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THE INFLUENCING ROLE OF ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG ADULTS ON THE FAMILY DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

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ABSTRACT

EN. First advances on family consumption research focused essentially on the dynamics between husband and wife. However, it was soon recognized that the influence of children should not be overlooked. Not only younger family members represent a powerful and growing market, but also they have an increasingly wider access to information, which contributes to their influence upon family decision-making.

The majority of the studies on this area have focused on North-American households. Less attention has been allocated to European families. In particular, the facets of family decision making within Portuguese households remain neglected by the academic literature. Furthermore, only children and adolescents have been considered by previous studies. The emergence of a new generation of young adults who still live with parents has not been analyzed yet.

This paper provides a better understanding of how teenagers and young adults impact and influence the family decision-making process, according to their parents' perceptions. In order to perform this analysis, a literature review was developed and further data was obtained by conducting a survey among Portuguese parents of children aged between 13 and 24 years old.

The main findings suggest that children's expertise is the main driver for children influence, together with the importance attributed to a given purchase. Also, we found out that the perception parents' have of children expertise may be triggered by exposing them to concepts relating to knowledge acquisition. Furthermore, the study shows that different factors account for the variation in children's influence, depending on the product category concerned.

RESUMO

PT. Os primeiros estudos na área de consumo familiar abordaram essencialmente a dinâmica entre marido e mulher. No entanto, rapidamente se concluiu que a influência das crianças não devia ser menosprezada. Por um lado, os elementos mais jovens da família constituem um mercado de grande dimensão e em crescimento. Por outro lado, estes membros do agregado familiar têm um acesso à informação cada vez mais alargado, o que contribui fortemente para a sua influência no processo de tomada de decisão.

A maioria dos estudos nesta área tem-se centrado na análise de famílias norte-americanas. As famílias europeias têm recebido menos atenção; mais concretamente, as especificidades do processo de tomada de decisão das famílias portuguesas continuam negligenciadas pela literatura académica. Para além disso, apenas as crianças e adolescentes têm sido considerados por estudos anteriores. O surgimento de uma nova geração de jovens adultos que ainda vivem com os pais ainda não foi tido em consideração.

O objectivo global desta tese é proporcionar uma compreensão mais aprofundada acerca da forma como os adolescentes e jovens adultos impactam e influenciam o processo de tomada de decisão familiar, de acordo com a percepção dos pais. Para concretizar esta análise, a literatura existente foi revista e informação adicional foi obtida através da realização de uma pesquisa junto de pais portugueses, com filhos de idades compreendidas entre os 13 e os 24 anos de idade.

Os principais resultados do estudo sugerem que o conhecimento dos filhos é o principal motor da sua influência, juntamente com a importância atribuída por estes ao produto ou serviço em causa. Ademais, descobrimos que a percepção dos pais em relação ao conhecimento dos seus filhos pode ser estimulada, através de uma exposição a conceitos relativos à aquisição de conhecimento. Os resultados do estudo mostram também que, dependendo da categoria de produto em causa, diferentes factores contribuem para a variação da influência das crianças.

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1. INTRODUCTION

It does not really matter whether one belongs to a modern family or to one coming from the Stone Age. Some people have complained about having a mother in law that is a witch, others have worried about ending up home alone during Christmas. Sometimes, it may even occur to belong to a family fascinated by the mafia or to suddenly become a desperate housewife. What is special about the family is the “permanence” (Cox, 1975), both in life or six feet under.

This paper concentrates on the analysis of one of the most important units of markets – the family. More precisely, the aim of this thesis is to provide a better understanding of the influencing role of teenagers and young adults concerning the family decision-making process.

In reality, consumers are more *one for all and all for one* than one can imagine. Although the consumer is frequently considered as a singular individual, for many purchase decisions, family represents the essential decision-making and consumption unit (Spiro, 1983).

To our knowledge, first advances in the area of family decision-making have been mostly focused on the dynamics between husband and wife and have excluded the role of younger family members. However, researchers soon recognized that the influence of children should not be neglected. Even though children may possess restricted financial resources, they are recognized as having a major impact on family purchases, on a comprehensive range of products (Wu et al., 2010).

