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ADOLESCENT INFLUENCE ON FAMILY PURCHASING DECISIONS: RESEARCH IN TURKEY

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Abstract

The economic, social, and cultural changes in the modern world have made adolescents between the ages of 12 and 18 important influences on family purchasing decisions. No longer solely users of products and services, adolescents now influence purchasing decisions and have attracted the attention of marketers and researchers. The purpose of this study is to analyze changes in the influence of adolescents aged between 12 and 18 on family purchasing decisions depending on socio-economic and demographic factors. This study aims to determine whether changes occur regarding different product groups by establishing at which stage of the decision process adolescent influence predominates. To achieve this goal, a survey method was used as a data collection tool. Using the convenience sampling method, adolescents within the age range of 12 and 18 were interviewed in Mersin, Turkey. The research results indicate that the influence of adolescents on family purchasing decisions occurs at different stages and depends on the type of product to be purchased. The analysis further shows that adolescents' age, gender, and number of siblings, and the family's total income, the father's level of education, and the mother's employment status also affect adolescent influence on family purchasing decisions.

Keywords: Consumer Behavior, Family Purchasing Decisions, Adolescent Consumers

1. Introduction

Various decisions concerning the consumption of products are made by the family unit. The family unit is the major consumer and purchasing organization in society, and family members constitute the most effective reference group (Kotler, 2000). Therefore, as both a producing and consuming unit, the family unit has been the subject of much consumer research.

In the initial research to explain how family units make purchasing decisions, the influence of the husband and wife has been investigated. Typically, in extant research, factors such as the level of education, duration of marriage, the amount of annual consumption expenditures, profession, and the existence and number of children have been considered as the determining

factors in family purchasing decisions. However, previous research shows that children also influence family purchasing decisions, which is an important subject recently the focus of much research.

Economic development entails an increase in goods and services in many sectors, the majority of which are produced to satisfy the needs and desires of adolescent consumers. Therefore, adolescents constitute an important group for consumption decisions (McNeal, 1992). In particular, markets targeting the youth in countries with a younger population, such as Turkey, are essential for businesses, and these markets develop rapidly. Companies can take advantage of this development and establish a market presence by implementing proper marketing strategies that target adolescent consumers. Adolescents within the age range of 12 to 18 are not only product and service users, but also influence the decisions for purchasing common products. Considering this impact on purchasing behavior both as a user and an influencer, the significance of adolescents in consumer markets is evident.

The purpose of this study is to determine the following: at which stage of the purchasing decision process are adolescents within the age range of 12 to 18 most influential for different product groups; which demographic factors affect adolescent influence on purchasing decisions; and, at which stage of the purchasing decision process are adolescents most influential overall. Within this context, we describe the conceptual framework and relevant literature for this study. The hypotheses are provided, along with the research method, data analysis, and findings. The results are analyzed in the final section of the study.

2. Research Literature and Developing Hypotheses

A family, which is the most important consumption unit, is a social system, meaning that it comes into existence, evolves, and renews itself. During this process, people age and roles within the family change as the family's needs, demands, and preferences change. These changes in roles significantly influence the decision-making process and family behavior (Odabasi and Baris, 2007).

Sheth (1974), who first set forth the consumer behavior model in 1966 and established the foundation for future research, attempted to develop a comprehensive theory regarding purchasing decisions. Since the needs and wishes of families change over time, family life cycle; a concept frequently used by marketers, was established. Family life cycle explains the lifelong changes in resources and demand for these resources of a typical family (Gonen, 1986).

Middle-aged couples who are married with children constitute an important stage of the family life cycle. At this stage of the family life cycle, individuals must satisfy various needs. The consumer behavior among family members also differs. In this period, products are purchased for both the family's general use and the individual's personal use. At this stage, children between the ages 12 and 18 have significant influence on the family purchasing decisions.

Each stage of the family life cycle has specific characteristics. Therefore, being able to define the target market in the family life cycle is important for developing proper marketing strategies. During the family purchasing process, adolescents, who have higher levels of attention than their parents, take more active roles in communicating information, initiating, and influencing (Islamoglu, 2006). Adolescents' relative influence gradually takes over, especially due to their being more open to marketing messages than their parents. Further, parents tend to compensate for their lack of attention to their children by giving them more responsibility and authority (Budzanowska-Drzewiecka, 2011).

