the ones who actually buy the game. The child is the user, but the decision maker is probably the child's parents. The buyer may be the parents or the adult who picks the game up at the store.

Family decision making is different from individual decision making and is more complex because of the likelihood of joint decisions and different role specifications for members (Assael, 1987). To understand how consumers actually make buying decisions, there is need to identify who makes and has input into the buying decision; people can be initiators, influencers, deciders, buyers, or users (Kotler, 2008). Children may combine the roles of initiators-those who request that something be bought, influencers-those who influence the buying decision, or users-those who use the product. These roles carried on to the family decision making process, places children as being equal participants in the buying process just as parents. This study considers children as having direct influence in the family purchase decisions through being; initiators, influencers and users. It recognizes the importance of seeing decision influence as a matter of degree and not an issue of who has the ultimate say.

2.2 Family Purchase Decisions

A family is defined as two or more persons related by marriage, or adoption who reside together. In a more dynamic sense, the individuals who constitute a family might be described as members of the most social group who live and interact to satisfy their personal and mutual needs (Schiffman, 2007). As stated by Assael (1987), family decision making is different from individual decision making and is more complex because of the likelihood of joint decisions and different role specifications from members. Family members can also strongly influence buyer behavior. Marketers should be interested in the roles and influence of the husband, wife, and
children on the purchase of different products and services (George, 1998). Buying roles change with evolving consumer lifestyles (Perner, 2010).

In Kenya, the wife traditionally has been the main purchasing agent for the family, especially in the areas of food, household products, and clothing. But with most urban women holding jobs outside the home and the willingness of husbands to do more of the family's purchasing, all this is inevitably going to change. Children may also have a strong influence on family buying decisions. Over the past, in the case of expensive products and services, husbands and wives often made joint decisions. Over several decades, there has been a trend toward children playing a more active role in what the family buys, as well as in the family decision-making process. This shift in influence has occurred as a result of families having fewer children (which increases the influence of each child), more dual-income couples who can afford to permit their children to make a greater number of choices, and the encouragement by the media to allow children to express themselves (Schiffman, 2007). Still further, single-parent households often push their children toward household participation and self-reliance. As an example of children's influence, a child in a supermarket with a parent makes an average of 15 requests, of which about half are typically granted (Wimalasir, 2004).

### 2.3 Product Types

For almost all product categories, children have an important role (Martensen and Gronholdt, 2008), whether the product is for the child's own use like toys, snacks, clothes, etc or the product is for family use like family vacation or the product is for joint consumption of the household like rice, food, tea/coffee, children have a very strong power to influence (Belch et al., 1985). But children influence in family buying process differs by product category. According to Martensen and Gronholdt, (2008), children seem to have a significant influence in product decisions for which they will be the primary consumer, like breakfast cereals, snack foods, toys, children's clothes and school supplies.

Children also influence decisions about family leisure time activities (such as vacations, movie attendance, eating out and cable TV subscriptions), although their influence is less in these decisions than in decisions for products for their own use. In Western countries, children's influence is maximal in purchase decisions like toys (Burns and Harrison, 1985); children's wear (Foxman and Tansuhaj, 1988); cereals (Belch et al., 1985; Berey and Pollay, 1968). Children also exert influence on family decision making for vacations (Ahuja and Stinson, 1993; Belch et al., 1985); families decisions to eat out (Williams and Veeck, 1998) and movies (Darley and Lim, 1986). Foxman et al. (1989) concluded that children tend to have greater authority if the products are for their personal consumption and are less expensive. On the other hand, due to children's limited financial resources, children have less influence on the products related to financial terms (Mangleburg, 1990), or entire family usage (television, refrigerator, car etc).