Foxman & Tansuhaj (1988) claim that last decades’ changes in demographic and household structures appear to have increased children’s impact on their parents’ decisions and their general involvement in family decision making. Also, the advent of the World Wide Web is impacting family dynamics as Internet becomes an important source of information, potentially altering the decision-making roles of family members based on their Internet usage level (Belch, Krentler & Willis-Flurry, 2002).

Research on children’s influence in family decision-making has had its focus on various age groups. Some authors have explored the influence of little kids (Berey & Pollay, 1968; Robertson & Rossiter, 1974; Ward & Wackman, 1972), others have chosen to study adolescents (Beatty & Talpade, 1994; Belch, Belch & Sciglimpaglia, 1980; Belch, Krentler &

Willis-Flurry, 2002; Foxman, Tansuhaj & Ekstrom, 1989) and, in some cases, both were considered (Jenkins, 1979). However, until now, little attention has been given to young adults who still live with parents. Around the world, young people are delaying taking what is commonly regarded as the first step in an independent adult life – moving out of their parents’ home (Cobb-Clark, 2008). This trend is also observed Portugal where, according to EUROSTAT, young adults only leave parental house by the age of 28.8, on average. These co-residence living arrangements among parents and adult children take two forms – either delayed home-leaving or the return of adult children to the home (Mitchell, 1998). As a fundamental part of the household, the influence of these delayed-home leaving kids in the family decision-making process should be analyzed.

As the world changes, the family decision making process will also change (Belch & Willis, 2001) and, based on the above described evidences, the world is in fact changing, leaving behind a call for further research.

Furthermore, although this area has received extensive attention from several researchers, the majority of the studies have focused on North-American households and less attention has been allocated to European families. In particular, the facets of family decision making within Portuguese households remain neglected by the academic literature.

The aim of this study is to provide a better understanding of how teenagers and young adults living with parents impact and influence the family decision-making process, according to their parents’ perceptions. In order to clarify this influence, the following questions are addressed:

1. What teenagers and young adults’ characteristics affect their relative influence in the family decision-making process?
2. What parental and household characteristics contribute to teenagers and young adults’ relative influence in family decision-making?
3. How does teenagers and young adults’ influence vary depending on the product category?

The above mentioned topics are explored through an empirical analysis of Portuguese households’ decision-making process.

The paper is comprised of six main chapters. The first one aims to provide the reader with an overview of the research topic, the problem statement and the corresponding research questions. Secondly, an analysis of the existing literature is performed in chapter two. The following chapter focuses on the research purpose, research questions and research design. Chapter four describes the methodology adopted in order to address the research questions, the main measures used and provides a description of the sample. Chapter five presents the empirical results and draws conclusions regarding the problem statement. Lastly, the concluding chapter deals with the interpretation of the main findings from the research and explores its recommendations. Also, this section draws attention to the limitations of the study as well as further research that might be developed under the same topic.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter aims to present the relevant theory and empirical research regarding the topic covered. It is divided in three main sections. In the first section, the literature regarding family as decision-making unit is reviewed. Additionally, an overview of the several stages of the decision-making process and product categories is provided. In the second section, a description of children as influencers is made and children's characteristics related to that influence are explored. Knowledge regarding parental and household characteristics is also considered. The last section addresses the evolution of family role structure and provides a grasp on the phenomena of young adults living with parents.

2.1 FAMILY DECISION-MAKING

2.1.1 FAMILY AS A DECISION-MAKING UNIT

Families and their inner complexity is a topic that has aroused the curiosity of many researchers in numerous areas, from social psychology to economics. In reality, consumers are more *one for all and all for one* than one can imagine. Although the consumer is frequently considered as a singular individual, for many purchase decisions, it is the family rather than the individual that is the critical decision-making and consumption entity (Spiro, 1983). In fact, "as with any social group, the family must have some degree of consensus regarding its goals, objectives and modes of operation" (Cox, 1975, pp.189) and the decision making regarding consumption should not represent an exception. The decision-making activity typically involves more than one family member who have different motivations, involvement, knowledge and who play distinct roles in the process. Furthermore, according to Lackman (1993), children appear to be central emerging actors in family decision-making process along with their parents.

Over time, several authors have consistently expressed this idea of family as the major decision-making unit. The unit of the theory of consumption is really the household, not the individual consumer (Arrow, 1951; Davis, 1976) and, given this, research conducted on consumer decision-making should switch its focus by highlighting family decisions over individual ones (Belch et al., 1980).