Much research has been performed on adolescent influence on family purchasing decisions. Ishaque and Tufail (2014) suggested that children now have active roles in all purchasing processes. Kaur and Singh (2006) stated that the factors that influence children's purchasing decisions are the mother's employment status, the family's level of education, the family structure, the manner of communication among family members, and the number of children in the family. Martensen and Gronholdt (2008) researched the influence of children aged 5 to 13 on purchasing behavior, and concluded that the influence of children and adolescents on family purchasing decisions varies according to their age. Furthermore, compared to younger children, older children have more influence on decisions. Malene (2011) studied the purchasing

behaviors of children's parents, and concluded that children had a high influence on grocery purchases. In another study, Wang *et al.* (2007) analyzed the influence of adolescents with respect to their culture. Considering the cultures and habits of Chinese and U.S. respondents, they determined that demographic and socio-economic variables differentiate the influence. Moreover, although China and U.S. have different cultures and family structures, no significant difference was observed between the two countries.

This study examines how adolescents' purchasing decisions, the adolescents' gender, the family's employment and structure, the education level of the mother and father, the number of siblings, and the family income affect family purchasing decisions. In this respect, the following seven hypotheses were developed:

H₁: Adolescent influence on family purchasing decisions varies depending on the adolescent's gender.

H₂: Adolescent influence on family purchasing decisions varies depending on the mother's employment status.

H₃: Adolescent influence on family purchasing decisions varies depending on the adolescent's age.

H₄: Adolescent influence on family purchasing decisions varies depending on the father's education.

H₅: Adolescent influence on family purchasing decisions varies depending on the mother's education level.

H₆: Adolescent influence on family purchasing decisions varies depending on the adolescent's number of siblings.

H₇: Adolescent influence on family purchasing decisions varies depending on the family's income.

It is important to identify the stages of the purchasing decision process to better explain how adolescents influence their family's purchasing decisions because the influence of adolescents is expected to vary at each stage. For example, Wut and Chou (2009) studied the family purchasing behavior influence of children living in Hong Kong and suggested that children are especially influential at the making a purchasing decision stage.

In marketing literature, previous studies in which the family unit was used as the research unit divide the purchasing decision process into different numbers of stages. Davis and Rigaux (1974) divided the process into two stages. Wilkes (1975) divided it into the four stages of identifying the problem, obtaining information and assessing the alternatives, decision-making and purchasing, consumption and assessment, and transition to the next purchasing process. Belch and Willis (2002) determined the three stages of the emergence of the idea of purchasing, the gathering of information and assessing of alternatives, and making the purchasing decision. In this study, as it suits the aim of the research, the family purchasing decision process is considered to occur in the three stages of determining the need, researching and assessing alternatives, and making the purchasing decision.

Additionally, it is estimated that the influence of adolescents on the stages of the purchasing decision process is not the same for each product group. Marketing literature (Foxman *et al.* 1989; Belch and Willis, 2002; Shoham and Dalakas, 2005) reveal that there are many product groups of different price levels that cater to different needs and are used by different family members. It was determined that for these product groups, the stages where the adolescent influences the purchasing decision varied. Singh and Aggarwal (2012) studied the roles and influence of children living in India on family purchasing behavior, and found that their highest influence was on clothing and technology product purchases. In another study, Kaur and Singh (2006) examined the influence of children on family purchasing decisions, and determined that children were more interested in the purchase of breakfast cereals, restaurant meals, groceries, and durable consumer goods.

As shown in the literature, at which stage the adolescents influence purchasing decisions varies depending on the product type. In extant studies, products are classified in different ways. The following classification is best suited for the objective of this study:

* High-Cost Products for Family Use

* Low-Cost Products for Family Use

* High-Cost Products for Adolescent Use

* Low-Cost Products for Adolescent Use

In the light of the above information, the stage at which adolescents most influence the purchasing process is expected to vary according to the type of product. Therefore, our eighth hypothesis was developed accordingly.

H₈: The stage at which adolescents influence the purchasing process varies according to the different types of products.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Sample and Data Collection Tool

The research population includes adolescents from Mersin, Turkey between 12 to 18 years of age who are continuing their education. The data for this study was collected using the convenience sampling method, one of the improbable sampling methods, and the face-to-face interview method was used. During the data collection process, 415 survey forms were completed by the adolescents. Analysis was performed on data from 400 surveys after eliminating the incomplete or faulty surveys. Considering this, the size of the research sample is sufficient for the hypotheses to be tested, with a 5% margin of error.

