

# **EXAMINING THE ROLE OF FAMILY MEMBERS IN FAMILY BUYING CENTER IN ADULT HUNGARIAN POPULATION**

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## **Abstract**

In our paper we examine the role of family members in family buying center. In the first part of this paper our aim is to highlight the importance of family Buying Center examinations, introduce briefly its relevance within family purchase decision making processes. In the second part of our paper we introduce our own quantitative research results oriented on family Buying Center and roles undertaken by different family members.

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**Keywords:** Family, buying center, roles, purchase decision

## **1. Introduction:**

### **1.1. Decision making within the family**

As we could see its role is changing though still family is the primary decision making unit in the society. Several authors deal with the dynamics of family decisions (Aribarg 2002, Arora és Allenby 1999, Seetharaman 1999, Su 2003, Ward 2006), but as to the decision making it is examined from several point of views: economical (Becker 1974) and social conflict views (Sprey, 1979) and by gender roles (Pollay 1968, Scanzoni, 1977, Qualls 1988). Most of the authors (Davis, 1970, 1971, 1976; Davis-Rigaux 1974, Filiatrault and Brent 1980, Spiro 1983, Cosenza 1985, Corfman 1991, Ward 2005) tend to examine family decision making from a gender point of view, hence they try to explain the relative influence of family members in the decision making process. Level of influence depend on several factors: how a spouse contribute to the household (Blood and Wolfe, 1960) or what type of culture (traditional/modern) the parties come from (Qualls, 1987). In spite of these Johnson et al. (1994) examine children's influence on decision making, however other authors concentrate exactly on the process (Hoffman 1977, Howard and Sheth 1969, Blackwell et al. 2006, Sheth 1974). Older studies introduced family purchase decision making as a rational decision by all family members it was not taken into consideration how personal

emotions influence the different actors. Nevertheless this type of assumption ignore that people are not totally rational decision makers, but in many cases influenced by their emotions. (Gelles and Straus, 1979) Among family members close emotional bonds emerge over time, that influence the decision making process and its output. Emotions (like love, sympathy, anger, guilt) can connect to different steps of purchase decision making.

### **1.2. Family Buying Center**

In the case of purchase decisions by the number of participants we can distinguish two different decision making situations: individual and group decisions. When a products is quite cheap, does not cause a problem and bought routinely family members usually make individual decisions. Nevertheless in the case of high value, newly purchased acquisitions several members take part in the decision making process undertaking different roles. (Töröcsik, 1996) Therefore it can be observed that families in the case of more important purchase decisions behave as a buying center, just like in organizational markets. different family members can undertake different roles: Influencers, Gatekeepers, Decision makers, Buyers, Users. (Mowen, 1987)

These role sometimes undertaken by one family member, but in most of the cases different family members undertake different roles when they by different products or they influence the purchase decision making process differently. (Chisnall, 1985) Buying center does not factually stand up always at the same time: it can occur that family members make their decision separately from each other. It is important to have consensus among family members (Cox, 1975), but we should not forget the fact, that roles within the family also depend on power-hierarchy relations. (Mangleburg et al., 1999)

Given roles can be connected to the different stages of purchase decision making process. Initiators usually play role in realizing the problem, though the role of Influencers can be connected to different stages. Making the final decision can be connected mainly to Decision makers and Buyers, while Users play the most important role in port purchase decisions. (Verma et al., 2003)

Some of the authors (Mowen 1987, Shifmann and Kanuk, 2008) also mention in family buying center the preparers, whom we cannot observe in this form at organizations. As to their opinion prepares are the ones who make a given product consumable for an other family member.