2.1.2 FAMILY DECISION-MAKING STAGES

Research studies have examined how family member involvement varies over the decision-making process phases (Beatty & Talpade, 1994, Belch et al., 1985, Belch & Willis, 2001) and how the decision dynamics changes across different product categories (Belch et al. 1985, Belch & Willis, 2001, Foxman & Tansuhaj, 1988). Also, some previous studies thoroughly analyzed sub-decisions regarding product or services' features - for example price, size, brand or where to purchase. (Belch et. al 1985, Belch & Willis, 2001, Foxman et al., 1989, Jenkins, 1979)

According to Jenkins (1979) and William (1986), the family decision-making process is composed of a sequence of interlinked stages and different individuals play different roles at different stages. Studies on family joint consumption have employed simplified models of the decision making process. Most of the studies have opted for a three-stage model, constituted by problem recognition, information search and final choice whereas others, such as Moschis & Mitchel (1986), have added an additional evaluation stage. On their turn, Beatty & Talpade (1994) have used a “two-factor reduced model”, consisting of an initiation stage, as well as a search/decision fused stage.

Family-member relative involvement and influence seems to vary from one stage in the decision-making process to another. Findings have been consistent in indicating that, in general, children's influence appears to be more significant in the problem recognition stage and then drops significantly in the subsequent choice stages (Beatty & Talpade, 1994; Belch et al., 2002; Nelson, 1979). Nevertheless, Szybillo & Sosanie (1977) found that there is a high degree of adult and child interaction and collaboration for all stages of the process.

2.1.3 FAMILY DECISION MAKING AND PRODUCT CATEGORIES

Previous studies has investigated family decision making for various product and service categories including breakfast cereals (Atkin, 1978; Belch, 1985; Berey & Pollay, 1968), vacations (Belch, 1985; Jenkins, 1979; Szybillo & Sosanie, 1977) , TV (Belch, 1985; Foxman & Tansuhaj, 1988; Foxman et al., 1989), furniture (Belch, 1985; Foxman & Tansuhaj, 1988; Foxman et al., 1989; Jenkins, 1979) and also toothpaste, groceries, family-PC, car, clothes, bike and child-records (Foxman & Tansuhaj, 1988), among others. Nevertheless, more recent product categories, such as smartphones, tablets, DVDs or MP3 players have not been covered by the literature yet.

Additionally, family-member participation differs within each product category depending on what is being experienced or decided (Davis, 1976). As an example, considering vacations' category, Belch & Willis (2001) found husband and wife having equal input in decisions such as how much time and money to spend and when to go. However, in the case of decisions regarding the destination and accommodation, the wife was found to have more influence. Still concerning vacations' category, Jenkins (1979) found children to exert especial influence in the choice of vacation activities but minimal relative influence in all other sub-decisions.

2.2 DETERMINANTS OF CHILDREN INFLUENCE

2.2.1 CHILDREN AS INFLUENCERS

“An important determinant of an individual's behavior is others' influence” (Bearden, 1989, pp.473). This is the reason why models of consumer behavior frequently include interpersonal influence.

Research studies on household decision-making dynamics dates back at least to the 1960s (Belch & Willis, 2001). However, during a preliminary period, the attention was essentially centred on husband-wife decision-making (Belch et al., 1980; Davis, 1976; Foxman & Tansuhaj, 1988; Jenkins, 1979; Mangleburg & Tech, 1990; Scott, 1972; Szybillo & Sosanie, 1977). Researchers soon recognized that the influence of children should not be neglected. According to Berey & Pollay (1968), whose study was one of the first addressing the child's role as influencer, there are three main reasons why attention to the role of the child in the market is of great importance: the size of the child market is increasing, “obviously children influence the family decision making” and adult consumer behavior is the direct predecessor of the child consumer behavior.

Although children may have restricted financial resources, they are recognized as having an impact on family purchases, not only on those products and services designed for them specifically, but also on a comprehensive range of products (Wu et al., 2010)

Research on children's influence in family decision-making has had its focus on various age groups. Some authors have explored the influence of little kids (Atkin, 1978; Berey & Pollay, 1968; Robertson & Rossiter, 1974; Ward & Wackman, 1972), others have chosen to study adolescents (Beatty & Talpade, 1994; Belch et al., 1980; Belch et al., 2002; Foxman et al.,

1989) and, in some cases, both were considered (Jenkins, 1979). However, until now, little attention has been given to young adults who still live with parents.