In the first part of the survey, five questions were asked to determine the demographic characteristics of the participants. In the second part, adolescents were asked at which stage of the purchasing decision process they considered themselves influential for the four product groups. In the final part of the study, the adolescents were asked questions regarding their influence on family purchasing decisions. A Likert scale adapted from Muderrisoglu (2009), Isin (2001), and North *et al.* (2007) was used to measure 11 statements on the adolescents' influence on their family purchasing decisions. Statements were graded as "Strongly Agree = 5, Agree = 4, Neutral = 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly Disagree = 1."

3.2. Analysis and Findings

Demographic and socio-economic information regarding the research sample have been summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Socio-economic and Demographic Characteristics of the Research Sample

Adolescent's Demographic Characteristics		Freq.	%	Adolescent's Demographic Characteristics		Freq.	%
Gender	Male	222	55.5	Number of Siblings	Only Child	115	28.8
	Female	178	44.5		2 Siblings	238	59.5
Age	12	25	6.3		3 Siblings	47	11.8
	13	43	10.8	Family Income	1001-2000 TRY	129	32.3
	14	38	9.5		2001-3000 TRY	187	46.8
	15	142	35.5		3001-4000 TRY	40	10.0
	16	132	33.0		4001-5000 TRY	44	11.0
	17	11	2.8	Mother's Employment Status:	Working	296	73.7
	18	9	2.3		Not working	104	26.3
				Mother (frequency)	Father (frequency)	Mother (%)	Father (%)
Parents' Educational Status		Elementary school	23	-	5.8	-	
		Middle school	17	27	4.3	6.8	
		High school	232	218	58.0	54.5	
		University	117	121	29.3	30.3	
		Post Graduate	11	34	2.8	8.5	

The validity and reliability of the scales are important for the results of the study to be valid and reliable (Demirali, 1995). Therefore, before testing the hypotheses, the validity and reliability of the purchasing decision influence scale were tested. For reliability, Cronbach's Alpha values were calculated and are provided with the scale statements in Table 2. The alpha values of the scale are higher than the recommended 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978) level. In this context, the scale has reliable results. To ensure the content validity of the study, the scales were evaluated by two marketing professionals. To ensure the criterion validity, the scales were created using scales that have been previously applied and successful.

Table 2. Scale Statements and Reliability Analysis

	Scale Statements	Cronbach's Alpha
S1	I notice that I need a product in the house.	0.952
S2	I can decide that purchasing a product will be beneficial.	
S3	I gather information regarding the alternatives of the product to be purchased.	
S4	I visit different shops to review different brands.	
S5	In the family, I influence the decision for how much will be spent.	
S6	I have direct influence on choosing the color/model of the product to be purchased.	
S7	I insist on the brand of the products to be purchased.	
S8	I have direct influence on the decision for which brand of product will be purchased.	
S9	I influence the decision for which of the alternative products are purchased.	
S10	I influence the decision from which shop/store the product is purchased.	
S11	I influence the decision for repurchase.	

In this study, in total, 28 products were chosen to represent the previously determined four product groups, and the adolescents were asked which stage of the purchasing decision process they considered themselves most influential. The modes of the influencing stages for the products representing each participant's product groups were obtained and the purchasing decision process they could influence for a single product group was established. Products representing the product classification are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Products Representing the Product Classes

Product Group	Name of Product
High-Cost Products for Family Use	Refrigerator, Camera, Oven, Dishwasher, Television, Furniture, Car, Air Conditioner, Small household appliances
Low-Cost Products for Family Use	Fruit Juice, Jams, Fruits, Vegetables, Toothpaste, Tea, Ketchup
High-Cost Products for Adolescent Use	Computer, Audio system, Mobile phone, PlayStation, Bicycle, Camera, Sports equipment
Low-Cost Products for Adolescent Use	Ice cream, Fizzy beverage, Chocolate, Cake/biscuits, Stationery equipment

To test H₃, which was developed in accordance with the aim of this study, a t-test, ANOVA, and Chi-square analyses were used. According to the independent t-test results shown in Table 4, adolescent influence on family purchasing decisions has a significant difference depending on the mother's employment status and the adolescent's gender. Therefore, H₁ and H₂ are supported (p<0.05). Based on the complementary analysis, the average influence of adolescent girls on

purchasing decisions is 3.70, whereas for boys it is 3.26. Thus, girls have more influence on purchasing decisions than boys. In addition, when the averages of the influence on purchasing decisions are compared, children with a working mother have an average of 3.57 while children with an unemployed mother have an average of 3.12. This suggests that children with a working mother have more influence on purchasing behavior.

