CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Consumer durable goods such as automobiles, television sets, refrigerators, and washing machines, have become the standard items of use in many households of the middle income group. Research on the influence of the family members in buying durable goods is more extensive than that on frequently purchased items. Even a casual observer would probably agree that decision on important, one-time purchases are likely to involve more than one household member. It is rather unfortunate that many consumer researches have been conducted on the assumption that individuals make decisions independent of other family members. In reality, many purchase decisions actively involve joint participation by members of the family, depending on the nature of the product. This fact is reflected in sociological literature on family power structure over the past 30 years. (Blood, 1958; Blood and Wolfe, 1960; Ferber, 1971; Heer, 1958, 1962; Herbst, 1952; Ingersoll, 1948; Kenkel, 1957; Sprey, 1972; Turkand Bell, 1972; Turner, 1970; Wolfe, 1959).

A review of marketing and consumer research journals and proceedings published over the past two decades indicates that studies on spousal roles in durable goods buying represent a very active area of empirical research. A number of empirical researches carried out have investigated spousal roles in family purchase decisions; home furnishings (Davis, 1970; Green and Cunningham, 1975; Jaffe Associates, and Scott, 1970; Woodside, 1975). Other

These studies of family purchase decision making behaviour have led to substantial insights into the relative roles of husbands and wives in buying particular products and have produced evidence that all these purchase decisions are actually composed of a sequence of decisions and that the key person or influencer at one stage of a decision making process need not be the same at another stage and their roles also vary across the product types (Davis 1970; Hempel 1974; Woodside 1975; Denny P. Rigaux, 1974; E.H. Bonfield 1978). These studies also reveal that a number of variables like feminine role perception, search behaviour, relative resource contribution, socio demographic characteristics and type of product are significant in determining the structure of family purchase decision making. The results of these studies lead to the conclusion that joint decision making is most likely to occur for purchases that represent economic outlay; whereas expenditure on items viewed as necessities will probably be delegated to one of the spouses. Disagreement is a natural part of joint decision making process as the family members will often disagree on the desirability of the various alternatives. There has been minimal
research investigating the role of conflict in family decision making (Belch et al., 1981; Davis 1976; Sheth 1974). This study has also addressed this issue, since, understanding the dynamics of such disagreements is essential to gain an insight into the family purchase decision making process. Also an understanding of how these disagreements are resolved will help marketers target their messages to the right spouse.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Research on family decision making has grown rapidly during the recent decades, and new insights on different perspectives have emerged. The dominance in purchase decision making in a family has been conceptualised along a social continuum from the patriarchal, through egalitarian to the matriarchal. The issue of where the typical Indian family would be located on it in durable purchases has been the subject of speculation. While the available literature contains many family purchasing studies conducted in Western countries, the scope of these studies is too limited and is not appropriate to Indian context in many respects. Paucity of Indian studies in this context is rather unfortunate, in that the Indian and the Western cultures differ with regard to the prevailing family culture, ideologies, purchase behaviour, level of economic activity and life styles. The Indian society is traditionally viewed as patriarchal, characterised by husband dominance (because of the important economic role of husband as bread winner), masculine superiority, sharply defined sex roles and separation of sexes.
But recent developments show that Indian societies are undergoing radical changes pertaining to the roles of men and women and indicate that the earlier conceptualisation of role structures for family decision making may no longer be valid (Anand, 1992; Femina, 1993; Merchant, 1992; Singh, 1992; Tripathy, 1991). Women in urban India are not content nowadays with running a household and bringing up children. They want to go out and prove themselves in corporate and Government circles which for long were male bastions. Some of them are strongly career oriented with no role for husbands in their lives. Some others are striving to balance between family and career. Some of them work for economic independence and are not motivated by economic necessity. This means that the Indian woman is becoming more contemporary than she has been a generation earlier. She is definitely becoming more alert and alive to issues other than the narrow focus of "family". She has more economic independence and abundant information at her disposal. Interestingly, these findings are bound to have an impact on the role women play in decision making regarding purchase of durables (Business Line "Working Women" - Growing Numbers, Growing Market - July 1997). All these evidences suggest that Indian families are different today from what they have been once and depict a gradual shift in the perception of men and women of the appropriate division of labour within the household. It has also been observed that men are increasingly involved in household activities.