Past studies have shown that children's relative influence in household decision-making is dependent on characteristics inherent to the child as well as specificities of the decision concerned. Also, parental and family characteristics impact children's influence (Mangleburg & Tech, 1990)

2.2.2 CHILDREN CHARACTERISTICS

Age seems to be a critical factor when accounting for influence in the decision-making process. Most studies have found that older children have significantly more influence than younger children (Atkin, 1978; Jenking, 1979; Moschis & Mitchell, 1986; Ward & Wackman, 1972). Mangleburg & Tech (1990) argue that this is partly owing to older children's greater cognitive ability, as compared to younger children. In addition, older children also have more experience with products and have learned more about consumer roles. Thus, it seems that when children grow older, their requests are considered as being more legitimate (Belch et al., 1980). According to Ward & Wackman (1972), this legitimacy is also associated to the fact that older children usually ask for less.

The greater cognitive ability displayed by older children is naturally associated with another crucial yet subjective variable, children expertise. During their research on conflict in family decision making, Belch et al. (1980) found out that delegation to the most knowledgeable family member was used the most for decisions regarding several product categories. Literature has revealed that children displaying greater knowledge appear to be more confident and interested in the whole process, offering ideas and suggestions. Also, they are more likely to be asked to do so (Beatty & Talpade, 1994; Wu et al., 2000).

Moreover, Atkin (1978) observed that children appear to hold pre-established beliefs and preferences which lead them to faster decisions regarding the final choice. This may be justified by a greater television exposure that provides them with a greater familiarity with the range of alternatives. In this sense, while parents perceive minor differentiation among alternatives, children may know how to distinguish brands, developing their own preferences (Atkin, 1978).

The advent of the World Wide Web also impacts on children and teenage actual and perceived expertise. Nowadays, Internet represents an essential information gathering tool

and, “it has potentially altered the decision-making roles of family members based on their interest in and expertise with the Internet” (Belch et al., 2002, pp. 569). Inspired on the *market maven* concept, Belch et al, (2002) developed an *internet maven* construct. Accordingly, an *internet maven* would be a person who has greater interest, awareness and knowledge about the marketplace due to his or her greater internet skills. Also, these people display a higher propensity to provide information to other consumers, influencing them. Indeed, the study concluded that the more teens were seen as internet mavens, the more input and influence they had on the family decision-making process.

Few papers have accounted for differences associated with gender. Although Atkin (1978) argues that there are no sex differences in parent-child interaction concerning decision-making, Moschis (1986) found female adolescents more likely to be active during the stages of need recognition, evaluation, decision and final purchase, when compared to male counterparts.

2.2.3 CHILDREN'S INFLUENCE AND PRODUCT CATEGORY

One of the most important sources of variation in children's influence is product type (Mangleburg & Tech, 1990; Williams & Burns, 2000). In general, children have demonstrated to exert significant influence in product decisions for which they will be the principal consumer (Mangleburg & Tech, 1990). For example, Atkin's study (1978), focused on the decision making regarding breakfast cereal purchase, proved that the child can play a dominant role on the product selection, either by asking for a brand or choosing one upon parental invitation. On the contrary, Jenkins (1979) found children to have minimal influence in the following categories: furniture, major appliances, cars, groceries, family savings, life insurance, and decisions regarding selection of family doctor. However, according to Foxman & Tansuhaj (1988) adolescents are active participants in family purchase decisions regardless of the product category concerned. They seem to influence the purchase of several product categories, even the most expensive or the ones which are not for their own use.

2.2.4 PARENTAL AND HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS

Several studies have examined the impact that demographic variables specific to the family unit have in children's influence. These studies examined the effects of social class, socio economic status, household income, family size and family life cycle (Williams & Burns, 2000; Beatty & Talpade, 1994).

Apart from Moschis & Mitchel (1986), there is no evidence in the literature that points toward a causal relationship between family income or social class and influence in decision-making. Not only Jenkins (1979) found that income is not associated with either spouse's perceived influence of children's input into decision-making, but also Atkin (1978), Nelson (1979) and Ward & Wackman (1972) found no statistically significant effect for socio-economic status on children's influence attempts.