A child's influence in the family buying process not only differs by product category but also by the stage of the family buying process. Davis and Rigaux (1974) differentiated stages within the decision-making process. Specifically, they divided the process into just three stages: problem recognition, search for internal and external information and final decision. Woodside and Motes (1979) considered a total of nine stages including decisions like style, size, brand, etc. in each stage; Putman and Davidson (1987) considered the final decision as having two stages,
namely where to buy and what brand to buy; Webster (1994) included the evaluation of alternatives stage and one final stage, that of post-purchase, aimed at reflecting the valuation of the purchasers with respect to the decision made. By and large most of the researchers used a three step model of purchase decision making: problem recognition, information search and evaluation of alternatives and final decision stage (Foxman and Tansuhaj, 1988; Martínez and Polo, 1999).

For certain products, children actively participate in initiating the purchase, seeking information about the product, while for others they are the final decision takers. The studies of Moschis and Mitchell (1986) and Beatty and Talpade (1994) showed that children dominate influence in the first two stages of decision making i.e. problem recognition and information search, but this influence decreases at the last stage (choice) of the purchase decision stages. Children are to a greater extent initiators than influencers in their family’s purchase decisions, independent of the sub-decision stage (Wimalasiri, 2004; Martensen and Gronholdt, 2008). Children consistently exerted the most influence in item selection and the least influence in how much to spend (Flurry and Veeck, 2009). Wut and Chou (2009) found that children have more influence in the choice-making stage of decision making and parents still control the final decision, which is consistent with previous research findings (Belch et al., 1985; Moschis and Mitchell, 1986).

This study made one hypotheses as;

\( H_0: \) Product types have no significant effects on family purchase decisions in Kenya.

\( H_a: \) Product types have significant effects on family purchase decisions in Kenya.

3. Methodology

The first step was to establish the objectives of the study based on a descriptive survey and a literature review. Then, on the basis of the literature review, a questionnaire was prepared. The questionnaire was tested in a pilot study: problems were identified and the questionnaire revised to ensure that all questions would be comprehensible to the respondents. The questionnaire was designed to tap information about: the personal characteristics of the respondents namely, age, gender, relationship with child, income etc; and the child’s influence for different products with respect to different stages of the family buying process. The study subjects were children of 8-12 year old in Kenya. However, the study targeted parents/guardians. This is because of ethical considerations, processes and dilemmas (i.e. kidnappings and children trafficking which are on the rise in Kenya today), that are frequently areas of caution to children custodians in Kenya when doing research with children; which is more the case than when doing with adults, due to issues of minority status, informed consent, and anxiety about the cognitive competencies of children. This study therefore used parents and considered children as being objects of research. Their consumer experiences were studied from the outside as parents took a paternalistic view.

A sample of 200 parents/guardians of children aged 8-12 years was chosen where stratified sampling based on 47 counties was used on the larger Kenya and Nairobi County purposively being chosen to represent the Kenyan population.

A list containing fifteen products and services, namely stationery and books, child(s) clothes and shoes, vacation, food and beverage, dining out, computer, mobile phone, car, television, toothpaste, bathing soap and cosmetics was made. These products and services were
established after some interviews and a thorough literature review, and therefore the list represented major products for a family. The respondents had to report their children’s influence levels on the purchase of these different products and services. A five point Likert response scales ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree was used. The third part of the questionnaire was designed to tap information about children’s influence for different products across different stages of the family buying process; from need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, to post purchase decision and a five point Likert response (Scale: (5) Always (4) often (3) sometimes (2) seldom (1) never) was used. The study targeted children aged from 8 to 12 years. The reasons for choosing that age band was that children at this age are expected to be mature enough and have been found to be active and independent shoppers (McNeal, 1992), highly cognitive in consumption choices (Belk et al., 1982) and knowledgeable about products and brands (Ward et al., 1977).

Out of the 200 questionnaires administered, 184 were filled and returned. This represented 92% of response rate. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), a 50% response rate is considered to be adequate, 60% to be good, while a 70% and above rate is considered to be very good. Therefore, a 92% response rate from this study is considered to be very good and satisfactory. The high response rate can be attributed to an overwhelming willingness of respondents to participate in the research. The study was interesting to majority of the respondents who participated with zeal. The collected data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences version17.0 (SPSS).

