

Consumer Behavior

11. Family



José Manuel Fernández Polanco
Patricia Martínez García de Leaniz

DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

AREA OF MARKETING AND MARKET RESEARCH

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11.1. Family as a consumer and purchasing group

11.2. Family life cycle and consumer behavior

11.3. Family roles and processes

11.1. Family as a consumer and purchasing group

The family is the most relevant social group in terms of consumption and marketing. The **role of family** comprises two relevant processes of consumer behavior:

Consumer socialization. The process by which purchasing behaviors are passed from one generation to another.

Family operates as a **consumer decision-making and purchasing** unit.

Family of orientation. The one into which the subject is born. The one in which the subject is socialized.

Family of procreation. The family one establishes by marriage. The one where the subject socializes.

The importance of the **family in economic terms** is emphasized by the multiplicity of its **functions**:

Consumption and purchasing **unit**.

Financial resource.

Source of **information**.

Source of **physical** and **emotional satisfaction**.

11.2. Family life cycle and consumer behavior

Takes the idea of the **family** as a consuming unit which **progresses through a series of stages**.

A family's consumption preferences and the **focus of expenditure** will **change according to the stage** of development in the life cycle.

Different members of the family may have **different aspirations** which may result **difficult to satisfy within the available budget**.

Advertising seeks to minimize these conflicts by sending different messages to the different members of the family.

Single / Young unmarried.

Despite a relatively low earning power, they are subject to few rigid demands, resulting in a **high disposable income**.

Typical purchases are cars, equipping the new owned home, technology, fashion and leisure.

Recreational activities are **focused on obtaining a partner**.

Newly married.

Commonly two earnings with no children resulting in more disposable income.

Typical purchases are again cars, clothing and vacation, with a high rate of durable purchases. Investment in a new bigger size house, furniture and appliances in a **nest-building stage**.

Full nest.

With the arrival of children, the family **income** sharply **declines** with the **new** young **members** creating a **new focus** for family **expenditure**.

Typical purchase behaviors are related to the home and children's care and fun. The normal assumption is that family income increases over time. The initial financial pressure eases and savings can be increased and invested anticipating retirement. At the same time children's demands also become more expensive.

Empty nest.

Children have left home and are no longer financially dependent on their parents. The result is the **higher level of income** which is focused on high cost goods **until retirement** brings a drop in income. Expenditure focuses on **health care** from this point onwards.

11.3. Family roles and processes

Family consumption decisions encompass a number of different **roles assumed by members of the family**. These roles include:

Gatekeeper. The person who controls access to information and ideas.

Influencer. The person who provides information, expertise and preferences used as reference by the other members of the group.

Decider. The person with the authority or power to determine what is going to be purchased.

Buyer. The person who acts as the purchasing agent.

Preparer/operator. The person who operates the product (washing machine...).

User. The person or persons who use the product.

Spousal roles:

Wife dominant. The wife is the person who always makes the final decision.

Husband dominant. The husband always makes the final decision as regards purchases.

Autonomic. Equal number of decisions made by each partner, but each decision is made independently by one or the other.

Syncratic. When the decisions are made jointly and equally by the two partners.