Mangleburg & Tech (1990) argued that a negative effect of family size on any one child's influence attempts would be expected. However, Ward & Wackman (1972) found no relationship between child's purchase influence attempts or parental yielding and number of children in the family and Jenkins (1979) and Nelson (1978) results showed that the greater the number of elementary school children and teenagers in the family, the more overall influence was assigned to children. Hence, results are mixed and literature cannot be considered clear on this point.

Concerning the stage in family life-cycle, Jenkins (1979) found a positive relationship between children influence and the parents' length of marriage. This may be partially explained by the greater predominance of consensus between the couple in later marriage, as opposed to the intensive negotiation existing in early marriage (Cox, 1975) Given this, in later stages of the family life-cycle there would be more room for children to participate in family decisions –also due to their later age - whereas in the earlier stages, mainly parents would participate in the dynamics.

In addition to demographics, other household variables were studied by some researchers when trying to understand the role of children on parents' purchase decisions. Roberts et al. (1981) developed social-attitude-related scales and concluded that a conservative orientation, as opposed to liberal orientation, is indicative of a smaller role for the child in purchase decision-making.

Furthermore, Berey & Pollay (1968) hypothesized that the influence a child has depends on how well the parent is tuned in to the child. In order to confirm this argument, a child-centeredness index was developed for each mother based on her time involvement in the child's activities. However, the results were opposed authors' predictions, since highly child-

centred mothers revealed lower willingness to yield to children influence attempts. Given that the product category studied was breakfast cereals, probably those highly child-centred mothers were more concerned about the healthiness of the product. Therefore, different results may be obtained for other product categories.

Mothers' attitude towards advertising was considered by Ward & Wackman (1972), who found that mothers with more positive attitudes toward advertising were more likely to yield to children's influence attempts when compared to mothers with less favourable attitudes. Also, it was found that children influence attempts and yielding to those attempts had a positive relationship with mother's time spent watching television.

Lastly, parental locus of control, i.e. the degree to which individuals perceive themselves as being in control of their lives and events that influence their lives or the degree of control individuals perceive themselves to possess in regard to consequences of their behavior (Rotter, 1966) was found to have a significant impact on perceived child influence. William (1986) concluded that external locus of control parents perceive greater child influence.

2.3 THE EVOLUTION OF FAMILY STRUCTURE

2.3.1 THE EVOLUTION OF FAMILY ROLE STRUCTURE

Several studies have suggested that families – and the ways these families make decisions regarding the household unit – are significantly different than they were in the past (Belch & Willis, 2001).

Jenkins (1979) acknowledged a substantial change in the family role structure and family decision-making which is, in turn, reflected in the marketplace. Later on, Foxman & Tansuhaj (1988) claimed that changes in demographic and household structure appear to have increased children's impact on their parents' decisions and their general involvement in family decision making. Indeed, all signs are that the division of responsibilities within households is becoming more complex, ambiguous and open to dispute (Belch & Willis, 2001).

In the last two decades, the structure of families has been significantly influenced by demographic, economic and professional changes. These changes lead to a transition from a patriarchal and traditional family model to a nuclear and more 'modern' one, characterized by a higher number of single-parent families, single-person households, childless couples and

same-sex couples (Luciano et al., 2012) However, both consumer researchers and marketers appear to maintain the conception that the intact two-parent family is an suitable representation of most consumers' family dynamics (Rindfleisch et al., 1997) and, by excluding alternative family structures from studies, the analysis is narrowed to one subdivision of children and households (Mangleburg & Tech, 1990).

One of the demographic trends which drive intact households away from the norm is the emergence of single parent families. The trend toward more single parent families has not been adequately considered in the family decision-making literature (Darley & Lim, 1986). This means that partial and potentially misleading results are being produced while important managerial implications may have been overlooked. The absence of a parent not only represents a change in the family structure and composition, but it is also likely to modify the children's patterns of influence in the decision-making process (Darley & Lim, 1986).

