
Effects of Family Roles on the Purchase Decision Process:

Empirical Evidence from Algeria

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Abstract

Studies on making purchasing decisions within the family have motivated many academic studies. However, understanding how families adopt certain purchasing decisions is a fundamental issue that interests distributors as well as companies in order to target family members in the best way. It is in this context that the present research work tends to provide some elements in order to understand the buying process in Algerian families. An empirical study was conducted on a sample of 200 households, consisting of two parents and 663 children and adolescents, aged between 10 to 19 years. This would make a total of 1063 individuals to be surveyed, representing the Wilaya of Tlemcen (a province in Algeria). The results obtained showed that the father has more influence in making a purchase decision. Ultimately, some managerial implications and recommendations are suggested.

Index terms: Family decision making, marital influence, Algerian family, electrical equipment.

I- Introduction

Studying the consumer behavior has become essential in the analysis and practice of marketing. According to Pham (1996), decision making is a subject of major importance in marketing. However, purchasing decisions are often made collectively and consumption often takes place within the family (Ward, 2005).

Knowing the family shopping habits involves identifying the respective roles of the mother, the father and children, depending on the product category and the different phases of the purchase process (Qualls, 1987). These issues are essential for companies who want to ensure their economic survival (Peter and Grunert, 1999). In addition, the Algerian family has gone through changes involving both its structure and components. In Algeria, which is our case study, the family has greatly changed in recent decades. The rise in the percentage of *dual-income families* has increased the influence of women in decision making, and has therefore changed the role of parents, which was known before (Boutefnouchet, 1988). Based on that, the following fundamental question deserves to be answered:

Is the purchase decision, within Algerian families, influenced by the husband, the wife, the children, or is it made collectively by all family members?

The aim of our research is to understand the family purchasing behavior, and particularly the relationship between cultural practices and decision making. For this, the following research hypotheses may be formulated:

Hypothesis 1: *The Algerian family is influenced by the patriarchal system when taking a purchase decision.*

Hypothesis 2: *The rise in the number of women in work would lead to a change with regard to the attitude in making purchasing decision.*

Hypothesis 3: *Children have influence in making a purchasing decision.*

In an attempt to answer all these hypotheses, the following two-part plan is adopted:

- The first part focuses on the distribution of roles among family members when taking a purchase
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decision, and also on the influence of each one in that process

- The second part is the practical part. It is dedicated to the presentation of the sample, the survey methodology and analysis of results.

This study intends to help us understand closely the key variables in making a purchasing decision within the Algerian family. Interactions between variables, as well as their participation and degree of action are analyzed in order to try to remove any gray area and amalgam, which have remained unexplained on such families, in the last years.

II- Distribution of roles and influence of family members in taking a purchase decision

Studying the household as an environment of consumption, which has an influence on the purchase process, is a current research topic which, over the years, has become increasingly important (Watne & Brennan, 2011). Marketing researchers have long focused on understanding the family consumption behavior because it is the largest unit of consumption, socialization and decision. Indeed, it is essential for a company to have a good knowledge of *family purchase decision making* (Solomon, 2004).

Wolfe (1959) was the first to develop a theory on the distribution of roles in *family decision making*. The decisions were analyzed in relation to two attributes, which are the degree of specialization and the relative influence. The author defined four types of decisions, which are those dominated by the husband, the ones dominated by the wife, the autonomous ones where it is assumed that roles are distributed between the husband and the wife (which implies that there is no dominance from either part and no joint decision either), and finally those for which both parties reach some sort of consensus after exchanging information.

Therefore, the degree of influence of each member of a couple depends on the type of product to be bought and the stage of the purchase decision process (Bonfield, 1978). Recent studies on influence have been interested in the changes that have taken place within the family structure, and have brought some new habits in the decision making process, suggesting an ongoing trend towards more common or joint decision making (Blood and Wolfe, 1960).

The two main theories used to explain the influence exerted by each spouse when making a purchase decision are the resource theory and the social power theory (Perreau, 2014).

The resource theory shows that the influence of a person in a decision making process, within a family, is based on the socioeconomic resources that he detains, like the income, education level and social status. While the second theory suggests that social power is a resource that an individual may use to exert influence on another person. In addition, the members of each household have different roles in the consumption process.