The distinction between sex-roles is much less functional and in many respects Indian Society is experiencing a breakdown in cultural norms and ideals pertaining to the tasks of men and women. This diminishing distinction in the
roles that men and women perform in the society has resulted in changing sex-roles, moving towards equality between sexes. These external environmental trends, namely, changes in feminine role perception, wives' employment outside the home and their resource contribution (educational attainment, level of income, and age) are likely to change the internal environment too, altering the balance of family power between the husband and wife. (Foote, 1954; Haas, 1980; Holter 1971) and are likely to act as important variables in FPDMB (Family Purchase Decision Making Behaviour) research.

In addition, these major changes in feminine role perception, wives' employment outside the home, women empowerment and their economic independence will also be reflected in the market place and will present many new opportunities and challenges to the marketers of consumer durables particularly the multinationals who have entered the Indian market in a big way after the liberalisation policy. Marketers should, therefore, respond to these changes by formulating suitable marketing strategies and promotional policies.

Empirical studies conducted in many countries have suggested that feminine role perception, search behaviour, relative resource contribution, wives' work participation, demographic characteristics and type of product have tremendous impact on family decision making. The presence, nature and extent of the effect of these variables on family purchase decision making remains an area which is yet to be explored in the Indian context. Apart from the paucity of research on family decision making in the Indian context, most of the earlier studies conducted in other countries have often been criticised for the use of
hypothetical purchase situations and use of wives as sole respondents which would tend to affect the generalisation of the results. A broader conceptual framework, overcoming these weaknesses, is therefore necessary to better decipher and understand the general pattern of spousal influence and disagreement and to explain and predict the impact of many variables on purchase decision making.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

Purchase decision making is a normal process in many families. Analysing and understanding the purchasing pattern of consumer durables are important today in view of the many important changes that are occurring in the Indian families - eg., the increase in the number of nuclear families, late marriages, childless couples, postponement of parenthood, women's empowerment, proportion of the number of career oriented women and changes in family members' roles.

The other important sweeping changes are the recent "Globalisation" of the Indian market, explosion of the middle income group and emerging small nuclear families. Many multinationals have entered the Indian soil to market their products. The main reason behind the multinationals seeking entry into India is the potential offered by the middle class, which, according to IRS, numbers 140 million, of whom 42 million live in the major cities (Advertising and Marketing volume VII Issue XXIII "clue to change". pp 24-25).
The middle income group is growing steadily and offers tremendous potential to the marketers of durable products (both national and multinational). On an all India level an important finding reveals that 74 per cent of Indian households are now nuclear. The report finds that typical family across urban and rural India consists of 3.9 individuals. This middle income family today has more economic power and tries to imitate the upper income group life styles. In addition, the increased status and autonomy of the modern wife implies that she will make some of the decisions which were previously made by the husband. In the light of the above changes, this research which analyses the spousal influence and disagreement is of paramount importance to comprehend the dynamics of durable purchase decision process in a family. This study, it is hoped, will help marketers understand the decision process and thus develop appropriate marketing programmes. From the point of view of the multinationals, the study will help them understand the decision process of this important, large and heterogeneous middle income segment in the Indian context. This research would also add to the already existing theory of literature on consumer behaviour and contribute to the better understanding of family buying patterns with reference to purchase of consumer durables in a developing country like India.

The present study is an improvement over the previous studies in that:

1. Unlike earlier studies, due care and attention have been exercised in the selection of durable products. The three products considered were television, refrigerator and washing machine. All the three products are family-oriented. Further this research has considered middle income group
and on analysing the order of purchase, these three products are acquired in the order stated above.

2. The present research was based on seeking information from respondents on explicitly defined past purchase decisions rather than on hypothetical purchase decisions.

3. The joint response of both husbands and wives were obtained instead of individual responses from only one spouse in analysing influence structure.

4. This study also analysed the disagreements in family decisions process and in whose favour it was finally resolved.

5. A large number of product sub-decision elements were included in the present study instead of permitting a broad analysis and thus a better understanding of the decision process has been attained.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The prime objective of the study is to investigate the husband-wife influence in the purchase of consumer durables. As disagreement is a natural outcome of joint decision making process, this study also focuses on analysing the disagreement in the sub-decisions during various stages of the decision making process. The study focuses on the following objectives.
1. To review the theoretical concepts of WWP (wives' work participation), RRC (relative resource contribution) in household decision making and to bring out its significance with regard to spousal influence structure and conflict in decision making.

2. To analyse the patterns of husband-wife influence in the purchase of durable products with reference to the sub-decisions involved.