## **2. Methods**

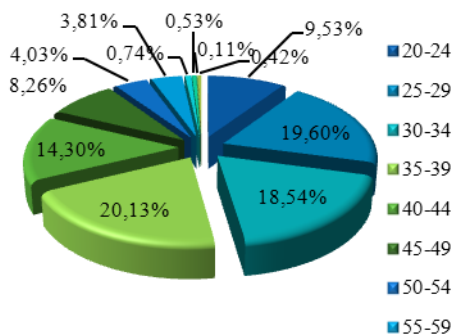
In the course of nationwide quantitative research I used questionnaire surveys in the third and fourth quarter of 2010 among adult and young adult population between the age of 14-18. Sampling was a quota sampling taking into consideration the age and gender of the respondents. I used the

information database (<http://statinfo.ksh.hu/Statinfo/haViewer.jsp>, NT3C01) of Hungarian Central Statistical Office to define the quota. For defining the quota I considered that it is more important to examine women and men separately not as a family or spouse, because in this way all individuals with own children had the chance to get in the sample. Hence single parent and patchwork families were taken into the research process. Another reason why the sample were developed by age and gender is that opinion and judgment of men and women can be different concerning to a given topic, hence in my opinion it is justified to examine genders separately.

In the case of adult population it was a filter condition for the respondents to have dependent child under the age of 18. After the pilot surveys and the real surveys in the case of adult population 944 evaluable questionnaires were proceeded. Data proceeding were done with help of SPSS 14.00 and SPSS17.0 softwares using mathematical and statistical methods. I used both simple description statistical methods (crosstables, frequencies), and multivariate statistical analyses (Khi-square probe, variance analysis, factor- and cluster analysis).

**2.1. Demographic characteristics of the sample**

46,7% of the sample consisted of men and 53,3% of women.. As it can be seen on chart 1, 9,5% were under 25, 16,9% between 25-29, 18,5% between 30-34, 20,1% between 35-39, 14,3% between, while 8,3% were between 45-49 years. Only 6,5% of the sample were above 50 years. 10,5% lives in the capital, 66,9% in towns and 22,6% in villages.



**Chart 1.** Distribution by age  
**Source:** own research 2010, n=944

73% of the sample judge their economic status an average one, as to 9,9% it is under the average, while 1,9% thinks it is much more under the average. 12,7% has an above the average status and 1,8% is much more above the average. Among those who live in the capital 21,1% have at least average or above the average income, this ratio is 14,8% among those who live in a

town and only 8,8% among people living in villages. Among those who live in a village ratio of low or very low income is the highest, 16,9%. This ratio is 10,6% in case of citizens, while 11,6% in case of those who live in the capital.

### 3. Results

Role of different family members can be different in family purchase decision making, different roles can be undertaken: they can be Initiators, Decision makers, Users, Gatekeepers, Buyers. Aim of the research was to examine the role of people taking part in purchase decision making in case of given products and to highlight role of different family member in the family Buying Center in case of different product. We separated the following roles within family Buying Center: Initiators, Experts, Buyers, Brand Choosers, Information Intermediaries, Decision Makers. The base for this examination was the model of Davis and Rigaux (1974), but we expanded the victuals in the direction of vegetables, fruits, chips, snacks, soft drinks, candies and sweets.

**Table 1.Roles undertaken in the Buying Center**

	<b>Initiators</b> <i>I initiate the purchase</i>	<b>Experts</b> <i>I know the most about the product</i>	<b>Buyers</b> <i>I buy the products</i>	<b>Users</b> <i>I use the products</i>	<b>Brand Choosers</b> <i>I decide about the brand</i>	<b>Information Intermediaries</b> <i>I look for information before buying a product</i>	<b>Decision Makers</b> <i>I decide whether to buy a product or not</i>	<i>I have no role</i>
<b>Clothes for myself</b>	29,2%	2,9%	20,8%	25,5%	4,9%	1,2%	14,0%	1,6%
<b>Shoes for myself</b>	25,3%	3,4%	24,2%	21,5%	6,3%	1,4%	13,1%	4,8%
<b>Detergents, cleaning products</b>	8,7%	8,3%	19,2%	13,4%	6,4%	5,7%	7,3%	31,1%
<b>Sport equipment</b>	14,5%	3,6%	16,3%	7,9%	8,9%	12,3%	14,9%	21,7%
<b>Candies, sweets</b>	9,8%	2,6%	33,8%	3,2%	6,4%	3,0%	19,1%	22,2%