4. Data analysis and findings

Data obtained from the field survey was analyzed in several steps. Reliability was tested using Cronbach’s coefficient Alpha. Cronbach’s Alpha measures how well a set of items or variables, measure a single uni-dimensional latent construct that is a coefficient of reliability or consistency. Reliability is expressed as a coefficient between 0 and 1.00. The higher the coefficient, the more reliable is the test. A threshold of a Cronbach Alpha of 0.7 and above is acceptable (Cronbach, 1951). Cronbach Alpha was used to test the reliability of the proposed constructs. The findings indicated that product types had a coefficient of 0.8211 and family purchase decisions had a coefficient of 0.8058. All constructs depicted that the value of Cronbach’s Alpha were greater or equal to 0.7 and thus, the study constructs were reliable. Further a test of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO), which measure sampling adequacy and Bartlett’s test of Sphericity was applied to test whether there was a relationship among the variables. A sample size is considered to be adequate if KMO is greater than 0.5. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measures of sampling adequacy shows the value of test statistic as 0.743 which is greater than 0.5. With the value of test statistic and the associated significance level, it shows that there exists a high relationship among variables.

Demographic profile of the respondents

The mean age of the sample population was 37.8 years. 26% of the respondents represented children of 8 years, 25% of the respondents represented children of 9 years, 23% of the respondents represented children of 10 years, 15% of the respondents represented children of 11 years and 11% of the respondents represented children of 12 years. Around 52 percent of the children were boys and 48 percent were girls. Out of all the respondents surveyed, 80
percent were both parent, 12 percent were single parents, 4 percent were guardians, 2 percent were widowed while 2 percent were divorced. The highest income of majority respondents was Ksh 30 000 – Ksh 100 000, representing 41% of the respondents. 27% of respondents earns Ksh 10 000 – 30 000, 17% of respondents earned Ksh 10 000 and below, 15% of the respondents earned Ksh 100 000 and above. The mean monthly income was Ksh 25,400 with a standard deviation of Ksh 9,400.

Children Influence on Product Types

According to the study, 95% of the respondents agreed that their children have a list of product request for shopping. An unplanned impromptu observation at Nairobi’s Kasarani Naivas Supermarket, a day prior to primary school’s March 2014 half-term revealed that 8 out of 10 accompanied children of years 8-12 in the supermarket had a shopping list. This is absolutely a reality because the role of children on decision making and negotiation strategies has become an important issue. Still strengthening this assertion, the study shows some considerable extent of children’s influence for almost all product categories.

Considering products of children’s own use, 38.6% of the respondents strongly agreed that their child had influence for the purchase of toys, while 47.3% agreed that their children had influence on the purchase of toys, 7.6% were neutral, and 3.8% disagreed while 2.7% of the respondents strongly agreed that their children did influence the purchase of toys. 26.6% of the respondents strongly agreed that their children had influence for video games, 56.6% of the respondents agreed that their children have some influence in the purchase of video games, 7.6% of the respondents were neutral, 4.9% of the respondents disagreed while 4.9% of the respondents strongly disagreed that their children had some influence on the purchase of video games.

For products which are used by the whole family, 13% of the respondents strongly agreed that their children had influence in a vacation that they took, 50% of the respondents agreed that their children had some influence on vacation, 20.2% of the respondents were neutral, 12.5% disagreed that their children had an influence on vacation while 4.3% strongly disagreed that their children had influence on the vacation that they took. 8.2% of the respondents strongly agreed that their children had some influence on the television set that they bought, 61.4% of the respondents agreed that their children had some influence on the purchase of television set, 14.1% of the respondents were neutral, 10.9% of the respondents disagreed that their children had some influence on the purchase of television while 5.4% of the respondents strongly disagreed that their children had some influence on the purchase of a television set.

Sophisticated family products like cars and computers were also not being left out. 9.2% of the respondents strongly agreed that their children at least had some influence on the purchase of their family car, 22.8% agreed that their children at least had some influence on the purchase of their car, 34.2% of the respondents were neutral about their children’s influence on the purchase of a family car, 19.6% of the respondents disagreed that their children had some influence on the purchase of their family car while 14.1% of the respondents strongly disagreed that their children had some influence on the purchase of their family car. This confirms a study by Chaudhary and Gupta (2012), who found out that children have an influencing role whether the product is for the child’s own use like toys, snacks, clothes, etc or the product is for family
use like family vacation or the product is for joint consumption of the household like rice, food, tea/coffee, children have a very strong power to influence.