III- Empirical Study

This research attempts to clarify the purchase process within Algerian families. The present study focuses on household products. A list of six (06) household appliances was established, i.e. refrigerator, television, satellite dish antenna, Hi-Hi system, camera, and video game console. Most of these products are collectively used by all household members. This collective aspect enables one to understand the interactions and influences of family members during the purchase process. The survey conducted in the present work concerned, of course, households residing in the Wilaya (province) of Tlemcen (Algerian town). The sample used consisted of 200 households, all living in that province, and was distributed in proportion to the total number of households, in each area; there were 112 urban families and 88 rural families.

3.1. Presentation of results

3.1.1. Analysis of the socio-professional aspect of surveyed households

Consumer practices depend on a number of factors, such as gender, age, marital status, education level, income level and profession (Verma and Kapoor 2003). The following table summarizes all the socio-demographic and socio-professional parameters of consumers included in our sample.

Table 1: Socio-demographic and socio-professional analyses

Age group	Urban Zone (1)		Rural Zone (2)	
	Father	Mother	Father	Mother
35 – 44	10.18%	7.78%	18.18%	2.28%
45 – 54	26.35%	18.57%	36.77%	9.09%
55 – 64	19.76%	14.37%	20.45%	4.45%
Over 65	2.32%	0.6%	6.82%	1.87%
Education level				
Illiterate, with no education	5.39%	2.57%	6.06%	5.00%
Koranic school (Can read but no formal education)	7.78%	10.78%	19.09%	28.18%
Primary school	10.18%	19.77%	9.09%	12.12%
College	13.17%	13.17%	10.15%	9.15%
High school	17.69%	29.16%	11.27%	8.30%
University	33.80%	15.56%	10.30%	4.24%
Third-cycle degree	5.99%	1.80%	3.04%	0.00%
Other	5.99%	7.19%	0.00%	0.00%
Professional activity				
Unemployed, housewife	52.87%	52.87%	80.76%	80.76%
Unskilled worker, housekeeper, caretaker	5.99%	5.99%	4.03%	4.03%
Skilled worker, carpenter, electrician, plumber, business assistant, cook, waiter,	1.78%	1.78%	9.09%	9.09%
Clerk, bank employee, civil servant	7.19%	7.19%	0.09%	0.09%
Middle management executive, officer, middle civil servant, small shop owner, technician, teacher	17.78%	17.78%	3.03%	3.03%
Senior executive, business professional, government official, SME owner	2.40%	2.40%	0.00%	0.00%
Director, department head, owner of a large company, <i>high-ranked civil servant</i>	2.60%	2.60%	0.00%	0.00%
Retired	5.39%	5.39%	2.00%	2.00%

Other (to precise)	4.01%	4.01%	1.00%	1.00%
Household income level	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
18.000 - 39.999 A.D.	40	32.79%	35	39.77%
40.000 - 69.999 A.D.	34	27.87%	22	25.00%
70.000 - 99.000 A.D.	33	27.05%	17	19.32%
More than 100.000 A.D.	15	12.30%	14	15.91%
TOTAL	122	100.00%	88	100.00%

(1)Percentage of 112 surveyed families / (2) Percentage of 88 surveyed families.

Regarding the age group of surveyed parents, it is clearly noted that the percentage of surveyed men is higher than that of women (over 58% in urban zone and 82% in rural zone). This is due to cultural reasons (husbands are reluctant to let their wives be interviewed) and to narrow thinking (some mothers do not trust us enough and avoid the questionnaire). Regarding the importance of the education level in the *family decision-making process*, one can say that when parents have a good education level, the roles in *decision-making process are more balanced* (there are more discussions and negotiations between family members). However, when the father has a higher level of education, he monopolizes all decisions within the family.

Concerning the professional activity of parents, it was found that the percentage of unemployed mothers is higher in rural areas compared to urban areas (82.76% in rural areas against 52.87% in urban areas). Mothers are supposed to look after the home (housework).

