PROLOGUE

Marketers and strategists have long realized that in order to successfully design the marketing mix and position their offerings, an in-depth understanding of the consumer psyche and different dimensions of decision making process are inevitable. They have acknowledged the role of family in general and involvement of husband-wife dyad in the purchase decision-making process in particular.

Studies have revealed that the roles of family members are fluid and continuously changing with time. They are likely to shift, depending on the specific product or service, the family role structure orientation and the specific stage in the decision-making process. With these changes there is also a continuous change of the members' involvement in the purchasing decisions. So the behaviour of the said members as consumers has to be studied regularly to identify the main decision makers within the family.

The information concerning involvement of family members during different stages of the decision-making process and the various related sub-decisions in the Indian context is in its nascent stage with even lesser work having been done in the rural context. Further, the extant US centric research in the context of family decision-making has been mainly oriented towards studying the involvement of husband-wife dyad in the purchase decision and that too in the urban context. Interestingly, other members of the family, particularly children and grandparents who also play an important role have been largely ignored.

Through the present study an attempt has been made to bridge this gap and to provide a realistic insight into the dynamics at play in the family decision-making process in the Indian rural context.
This thesis is divided into seven chapters. Chapter 1 tries to provide a brief introduction of family and purchase decision process, the need for the study and the research objectives.

Chapter 2 tries to identify the dominant players in the family purchase decision process in the light of the extant literature.

Chapter 3 deals with the methodology and related sub-headings pertaining to hypothesis, research design, sampling plan and the instrument administered, the profile of the respondents, limitations of the study and the method of analysis adopted for the present study.

Chapter 4 contains the analysis and interpretation of data. It is an attempt in the direction of unraveling the involvement of various family members and the family dynamics at work in the purchase of the products under study.

Chapter 5 presents the summary of the results and discussion. The findings are presented in the form of sections dealing with stages of decision-making process and the sub decisions relating to the products under study.

Chapter 6 includes the conclusions drawn from the study that may serve as vital inputs to the marketing practitioners in developing the promotional campaigns, selecting markets, market segmentation and product design and development.

Chapter 7 deals with suggestions pertaining to future research in the area.

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