The findings also concur with Belch et al., 1985; Foxman et al., 1989; Jenkins, 1979; Lee and Beatty, 2002, who found out that children’s influence seems to vary across product categories. Their findings showed that children gained most influence when it came to products for their own consumption. According to the study, children do not have as much influence for the purchase of sophisticated products like cars and computers as they do on products of their own use or those for joint consumption. These findings also relate with Nogaard (2007); Chaudhary and Gupta (2012), who concluded that for products that involved significant financial expenditure such as cars, TV, washing machines, computers and vacations etc., parents would like to take major decisions and limit their child’s involvement due to the financial risk associated with these decisions.

The coefficient of determination (R square) and correlation coefficient(R) shows the degree of association between product types and family purchase decisions in Kenya. Results of the linear regression indicate that R = 0.450 and R square = 0.203 which is an indication that there is a moderate relationship between product types and family purchase decisions in Kenya. The findings concur with Belch et al., 1985; Foxman et al., 1989; Jenkins, 1979; Lee and Beatty, 2002, who found out that children’s influence to family purchase decisions seems to vary across all product categories. Results of ANOVA test revealed that product types had a significant effect on purchase decisions since P-value is .000 which is less than 5% level of significance. This is shown by the linear model $y = 6o + 61X1+e$ where $X1$ is product types. Since p-value is the probability of finding a value of the test statistic as large or larger than that obtained, given that the null hypothesis is true, the null hypothesis is rejected as p-value is .000<0.05. Further, F-value=46.267 and the critical F =3.84<46.267 and therefore we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a linear relationship between product types and family purchase decisions in Kenya. Beta coefficients show a positive gradient which reveals that an increase in product types increases purchase decisions. The results of t-test found that the $\beta$ coefficient was statistically significant since t-value at 5% is 6.80>critical t=1.96. The null hypothesis was rejected since the t-test indicated that $\beta$ coefficient was different from 0 at 5% significant level.

**Overall children’s influence across various stages for all the product types**

Family members exert varying degrees of participation within the purchase decision process. According to the study, 55% of the respondents often felt that their children had some influence at the need recognition stage of FPD process, 7% of the respondents always felt that their children influenced the need recognition of the FPD process, 27% of the respondents sometimes felt that their children influenced the need recognition of the FPD process, 9% of the respondents were seldom that their children influenced the need recognition of the FPD process while 2% of the respondents never felt that their children influenced the need recognition of the FPD process. This is consistent with Kapoor (2001), who found out that children (initiator) first expressed the need for personal computers and television but the final purchase was made after consultation with other family members, mainly the husband. 37% of the respondents felt that their children often influence information search stage, 6% of the respondents always felt that their children influenced information search stage, 28% of the respondents...
respondents are felt that their children sometimes influenced information search stage, 11% of the respondents seldom felt that their children influenced information search stage while 18% never felt that their children influenced information search stage. This corresponds with Gotze et al. (2009), who found out that most children spent more time than grown-ups discussing innovations like digital cameras, mobile phones, and sports equipment. Along with their friends, they compared what they had and reflected on what was new in the market, and they dedicated more interest to what it would be like if they had a specific product, e.g. faster internet. 36% of the respondents felt that their children often had influence at the evaluation of alternatives stage, 12% of the respondents felt that their children always had influence at the evaluation of alternatives stage, 22% of the respondents felt that their children sometimes had influence at the evaluation of alternatives stage, 15% of the respondents felt that their children seldom had influence at the evaluation of alternatives stage while 15% of the felt that their children never had influence at the evaluation of alternatives stage. Wut and Chou (2009) found that children have more influence in the choice-making stage of decision making and parents still control the final decision, which is consistent with previous research findings (Belch et al., 1985; Moschis and Mitchell, 1986).