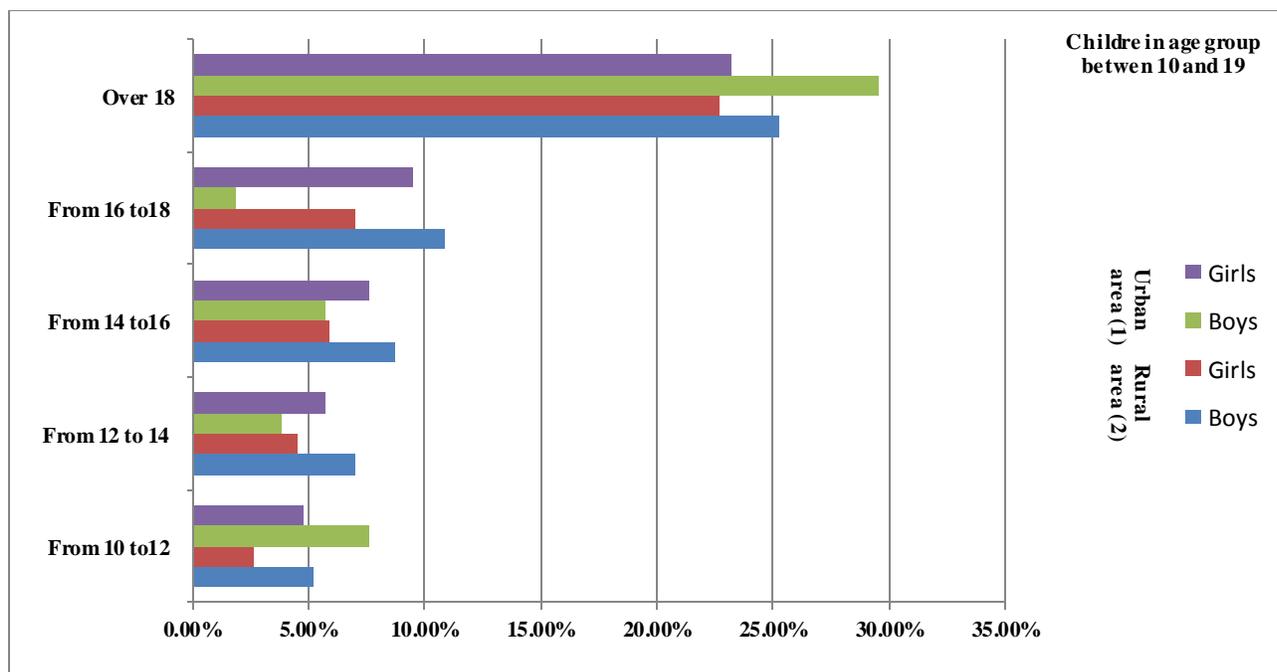
It can clearly be seen from Table 1 that employed fathers and mothers are generally found in the third and fourth categories. There is a male predominance in the different occupations mentioned in the 6th and 7th categories (Table 1). Other types of jobs, such as liberal professions (doctor, lawyer, etc.) representing about 5%, are practiced by both men and women and are equally distributed between the two genders. Women with that kind of job in rural areas represent only 1%.

It is well known that the household income is a good indicator of the standard of living, type of consumption and purchasing power within a family (Verma and Kapoor 2003). Identifying the elements that contribute to the household income, with their respective proportions, enables us to know if the buying process is dominated by the person with the highest income or, by cons, the

purchase process is influenced by other factors. The survey conducted in this research work allowed saying that over 35% of the visited families have an income lower than 39999 AD. In general, households strive to put some money aside; they purchase or replace a household product only by necessity (low purchasing power). Furthermore, the highest percentage was found for households with a salary between 40000 and 99999 AD (54.92% in urban areas and 44.32% in rural areas). For this income range, families have an acceptable purchasing power. Finally, households with an income above 100 000 AD have better living conditions. In addition, some households owned appliances that were not mentioned in our study; some of these are the VCR, vacuum cleaner, dishwasher, microwave, etc.

3.1.2. Involvement of children in the buying decision process

The present study was interested in households, with at least one child between 10 and 19. The analysis of the questionnaire allowed us to obtain the following results:



(1)Percentage of 383 surveyed children (boys and girls) / (2) Percentage of 280 surveyed children (boys and girls).

