Chapter 1

The Buying Decision–Making Process in the Selection of Device Suppliers in Reproductive Medicine:
A Preliminary Model

Paulo Botelho Pires

iD https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3786-6783

Porto Business School, Portugal

António Correia Barros
Politécnico do Porto, Portugal

Filipe Taveira Santos
Faculdade de Economia, Universidade do Porto, Portugal

ABSTRACT

This study identifies the criteria underlying the buying decision-making process of medical devices in reproductive medicine. This research had three main objectives. The first one was to translate the criteria mentioned by the decision-makers into theoretical constructs, while the second objective was intended to establish the relationship between the constructs, creating a conceptual model of buying decision-making for medical devices in reproductive medicine. The third objective was to identify suitable business and marketing strategies for such a decision-making process. Four constructs were evaluated in the pre-purchase phase, namely the brand, the product's performance, the training associated with the product, and the price. In the post-purchase phase, decision-makers evaluated the following constructs: service provided by the company, the relationship with the salesperson, and loyalty. Regarding marketing strategies, market-orientation strategy, relationship-marketing strategy, and brand-equity strategy were identified as possible strategies.

INTRODUCTION

The degree of competitiveness in the health industry is characterized by increasing intensity, with globalization also taking place, being made up of companies with different sizes and strategies. Even in small market segments that are apparently unattractive, with low growth rates, companies try to gain market share and remain profitable. Therefore, it is crucial to know what strategies companies in the health industry should adopt, bearing in mind the decision criteria underlying the purchasing process by health service providers, specifically public hospitals, and clinics. Reproductive medicine or medically assisted procreation uses a set of therapeutics and laboratory techniques, resorting to medical devices, reagents, and equipment.

Questions about the role of the brand, the importance of price, technical specifications, or performance that probably will influence the buying decision-making process are relevant. Surely, in some cases obtaining information regarding how the buying decision-making process takes place and proceed with the right adjustment to it will mean survival in the market. Therefore, the research question is about how the decision-makers choose the suppliers of medically assisted reproduction devices.

This research was developed in a sequence of phases, in which, first, a review of the bibliography will be carried out that includes the relevant themes for the objectives, including the literature review on the types of strategies, the review on consumer behavior models, and decision making in B2B. Subsequently, a qualitative methodology will be used to collect data from decision-makers who are responsible for the buying decision-making process in public hospitals and private clinics. The data collection method will consist of semi-structured interviews, which after analysis will produce the preliminary constructs and the relationship between them. The objective of the investigation is therefore to obtain a preliminary model of the buying decision-making process of medical devices, reagents, and equipment in medically assisted reproduction.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Business and Marketing Strategies

According to Hunt (2010, p. 359) "R-A theory (Resource-Advantage) is an evolutionary, process theory of competition that is interdisciplinary … has affinities with numerous other theories and research traditions, including evolutionary economics, Austrian economics, the historical tradition, heterogeneous demand theory, differential advantage theory, industrial-organization economics, the resource-

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