Also, women emancipation leads to a second household structure change which is the predominance of dual-career families. Jenkins (1979) found that, for husbands, the greater the amount of time spent away from home, the greater the children's influence. The author infers that husbands who spend a great amount of time away from home and children due to work, feel some "self-actuated guilt" and perceive children as having more influence because of it. Given that dual-career families - couples where both partners pursue careers, are married and have one or more children - are now the norm (Bhowon, 2013), there is room to presume that children's influence has risen even more. This reasoning is also supported by Williams & Burns (2000), who acknowledge that these social tendencies, such as working mothers, have given way to children as a formidable market force.

2.3.2 YOUNG ADULTS LIVING WITH PARENTS

The age at which children leave the parental home differs considerably across countries (Fernandes, 2008). In more recent decades, there has been a global trend towards remaining at parental home longer. This tendency has been attributed to the growing importance of educational attainment, weakening labour markets and growing housing costs. This trend has been especially evident in Mediterranean Europe, where the majority of young adults continue to live at home with their parents until their early thirties, but it has been observed in the United States and in Australia as well (Cobb-Clark, 2008). As a consequence, when classifying Portuguese households, Albuquerque (2008) considers Portuguese nuclear

households as being composed of a couple with children all under 26 years old or subsets of this form. *Breaking up* time is considered to be 26 years old. The fact that young people are delaying the first step in an independent adult life (Cobb-Clark, 2008) has attracted the attention of social researchers. However, the impact of this social trend remains overlooked by the consumer behavior literature, whose main focus has been on children and teenagers, disregarding the role of these elder family members within the household.

In sum, we may infer that “as the world changes, the family decision making process will also change” (Belch & Willis, 2001, pp.122)

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH DESIGN

This chapter is divided in three main sections. The research purpose and its corresponding research objectives are described in the first one. In the second section, the research design used to guide the study towards its objectives is explained. Finally, the questionnaire structure and the variables used in the questionnaire are described in a third section

3.1 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The overall aim of the present paper is to explore the main determinants of Portuguese adolescent and young adults' influence concerning parents' decision-making process, according to their parents' perception. Therefore, the research objectives consist of understanding adolescent and young adults' characteristics affecting the perceived influence and also of investigating household and parental traits' role on family decision dynamics. Moreover, the study intends to determine how teenager and young adults' influence varies depending on the product type and category. Finally, a further objective is to understand if parents' acknowledgement and acceptance of children's market knowledge and influence may be elicited through communication.

In order to accomplish the research objectives described above, the following questions have to be answered:

- What teenagers and young adults' characteristics affect their relative influence in the family decision-making process?
- What parental and household characteristics contribute to teenagers and young adults' relative influence in family decision-making?
- How does teenagers and young adults' influence vary depending on the product category?

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

Although secondary data from previous studies have contributed to the preliminary planning stage this study, primary data was needed to address the specific research objectives stated earlier in this chapter. Taking into account the existence of time and budget constraints, we have focused exclusively on the information that was relevant and crucial to address the research goals. This information was obtained by conducting a survey among Portuguese parents of children aged between 13 and 24 years old.

As previously mentioned, the study had as a further objective to understand if parents' acknowledgement and judgments of children's knowledge and influence could be simulated through communication. For that purpose, an experimental approach - between-subjects design - was adopted.

According to Srull & Wyer (1979), when individuals are requested to judge themselves or another person in behavioral terms, they are unlikely to perform an exhaustive search of memory for all cognitions. Instead, they call on the most readily available cognitions (usually the most recent), which will have a major influence on their subsequent judgments. Following this rationale, some subjects were asked to perform a simple task which included terms related to children's knowledge acquisition. This task aimed to make these concepts more accessible in memory and, therefore, more available in the course of the questionnaire completion – affecting parents' judgments of their children and consequently influencing their ratings. Subjects faced with the task was expected to produce results biased in the direction of the implications of the terms presented i.e. when primed with words related to children's sources of knowledge, parents' were expected to rate their children more favorably in terms of knowledge about the marketplace and, possibly, influence upon the DMP¹.

In the beginning of each questionnaire, participants had a 50% chance of being assigned to a letter-ordination task. Therefore, the following classical *two group, after-only design* was employed:

¹ DMP = Decision-Making Process

A- EXPERIMENTAL GROUP - WORD TASK (Appendix 2, R1):

Following Srull & Wyer (1979) and Bargh et. al (2001), whose experiments included scrambled sentence priming technique, subjects were attributed a lexical decision task, in which they were asked to organize a group of scrambled letters in order to produce a word. This scrambled word priming technique was expected to indirectly activate participants' cognitions about their children's knowledge.

