

## Pediatricians as a Key Channel of Influence for Infant Formula Purchases

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**Abstract :** For infant caregivers, choosing an infant formula for their child can be a difficult task in an already stressful environment of caring for a newborn. There exist several channels that influence purchasing decision of infant formula such as, friends and family and their experiences, health care professionals, social media influencers, as well as standard media marketing. This study sought to identify the key channels by which caregivers obtain information regarding infant formula and help them make their purchasing decision. A digital survey was issued for 90 days in the US (n=121) and 30 days in Mexico (n=88) targeting respondents with children  $\leq 4$  years of age. Respondents were asked two key questions regarding the influences on their purchasing decisions: 1) "When choosing a formula brand, what do you do to help you make your decision?", and 2) "When choosing a formula brand, what is most important to you?". A list of potential answers was provided for each question and respondents were asked to select all that apply to them. Lastly, respondents were provided a 5-point Likert scale and asked to respond to the statement 3) "I am more likely to buy a particular formula brand if my pediatrician recommends it to me". For question 1, in the US and Mexico, 76% and 95% of respondents respectively, selected "I ask my pediatrician" which represented the top selection. For question 2, 52% and 45% of respondents respectively, selected "On package "Pediatrician Recommended" claim..." which also represented the top selection. For statement 3, 82% and 89% of respondents respectively, stated that they either "somewhat agree" or "strongly agree" with the statement. For infant caregivers, the pediatrician is a very important channel of influence when it comes to purchasing decision of infant formula. Caregivers clearly see the pediatrician as the arbiter of their child's nutrition and seek their recommendations for infant formula use. For infant formula manufacturers, it is important that they see the pediatrician as the gatekeeper to this market, and they put resources into medical marketing communication to this health care professional group to ensure success.

**Keywords :** infant formula, pediatrician, purchasing driver, caregiver

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