Figure1: Children by age group

One can easily note that the highest proportions are found in the age group over 18 (boys and girls). This survey was interested more in adolescents. Researchers consider that this age group, namely boys and girls over 18, have recently started financing their own purchases; they are becoming

increasingly independent from their parents. On average, in each surveyed family, there are three or four children, one or two of them are between 10 are 18 years old. In general, the financial contribution of children is insignificant in comparison to that of parents.

3.1.3. The contribution of family members to the monthly income

In the sample under study, 78% of purchases are financed by the head of household (father). Mothers and children's contributions to the monthly income are 12.5% and 9.5%, respectively. It is well noted that women, in urban areas, contribute more (17.86%) than their counterparts in rural areas (5.68%). This difference is due to the fact that there are more women working in urban than in rural areas. Children's contribution is more evident in rural areas (13.64%) against (6.25%) in urban areas. Rural children leave school earlier and work in private homes to earn money.

The use of a collective contribution to the household income can be explained by the decreasing purchasing power (the head of the household can hardly manage the monthly expenses).

Table 3: Rate of contribution to household income.

Household member	Urban area (1)		Rural area(2)		Sample (3)	
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
Father	85	75.89%	71	80.68%	156	78%
Mother	20	17.86%	5	5.68%	25	12.5%
Children	7	6.25%	12	13.64%	19	9.5%
TOTAL	112	100%	88	100%	200	100%

Percentage of 112 surveyed families / (2) Percentage of 88 surveyed families / (3) Percentage of 200 surveyed families.

3.1.4. Analysis of purchase of home appliances

3.1.4.1. The purchase stimulus

The idea of purchase is a key driver that enables a person to know where the buyer gets his motivation for buying. Based on the obtained results, and as it has already been demonstrated in other studies, the need is the first element that encourages the individual and family members to buy. For more than 80% of surveyed households, the desire to buy is triggered by the need.

Advertising comes in the second place for households in urban areas (42.51%) and in rural areas (36.36%).

In addition, the family environment (uncle, cousin, brother, sister and grandparents), friends, co-workers, are other sources that usually motivate purchase (the purchase idea is suggested by relatives for one out of three products). For more than 24% of households, the idea of buying a specific type of product is suggested by one of the two spouses (husband or wife). In general, fathers make purchase proposals related to a new TV set or a video game console. Mothers are rather interested in products that help them in their daily chores (washing machine, microwave oven, etc.)

The role of the child as a prescriber has been proven in several studies. In this article, it was found that over 29% of suggestions for the purchase of electrical appliances come from children. The proposals made by a child are generally related to products for personal use, for instance for amusement and entertainment. People living in urban areas seem to be more influenced by the recommendations made by the seller (27.54%) as compared to those living in rural areas (2.09%). Promotions and magazines are not important *sources of information for buying in rural households* (9.09% and 30.3%, respectively). *However, they play a significant role in urban households* (19.76% and 18.56%, respectively).

Table 3: Information sources for the purchase of appliances.

Information sources	Urban area (1)	Rural area (2)
Personal need	82.04%	90.91%
Spouse	28.74%	24.24%
Child	29.94%	30.30%
Suggestion from a relative	33.53%	30.30%
Magazine	18.56%	3.03%
Promotion	19.76%	9.09%
Advertising	42.51%	36.36%
Shopkeeper	27.54%	2.09%

(1) Percentage of 112 surveyed urban families / (2) Percentage of 88 surveyed rural families.