Each word described a source of knowledge accessible to children. Words should be written in a blank space placed right next to the syllables. The semantic task would be completed after the identification of the following words:

- (1) Universidade (*University*);
- (2) Internet;
- (3) Informação (*Information*);
- (4) Televisão (*Television*);
- (5) Tecnologia (*Technology*);

B- CONTROL GROUP: Respondents not exposed to the word task treatment.

3.3 QUESTIONNAIRE COMPOSITION

3.3.1 QUESTIONNAIRE STRUCTURE (SEE APPENDIX 2)

The questionnaire comprised six sections. In the first section, respondents were presented with an introduction, inviting them to contribute to the study, where the main purpose of the study was explained and anonymity of responses was assured in order to encourage honesty and avoid biased responses. Afterwards, a screening question was introduced – only participants who had children aged between 13 and 26 living with them qualified for the survey. Also, participants were asked to consider only one of their children when answering the questions presented. To avoid imposing parents the need to choose among their children, which could be an uncomfortable situation, respondents were told to pick their eldest kid.

The second section consisted of the priming task described in the previous chapter – only half of the participants were faced with this section.

In order to ensure that participants were really concentrating on only one of their children, the third section consisted of information requests about the son or daughter concerned. After a couple of demographic questions, the participant was given the mission of rating his/her child in terms of market mavenism.

In the fourth section, participants were given the task to assign a few products to two groups – “my son/daughter would participate in this purchase” or “my son/daughter would not participate in this purchase”. Subsequently, respondents were asked to recall the last time they purchased a given product or service. Information regarding knowledge about the product/service, relative usage within the household and influence in several sub-decisions was collected. Three different items were included in this part – a toothpaste tube (low-involvement product), a car (high-involvement product) and a TV operator (technological service).

The fifth part was constituted by a few questions regarding respondent’s personal and family values. Finally, the sixth section was dedicated to parental and household information, including demographic as well as behavioral questions.

3.3.2 QUESTIONNAIRE VARIABLES

The constructs used in our study were measured through a set of multi-item scales adapted from prior studies.

KNOWLEDGE (Q8, Q10, Q14, Q18)

In previous studies, expertise was considered as a driver for teenage influence within household decision-making (Belch et. al, 2002). The knowledge parents perceive their children to possess is believed to influence the acceptance of their suggestions and opinion leadership. This evaluation took two different forms: a general and absolute as well as a concrete and relative.

Propensity to provide general shopping and marketplace information was considered as a good proxy to measure general market expertise. To measure this, a five-item scale adapted from *Feick & Price (1987)* was presented to respondents, who had to rate some statements,

such as “My son likes introducing new brand and products to friends and family” (7-point scale; Totally Disagree – Totally Agree) - **see Appendix 2 (Q8)** for further details.

In turn, specific consumer expertise concerning each of the products considered in the survey was measured using a two-item scale. Respondents were asked to rate their own knowledge as well as the knowledge they believed their children to possess. Participants were asked to rate the following statements: “My knowledge concerning the offer of this product (service) is...”; “My son’s knowledge concerning the offer of this product (service) is...” (5-point scale; Very Low – Very High).

VALUES

The fifth section of the questionnaire was exclusively dedicated to personal and family values.

FAMILY IMPORTANCE (Q24)

According to Berey & Pollay (1968) argument, the more “tuned in to the child” the parent is, the greater the child’s influence. As mentioned before, the results of that study indicate that mothers with higher levels of child-centeredness were less likely to yield to children requests of breakfast cereals. Researchers’ interpretation was that these child-centered mothers did not yield to children requests due to their concern about children well-being. So, they would purchase what, in their opinions, would be better for children. However, considering that the present paper focuses on a greater variety of products and on children belonging to older age groups, it seems reasonable to re-consider the Berey & Pollay’s primary argument. Following this reasoning, we decided to measure the extent to which the respondent was “tuned in” to the family as a whole, using a *family importance scale* adapted from Burroughs & Rindfleisch (2002). Respondents were asked to rate several statements, including “It is possible for me to be happy without being married” and “I would not work longer hours if it would interfere with family activities” (7-point scale; Totally Disagree – Totally Agree) - **see Appendix 2, (Q24)** for further details.