3. To examine the independent effect of wives' work participation, relative resource contribution variables on spousal influence in these durable purchase decisions.

4. To analyse the disagreements between the spouses in sub-decisions involved and to investigate the impact of relative resource contribution, wives' work participation on such disagreements in the purchase decision process.

5. To determine the effect of socio demographic variables on spousal influence and disagreements in decision making in the purchase of these durables.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study is part of a broad investigation of urban family in purchase decisions relating to three durables, namely, television, refrigerator and washing machine.
The present research is an improvement over previous studies which either attempt to measure only spousal influence or disagreement. Although certain aspects of spousal influence and report disagreements have been extensively investigated in the United States, spousal report disagreement has been examined in only two cross-national consumer behaviour studies ((Hempel, 1974) and Davis, Douglas and Silk (1981)). Both the studies focused on report disagreements among couples in western industrialised countries. As a result, the extent and nature of spousal influence and report disagreement in other parts of the world remain essentially unknown. Such low level of understanding impairs the development of effective international marketing strategies. This study assumes significance with the entry of multinationals into the Indian durable market in a big way. This study will provide an insight into the family decision making process towards purchase of consumer durables in the Indian context. This will help the multinationals and domestic manufacturers in devising effective marketing strategies and plans. This study will also contribute to the growing knowledge of research on family purchase decision making.
OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF THE CONCEPTS

Family purchase decision making (FPDM) is defined as the decision making process that a family goes through in purchasing process of a particular product used by one or more persons of the family but has utility value for the whole family.

Family is defined as a man and woman who have been married for more than one year and live in the same house. Other members of the household, for example, children or maids, were not included in this study.

Durables is defined as goods that normally survive many uses, eg. refrigerator, washing machine, etc.. They normally require more personal selling and service, and command higher margin and require more selling efforts (Philip Kotler, 1984). Although durables include a wide spectrum of products for the purpose of this study, only three durables viz., refrigerator, television and washing machine were considered.

Wives work participation For the purpose of this study a wife is considered to be working if she is gainfully employed outside home, whether part-time or full-time.
Relative Resource Contribution Although many factors could have been selected as measures of resources, for the purpose of this study, relative resources is defined in terms of age, educational attainment and level of income of each spouse. These are equivalent to macro-level structural resources suggested by Howard, Blumstein and Schwartz (1986; P 103) who refer it to factors that are systematically associated with power through larger social institutions.

Spousal influence is defined as the degree to which authority, power and decision responsibility is attributed to the husband or wife by their spouse (William J. Qualls 1987). The influence is reflected through the role structure of the spouses. The terms influence, authority and dominance have been used interchangeably in family research and closely resemble each other in meaning.

Conflict is defined as a confrontation process between individuals (husband and wife) over scarce resources, controversial means, incompatible goals or a combination of these. This definition is consistent with those found in other disciplines (E.g. Boulding 1962; Deutch 1973; Rapport 1960). Conflict for the purpose of this study is conceptualised simply as discrepant preferences or desirability of various alternatives. The terms conflict and disagreement mean the same and are used interchangeably in this study.
ORGANISATION OF THE THESIS

The thesis contains seven chapters in all. The first chapter is an introduction which states the significance, need, objectives and scope of the study. Following this the second chapter is the survey of important empirical studies related to family purchase decision making behaviour. The third chapter reviews and brings out the significance of incorporating the four variables viz., spousal influence, relative resource contribution, working wives participation and degree of disagreement (Conflict) in family purchase decision making research. Also cited in this chapter is the importance of socio demographic variables such as level of income, number of years married, total number of children in the family on spousal influence and disagreement in family decision making.

The detailed methodology adopted in this research is stated in chapter four: Details like area of study, selection of sample, sampling plan, construction of the tool for data collection, testing of the tool for reliability and data collection procedure are discussed. Justification for the approach used at each stage is provided wherever possible.

The fifth chapter deals with analysis and findings of the study. The patterns of husband-wife influence for different durables and for different sub-decisions across different durables is analysed in this chapter. Also the impact of the variables like wives' work participation, relative resource contribution and other demographic variables on spousal influence is analysed.
The sixth chapter analyses the husband-wife disagreement patterns for different durables and for different sub-decisions across different durables. Also the impact of the variables like wives' work participation, relative resource contribution and other demographic variables on spousal disagreement is analysed. The seventh chapter summarises the main findings, draws conclusions, derives implications for marketing and points out avenues for further research.