Table 4. T-test results

Independent t-test results		n	\bar{X}	SD	t	p	Levene Test	
							F	P
Gender	Female	178	3.70	348.01	3.657	0.000**	42.722	0.000
	Male	222	3.26					
Mother's Employment Status	Working	296	3.57	160.11	3.082	0.002**	15.640	0.000
	Not working	104	3.12					

Note: ** and * represent significance level at 1% and 5%.

Table 5 displays the ANOVA test results and shows that the differences in influence on family purchasing decisions depending on the adolescent's age, the education level of the mothers and fathers, the number of siblings, and the family income. In addition, Table 5 also provides the Tukey test results, which show the groups that had statistically significant differences. Only the statistically significant differences with an error margin of 5% were included.

Table 5. ANOVA analysis results

	Age	n	\bar{X}	Sd	F	p	TUKEY
Age	12 (a)	25	2.69	0.434	33.39	0.000**	a>c, g
	13 (b)	43	2.50	0.554			b>g
	14 (c)	38	2.28	0.364			c>g
	15 (d)	142	3.90	1.197			d>a, b, c, g
	16 (e)	132	3.73	1.036			e>a, b, c, g
	17 (f)	11	4.93	0.168			f>a, b, c, d, e, g
	18 (g)	9	2.01	0.030			g<a, b, c, d, ,e, f
	Total	400	3.45	1.175			
Father's Educational Status	Middle school (a)	27	1.95	0.058	21.77	0.000**	a<b, c, d
	High school (b)	217	3.57	1.190			b>a
	University (c)	122	3.38	1.105			c>a
	Post Graduate (d)	34	4.09	0.748			d>a, c
	Total	400	3.45	1.174			
Mother's Educational Status	Elementary school	23	3.37	1.292	2.07	0.084	-
	Middle school	17	3.52	1.221			-
	High school	232	3.38	1.149			-
	University	117	3.49	1.177			-
	Post Graduate	11	4.40	1.111			-
	Total	400	3.45	1.174			-
Number Of Siblings	Only Child (a)	116	3.77	0.966	17.25	0.000**	a>b, c
	2 Siblings (b)	237	3.45	1.176			b>c
	3 Siblings (c)	47	2.62	1.255			c<a, b
	Total	400	3.44	1.174			
Family's Monthly Income	1001-2000 TRY (a)	129	2.99	1.220	10.47	0.000**	a<b, c, d
	2001-3000 TRY (b)	187	3.67	1.147			b>a
	3001-4000 TRY (c)	40	3.50	0.715			c>a
	4001-5000 TRY (d)	44	3.75	1.129			d>a
	Total	400	3.44	1.174			

Note: ** and * represent significance level at 1% and 5%.

The results of the ANOVA analysis indicate that the influence of adolescents on purchasing decisions varies depending on their age. This result supports H₃ (p<0.05). The Tukey test was performed to determine the differences in the degrees of influence on family purchasing decisions between the age groups, and statistically significant differences between the groups were indicated. Adolescents aged 15, 16, and especially 17 have more influence on purchasing decisions in comparison to the other age groups. Furthermore, the results show that adolescents, especially at the age of 18, differ in their influence on family purchasing decisions and have less influence at this age.

Table 5 also statistically shows that the degree of influence of adolescents on purchasing decisions varies according to the father's educational status. Therefore, H₄ is supported (p<0.05). According to the Tukey test results, adolescents whose fathers have a middle school education have a statistically less significant influence on purchasing decisions compared to the other groups. Adolescents whose fathers have a post-graduate degree have a greater influence on purchasing behavior. Therefore, the higher the educational status of the father, the more influence the adolescent has on family purchasing decisions.