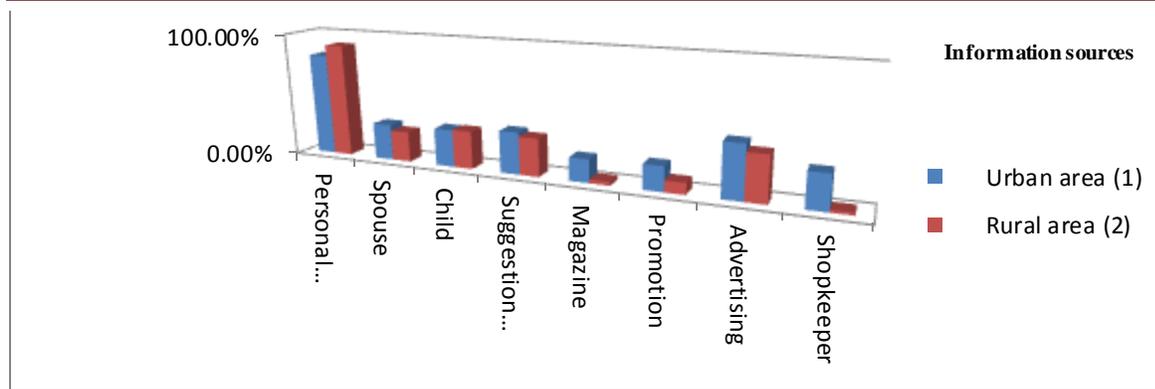


Figure2: Information sources for the purchase of appliances.

3.1.4.2. Choosing between different brands and products

Individuals within a household consider that they are not offered a large range of possibilities when choosing between the categories of products and brands found in shopping places (over 48% for both zones). This means that the products and brands that people generally look for are generally not easy to find on the market. Others think that it is difficult, or even very difficult, to make a choice (25.75% in urban areas and 24% in rural areas) due to the large number of unknown brands found in stores.

Table 4: Choosing between different brands and product categories available on the market

Area	Easy	Average	Very difficult
Urban	20.36%	53.89%	25.75%
Rural	27.52%	8.48%	24.00%

Percentage of 112 surveyed families / (2) Percentage of 88 surveyed families.

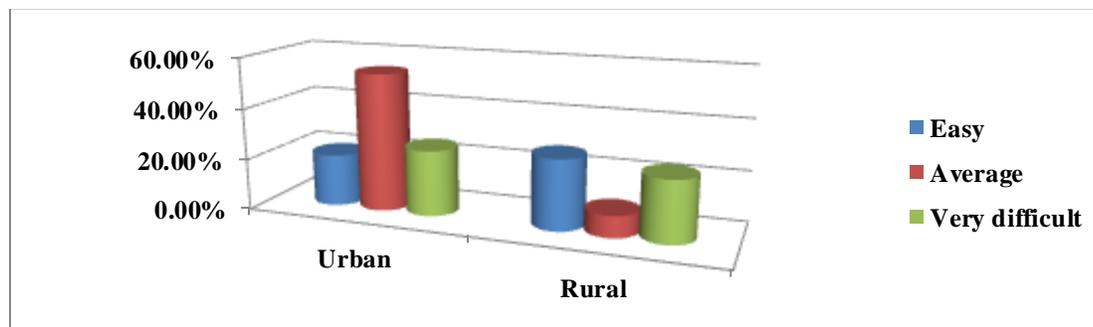


Figure 3: Choosing between different brands and product categories available on the market

3.1.4.3. Perceptions of family member roles in the buying process

Figures 4 and 5 exhibit the roles of the father, mother and child, with respect to the initiation of the idea, the influence on decision making, the purchase process and the use of these various household goods. The percentages are calculated with respect to the proportion of families equipped with these goods, for each area.

Product prescription

The idea of buying a TV and a dish antenna is initiated by the father in more than 80% of the cases. However, the mother intervenes in more than 56% of the cases when it comes to buying a refrigerator. In this stage, the child would get involved for entertainment products, such as a Hi-fi system and a video game console.

The relative influence of a person on the purchase of each product

One can see that the person who suggests or prescribes the product to buy influences the other family members.

Decision-maker and buyer roles

In general, the father holds these two roles. He is the absolute decision-maker within the family (in most cases, he has the last word in making any decision), and at the same time, he is responsible for the purchase of the product. It is clearly noted that mothers seldom intervene in the purchase process, except for some specific products, such as refrigerators. The degree of children's involvement in the phases of decision-making and purchasing of the above mentioned products is low, except for the Hi-fi system and the video game console.