<b>Chips, snacks</b>	9,7%	2,2%	34,4 %	2,4%	6,4%	3,2%	19,4 %	22,3%
<b>Soft drinks</b>	12,5%	3,1%	33,3 %	4,2%	8,3%	3,7%	18,8 %	16,2%
<b>Fast foods</b>	14,5%	3,6%	28,4 %	4,1%	4,2%	3,2%	18,4 %	23,5%
<b>Vegetables</b>	16,5%	4,6%	36,5 %	3,9%	2,7%	3,0%	11,0 %	21,9%
<b>Fruits</b>	16,6%	4,8%	36,8 %	4,1%	3,7%	3,2%	10,8 %	20,0%
<b>Other food products</b>	13,1%	6,2%	32,2 %	5,2%	5,2%	3,5%	11,5 %	23,1%
<b>Cosmetics</b>	14,9%	8,4%	21,9 %	10,5 %	7,2%	4,6%	7,1%	25,4%
<b>Over the Counter medicines</b>	14,1%	9,4%	24,1 %	6,8%	5,0%	10,9%	6,8%	22,8%
<b>Television</b>	17,5%	7,7%	9,2%	7,4%	6,8%	21,4%	11,2 %	18,7%
<b>Computer</b>	15,2%	7,7%	10,2 %	6,6%	6,5%	21,2%	11,9 %	20,6%
<b>Other electronic products</b>	16,4%	8,4%	9,2%	5,9%	6,1%	21,4%	12,7 %	20,1%
<b>Vehicle</b>	15,8%	7,6%	8,8%	9,7%	8,7%	16,3%	11,7 %	21,5%

**Source:** own research, 2010, N=944

In Table 1 it can be seen that our respondents undertake different roles in case of different products. Mostly they appear as buyers, initiators or decision makers, though in can occur that they do not have any roles within the family purchase decision making process. Roles also depend on gender and the product as well, but other social-demographic factors as economic status, type of settlement or age do not define the role undertaken in family buying center.

Women appear as an initiator more times even in the case when they buy clothes for their mates (60,9%). Brand choose is more revealing for men even if a clothes is bought for their wife (58,7%). It is interesting that 53,3% of men have no role in clothes purchases for themselves, it means that they absolutely not take part in the buying process. This portion is even higher in the case of shoes. Men have a more remarkable role when buying sport equipment, mostly they are experts, users, brand choosers or initiators. In

this case women usually appear as information intermediaries or decision makers.

In the case of detergents, cleaning products women dominance can be observed unequivocally this is especially true for cosmetics and detergents as 87,2% and 85,9% have absolutely nothing to do with the purchase. In the case of over the counter medicines unambiguously women are the initiators, brand choosers and also buyers, but men appear as users more frequently in 55,6%. The opposite can be seen in the case of electronic products: 82,6% of women have when buying a television, in the case of computer purchase this portion is even higher 83,2%. In case of vehicle, car purchase the role men is univoque, but interestingly women also appear as information intermediaries.

In the case of food products relationship can be unequivocally observed between the undertaken role and gender. Women are initiators, experts, buyers, brand choosers, information intermediaries, decision makers, while men occur only as users. This user status can be extremely seen in case of chips, snacks (77,3%), candies and sweets (63,3%), soft drinks (61,5%) and fruits (63,2%). Brand chooser role of women do not dominate in case of fast food restaurants, men occur as a brand chooser in higher proportion (57,9%). Though men occur as users in many cases; their role as initiators are never dominant.

### **Conclusion**

Family members undertake various roles in purchase decision making process and our research verified this fact as well. Family members can be initiators, experts, buyers, users, brand choosers, information initiators or decision makers. In the case of different products roles can be different, but social stereotypes can be observed unequivocally. By product types the role of different family members can be different they can behave very various.

When the respondents buy something for themselves usually the concerned person makes the decision, but the dominance of women can be occurred when clothes are bought for their housemates. Dominance of men is typical for sport equipment, electronic products and cars. Interestingly in the case of “not so healthy” products (chips, snacks, sweets, candies, soft drinks) men usually appear as users. In the case of other products usually women has a more significant role in the purchase decision making process: they appear as initiators, brand choosers or decision makers. Initiative role of women can be observed in the case of all products. Though the number of examined products had to be limited, in the future we would like to broaden the scope.

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