According to the study 28% of the respondents felt that their children often had FPD influence at the purchase decision stage, 6% of the respondents felt that their children always had some influence at the purchase decision stage, 19% of the respondents felt that sometimes their children had FPD influence at the purchase decision stage, 9% were seldom while 38% of the respondents never thought that their children had FPD influence at the purchase decision stage. This corresponds with Belch et al., 1985; Jenkins (1979), who found out that children do not know how much to spend but they can make communicative decisions such as model, color, brand, shape and time of purchase (Belch et al., 1985; Darley and Lim, 1986). Beatty and Talpade (1994) stated that children would make the decision based on the pre-determined boundaries established by the parents like the parent deciding on the model of the car and the child choosing the color.

The study indicates that 29% of the respondents felt that their children often did have purchase decision influence at the post purchase behavior stage, 20% of the respondents felt that their children always had purchase decision influence at the post purchase behavior stage, 21% of the respondents felt that their children sometimes had purchase decision influence at the post purchase behavior stage, 6% and 24% seldom and never felt that their children did have purchase decision influence at the post purchase behavior stage.

5. Discussion and implications

The stated null hypothesis in this study was; $H01$: Product types have no significant effect on family purchase decisions in Kenya. Product types/categories that were considered by this research were; toys, breakfast cereals, video games, stationery and books, children clothes and shoes, vacation, food and beverage, dining out, computer, mobile phone, car, television, toothpaste, bathing soap and cosmetics. The Multiple Linear Regression Analysis confirmed a positive and significant linear relationship between family purchase decisions and product types. The findings of this research indicate that children’s influence on family purchase decisions vary across different product types, whether the product is for a child’s own use or
weather the product is used by the whole family. The findings are consistent with those of Belch et al., (1985) who found out that children have influencing power for almost all product categories; whether the product is for the child's own use or the product is for family use. This study exposed respondents to products of children’s own use, products of joint consumption for the whole family, cheap and expensive products and it was found out that children had some influencing power for all product categories. This concurs with Chaudhary and Gupta (2012), who found out that children have an influencing role whether the product is for the child's own use like toys, snacks, clothes, etc or the product is for family use like family vacation or the product is for joint consumption of the household like rice, food, tea/coffee, children have a very strong power to influence.

6. Limitations and suggestions for future research

The study is limited on a few grounds. First, the sample of the study is limited to a size of 200 parents/guardians. Therefore, the scope of the study is limited to the sample size and Nairobi County. Future research could include a broad range of factors that determine family decision making, including the effect of demographic factors. The study subjects were children of 8-12 year old in Kenya. However, the study targeted parents/guardians. This is because of ethical considerations, processes and dilemmas (i.e. kidnappings and children trafficking which are on the rise in Kenya today), that are frequently areas of caution to children custodians in Kenya when doing research with children; which is more the case than when doing with adults, due to issues of minority status, informed consent, and anxiety about the cognitive competencies of children. Social researchers who work with children have their ethical view of children formed by social theory. That is to say, their paradigmatic perspective tends to shape not only their research questions, methods and theoretical perspectives, but also their ethical view of children as individuals. This study therefore used parents and considered children as being objects of research. Their consumer experiences were studied from the outside as parents took a paternalistic view.

This study is a millstone for future research in this area, particularly in Kenya. The study methodology has targeted parents/guardians who expressed their opinions on the extent to which their children actually influenced family purchase decisions. As a future avenue of research, there is need to carry out similar research on children’s influence to family purchase decisions in Kenya while using both parents/guardians and children in order to establish whether the two findings would agree for generalization.
APPENDIX I: MAMA WATOTO SUPERMARKET
APPENDIX II: MODEL 1 - PRODUCT TYPES AND FPD

Model Summary

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a Predictors: (Constant), X1 - product types

ANOVA(b)

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a Predictors: (Constant), X1 - product types
b Dependent Variable: Y - FPD

Coefficients(a)

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X1  
.398  .058  .450  6.802  .000  

a Dependent Variable: Y- FPD

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References