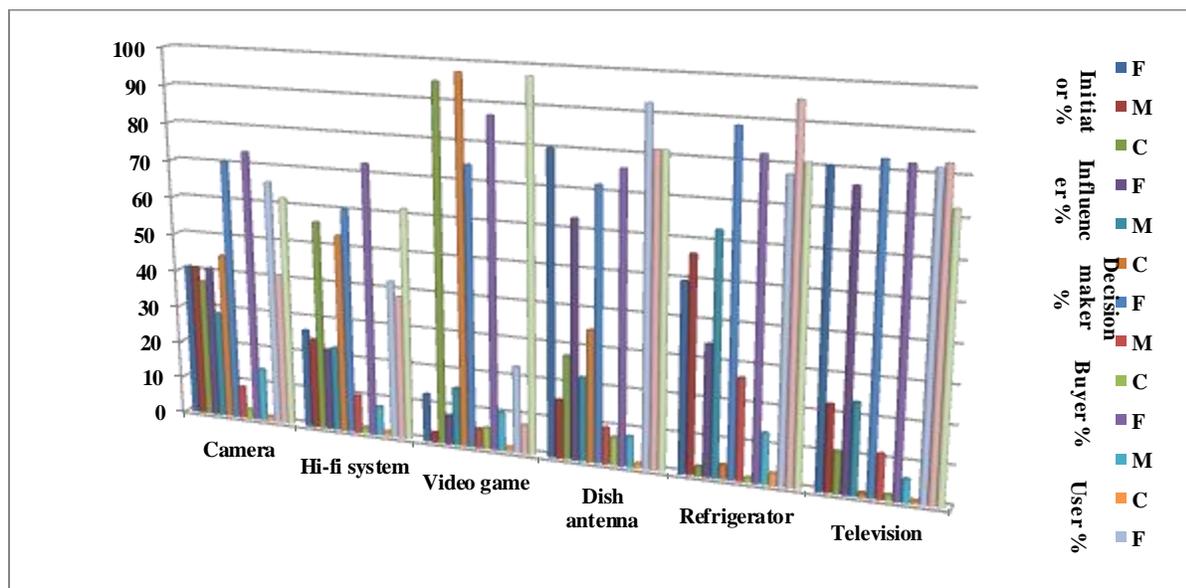
Domestic use of the products listed above

Almost all family members watch television. The child is the one that uses the most the Hi-fi system and video game console. The camera is mostly used by the father and children. The refrigerator is used by all the household members, slightly more by mothers.

Nevertheless, children scarcely participate in the decision-making process for buying a refrigerator (1.27% in urban areas and 0% in rural areas). However, they intervene more frequently in the steps of initiation and influence for products such as the Hi-fi system and video games (initiation

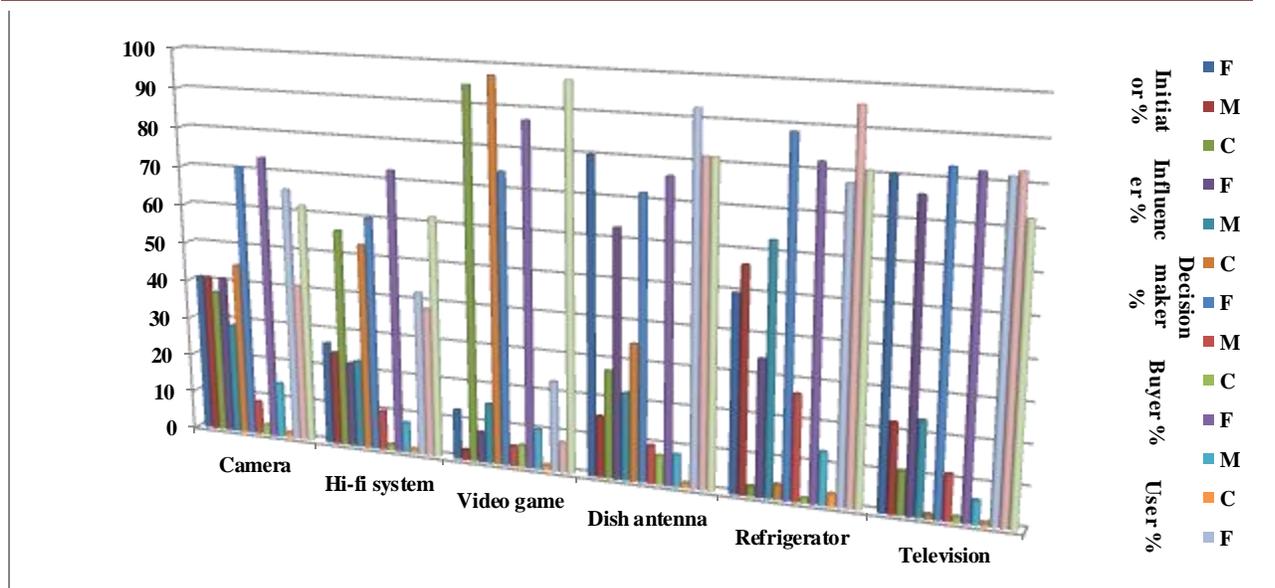
and influence: 56.25% and 94.87%, respectively, in urban areas; initiation and influence: 81.25% and 85.71%, respectively, in rural areas). Moreover, even for these products, the children's involvement in the purchasing process is negligibly small. The results obtained in this study support those reported in previous studies, where the children's influence on decision-making is more pronounced for products they use frequently; however, their influence is weaker in the final decision step. In addition, the father's influence in the purchase decision-making process is much more important than that of the rest of the family. Husbands tend to monopolize the purchase option for this type of products. They decide and buy the above mentioned products in more than 75% of the cases.

