

Chapter 15

Adolescent Influence in Family Purchase Decisions

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ABSTRACT

The adolescent is considered as an active element in family purchase decisions, especially in the earliest stages of the process. However, researchers have focused their attention on purchases for adolescent use. In this chapter, the author examines adolescent influence for several products. A survey was used to collect data from several high-schools in districts of Lisbon, Setúbal, Portimão, and Beja. 2,800 questionnaires were delivered during May 2016. Adolescents were instructed to submit the questionnaires to their mothers and to return them, fully completed. 966 validated questionnaires were returned. The results point to adolescent's age, gender, product knowledge, and mother's occupational status as the relevant explanatory variables. The results also point to the relevance of considering product category as a moderating variable. The present chapter offers a contribution to companies by providing evidence of adolescent's influence in family purchase decisions. It is important that producing companies and retailer marketers focus their efforts on adolescent satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION

The family has been considered as the most relevant consumer and decision-making unit in the area of consumer behavior (Baía, 2018; Kaur & Medury; 2011, 2013; Sondhi & Basu, 2014). The study of family consumption behavior has become increasingly important in the literature, in particular the process by which family decisions are made. In this context, academics and marketers recognize the importance of deepening and continuing the study of family consumption unit (Kaur & Medury, 2013; Niemczyk, 2015).

The theme of this chapter is household consumption behavior. The domain of family consumption behavior presents some gaps, among which, the influence of adolescents is often underestimated, and even omitted, with regard to purchasing decisions in that consumption unit. In most studies of traditional families, the adolescent is considered a less relevant actor in purchasing decisions, more associated to

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the purchase of products for own use, or with those products of less value to the family (Aleti, Brennan, & Parker, 2015; Beatty & Talpade, 1994; Commuri & Gentry, 2000). The adolescent also appears to be more associated with the initial phases of the purchasing decision process (Commuri & Gentry, 2000; Kaur & Medury, 2011).

The focus of the present chapter is the adolescent's influence in family purchase decisions, considering different categories of products according to the primary user whose interest is based on research on consumer behavior (Kaur & Singh, 2006). The influence of the adolescent on family buying decisions is not adequately studied in the literature on consumer behavior, noting the lack of theoretical explanation, aggravated by the descriptive nature of much research in this area (Yang et al, 2014; Kaur & Singh, 2006). The decision by adolescence (from 12 to 19 years old) refers, on the one hand, to the indication of the adolescents representing an age group with the complete cognitive development, that perceives the economic concept (Chavda et al., 2005; Kaur & Singh, 2006). On the other hand, adolescents are considered as active participants in purchasing decisions in the family, and the level of influence exerted is positively associated with their age (Aleti et al., 2015; Shergill et al, 2013).

To measure the influence of the adolescent on family purchases, only the mother's perception will be considered, which is consistent with other studies (Ahuja, 1993; Ahuja & Stinson, 1993; Ahuja & Walker, 1994; Ahuja, Capella, & Taylor, 1998; Isin & Alkibay, 2011; Kim e Lee, 1997; Mangleburg, Grewal, & Bristol, 1999).

In addition, the choice of purchase decision is related to the fact that several researchers recognize that phase as being the most relevant in the family buying decision process (Chavda et al., 2005; Shoham & Dalakas, 2003).

Given the limited research on the adolescent's influence on family buying decisions, several authors refer to the need to deepen the study of this phenomenon (Commuri & Gentry, 2000, Watne et al., 2014). In many studies, the adolescent is considered to be a less influential family member in buying decisions, and his influence efforts are more associated with products for his own use, or products for family use, but with a lower purchase value (Belch, Belch, & Ceresino, 1985; Beatty & Talpade, 1994; Commuri & Gentry, 2000). In fact, until the past century, research rarely perceived adolescents as decision making influencers within family (John, 1999; Mau, Schuhen, Steinmann, & Schramm-Klein, 2016).

The adolescent market is substantial and growing which needs marketers from producing and retailing companies to understand the adolescent purchase behavior for current sales and future brand loyalty (Niemczyk, 2015; Shahrokh & Khosravi, 2014; Srivastava, 2015; Yang, Kim, Laroche, & Lee, 2014). There is a good stream of research which has shown that adolescents play an important role in family purchase decisions varying by product, decision stage, adolescent, parental, and family characteristics (Akinyele, 2010; Aleti, Brennan, & Parker, 2015; Ali, Ravichandran, & Batra, 2013; Baía, 2018; Ishaque & Tufail, 2014; Shergill, Sekhon, & Zhao, 2013).

In order to confirm the adolescent's influence on the family context, it will be of interest for producing companies and retailer marketers to understand the dimensions that contribute to explain that influence.

Research Problem and Objectives

The research problem essentially involves an academic / theoretical dimension that this study proposes to contribute to solve and which is related to the answer to the following questions:

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