According to the results of the ANOVA analysis, adolescent influence on family purchasing decisions does not have a statistical difference depending on the mother's education. Therefore, H₅ was rejected (p>0.05).

Table 5 statistically establishes that the degree of influence of adolescents on purchasing decisions differs according to the number siblings. Based on this result, H₆ was supported (p<0.05). The Tukey test results show that adolescents who are the only child have more influence on purchasing decisions compared to adolescents with two or three siblings. The greater the number of siblings, the less influence adolescents have on family purchasing decisions.

According to the results, adolescent influence on family purchasing decisions has a statistically significant difference depending on the family income. According to this result, H₇ is supported (p<0.05). Additionally, according to the Tukey test results, adolescents whose total family income is within the range of 1000-2000 TRY have a statistically less significant influence on purchasing decisions compared to other income brackets.

Table 6 shows the relationship between the stage adolescents influence the purchasing decisions and the products they influence. The chi-square analysis results show that there is a significant relationship between the product groups and the decision process stage at which the adolescents influence the purchasing decision. According to this result, H₈ is supported (p<0.05). The results of the analysis demonstrate that while adolescents are influential at the research stage for alternatives of high- and low-cost products for family use, they are more influential during the purchasing decision stage for high- and low-cost products for their own use.

Table 6. Chi-square analysis results

Group	Determination of the Needs	Researching Alternatives	Making the Purchasing Decision
High-Cost Products for Family Use	7	384	9
	16.7%	41.2%	1.4%
Low-Cost Products for Family Use	33	358	9
	78.6%	38.4%	1.4%
High-Cost Products for Adolescent Use	0	130	270
	0.0%	13.9%	43.1%
Low-Cost Products for Adolescent Use	2	60	338
	4.8%	6.4%	54.0%

Note: X²=976.507 and p<0.001

4. Conclusion

As one of the most important building blocks of society, the family unit, as a consumption unit, cannot be ignored by marketers. Previous research examining family purchasing behavior focused on the influence of spouses on purchasing decisions, made comparisons between

husbands and wives, and generally ignored the influence of children and adolescents. However, changing social, economic, and global conditions have increased the influence of children and adolescents in this process.

Family members have different roles when displaying consumer behavior. In this context, adolescents between the ages of 12 and 18 are both the users of products and services and important influencers of purchasing decisions. As parents are increasingly influenced by their children, marketers and market researchers must pay closer attention to adolescents. The main purpose of this study was to establish how demographic and socio-economic factors differently affect the influence of adolescents between the ages of 12 to 18 on purchasing decisions. Moreover, this study aimed to determine the stage of the purchasing decision process where adolescents have more influence. The results show that adolescents at the ages of 15, 16, and 17 have more influence on purchasing decisions. Martensen and Gronholdt (2008) found that children (5 to 13 years of age) who are older had more influence on purchasing decisions.

In existing literature, studies suggest that the adolescent influence on the family purchasing decision process varies according to the adolescent's gender, family income, and the parents' educational status (Kaur and Singh, 2006; Schaninger and Putrevu, 2006). This study demonstrates that the adolescent influence on the family purchasing decision process varies according to adolescents' gender, number of siblings, employment status of the mother, educational status of the father, and family income. However, the educational status of the adolescents' mothers has no influence on the purchasing decision process. Additionally, adolescent girls are more influential on purchasing decisions than adolescent boys, and adolescents with low family income and mothers who are unemployed have less influence on purchasing decisions. Finally, adolescents whose fathers had a post-graduate degree, a high family income, and no siblings have more influence on purchasing decisions.

This study also indicates that the adolescent influence on the purchasing process varies in accordance with different product groups. Adolescents are more influential at the stage of researching alternative products for family use. However, they are also influential on the purchasing decisions of products for personal use.

This research is of great importance for marketers. This study shows that adolescents aged 12 to 18 are not just users of products and services. They can significantly influence purchasing decisions at various stages of the purchasing process for different product groups. Furthermore, the influence of adolescents on purchasing decisions changes in accordance with certain socio-economic and demographic variables. Therefore, while creating marketing mixes and strategies, adolescents should be considered important influencers. Proper marketing mixes and strategies can be created by taking into account the increasing influence of adolescents on purchasing decisions, which will help companies competitive advantage in the markets where they operate.

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