Women's participation, in the two steps of initiation and influence, is centered mainly on the refrigerator. Note that the pronounced influence of roles in all stages of the decision-making process could be misleading, as it does not enable to assess the extent of changes that occur in the frequency of involvement of the family members, at all times, for all products to buy, and in all situations.



Where *F* is for father, *M* for mother and *C* for child.

Figure 4: Perception of roles within the urban household (%).



Where F is for father, M for mother and C for child.

Figure 5: Perception of roles within the rural household (%)

IV. Conclusion

The main objective of the present research was to identify the characteristics associated with the *family buying process*. It is a modest contribution to the marketing literature, as it explains the way the Algerian families make their buying decisions.

The results obtained enabled us to clarify some aspects related to buying some household products by Algerian households.

- The father has a more decisive and important role in decision-making and financing the product, due to his advantageous social and professional status (**validation of hypothesis 1**).
- The mother plays some roles of initiation and influence, which are rather secondary but are still important (**ambiguity in hypothesis 2**).
- Regarding the entertainment and leisure products, such as the Hi-fi system and video game console, children are attentive and more active in advocating and searching for information (**validation of hypothesis 3**).

Moreover, the results obtained in both urban and rural areas, in the province of Tlemcen, showed that the same perception of roles, among the members of urban and rural families, exists for the purchase of household appliances; this may be due to a better movement of people from one area to another. Furthermore, the availability of the means of transportation enabled to develop the distribution channels, and helped improve communications in a remarkable manner. Having all the above mentioned information on buying habits, it becomes possible to significantly improve the efficiency of the company's marketing strategy. In addition, marketers should strive to satisfy members of the family and make them more loyal; they should regard satisfaction as a powerful lever which has a significant impact on the company's profits.

Limitations and future research avenues

Any research has some limitations that should be noted. These limitations could represent the topics of future avenues of research.

- The first limitation is the small size of the sample (N = 200 households). The sample could not be larger or generalized to all provinces due to the lack of financial capacities.
- The second one is related to the kind of products included in this research. Indeed, these are mainly products for which the *husband dominates* the *decision* making process.

This study opens up a number of avenues of research. Thus, it seems interesting to

- Validate the results obtained here on other product categories,
- It would also be interesting to establish a comparison between the urban and rural populations, in Algeria, in terms of influence and involvement, since people in these two areas are different in terms of purchasing power. Moreover, inhabitants in the rural area have a limited choice, due to the lack of shopping places. The consumer's behavior is based on imitation because the sources of information about a specific product are not reliable (friends, neighbors ...), and so he is not well informed,
- One should probably assess the negative impact of other family members on the buying decision process,

- Validation of the RIA scale (Relevance-Interest-Attraction) of Strazzieri (1994) is also necessary in the context of *family purchase decision making*. In fact, this would offer the possibility of segmentation of family members with respect to the cognitive, affective, and conative dimensions.

In the end, this work has provided an important clarification on the theory and practice of family buying process. This study aimed to develop a better understanding of the purchase decision making process within Algerian families, which still remains an interesting and relevant topic of research.

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