PERSONAL VALUES (Q23)

The List of Values (Kahle, 1983) was employed in this study with the aim of characterizing respondents as individuals, beyond the demographic information provided. Participants were assigned the task of ranking eight personal values according to the importance these have in their lives. **See Appendix 2, (Q23).**

INFLUENCE

GENERAL INFLUENCE AND DECISION MAKING STAGES (Q12, Q16, Q21)

As mentioned in the Literature Review chapter, most of the studies in family decision-making have implemented a three-stage decision-making model, constituted of problem recognition, information search and final choice. That method was also implemented in the present paper. Besides being presented with a question about children's overall influence on the acquisition process of a given product, respondents were also faced with three additional items: "Need recognition", "Information gathering and alternative evaluation" and "Final choice". In each of these three points, participants should rate their children degree of influence (7-point scale; No influence at all – Absolute influence). The scale was repeated for each of the three products studied.

INFLUENCE IN SUBDECISIONS (Q13, Q17, Q22)

Different family members may exert influence in different sub-decisions of the main decision. To measure this variation, a multi-item scale adapted from Belch (1985) was used and respondents were asked to rate their children's influence on several sub-decisions. When considering the toothpaste purchase, the sub-decision items were "where to buy", "when to buy", "brand" and "style". Changes were made for both the TV Operator and car purchasing scenarios. In the first case, "style" was replaced by "service type (channels' set)" and, in the second, the sub-decision "color" was added. (6-point scale; "No influence at all" – "Absolute influence")

PURCHASE IMPORTANCE (Q11, Q15, Q19)

Consumers may have greater influence and involvement in decision-making if purchases really matter to them. In order to assess purchasing activities' relevance to the respondent and corresponding child, a two-item question was developed for each of the products. Firstly, participants were asked to rate the importance of that given purchase for themselves. The second item referred to the importance the purchase had for their son or daughter. (6-point scale; "Not important at all" – "Extremely important")

4. DATA COLLECTION AND SAMPLE

4.1 RESEARCH METHOD AND SAMPLING

4.1.1 SURVEY METHOD

A web based survey was selected as data collection method, using the research software *Qualtrics*. This software was chosen to run the questionnaire since it allows registered users to benefit from countless options, both in terms of survey structure and question types. Additionally, some essential tools are offered, such as the possibility to randomize questions or to copy them from one survey to another, facilitating the pre-testing processes. Also, the system provides the researcher with a link which can be used to distribute the questionnaire to respondents through different means. In this specific case, the survey was shared essentially via e-mail and Facebook.

As any other data collection method, the online survey has advantages and limitations. The absence of financial costs and the time savings, resulting both from the survey diffusion ease and the automatic download of data in SPSS readable format, were considered the main benefits when choosing this method. Additionally, given the self-administered nature of the method, interviewer bias distortions are avoided and a more comprehensive questionnaire may be applied, since respondents are approached within their own environment, having more time to complete the questionnaire. The web survey also provides access to samples that would be difficult to reach by telephone, in-person or by mail.

However, some drawbacks should be taken into account. The researcher has poor control over respondents' identity and also over the environment within which the questionnaire is filled in. Furthermore, this method does not allow for respondents' guidance or support while they are completing the survey. In order to minimize this disadvantage, the survey design was as simple and practical as possible, consisting of closed-response questions essentially. Similarly, considering that the target consisted of Portuguese natives, Portuguese was used as primary language to facilitate respondent's understanding.

The questionnaire was pretested twice. The first pretest aimed to test the stimuli respondents would be exposed to in the final survey (**Appendix 1**). The purpose of the second and last

pretest was to ensure respondents' understanding of all questions and avoid ambiguity in wording. Deficiencies were identified and corrected.

4.1.2 TARGET POPULATION

Parents of children aged between thirteen and twenty-six years old were considered as target population. The age interval was defined based on indications from previous research. Similarly to Belch et al. (2002), we considered children aged between thirteen and eighteen as adolescents. The young adults group was composed of individuals aged between 19 and 26, the age indicated by Albuquerque (2009) as being the *Portuguese breakup time*. Since the research intends to study Portuguese consumers' behavior, only individuals residing in Portugal were considered.

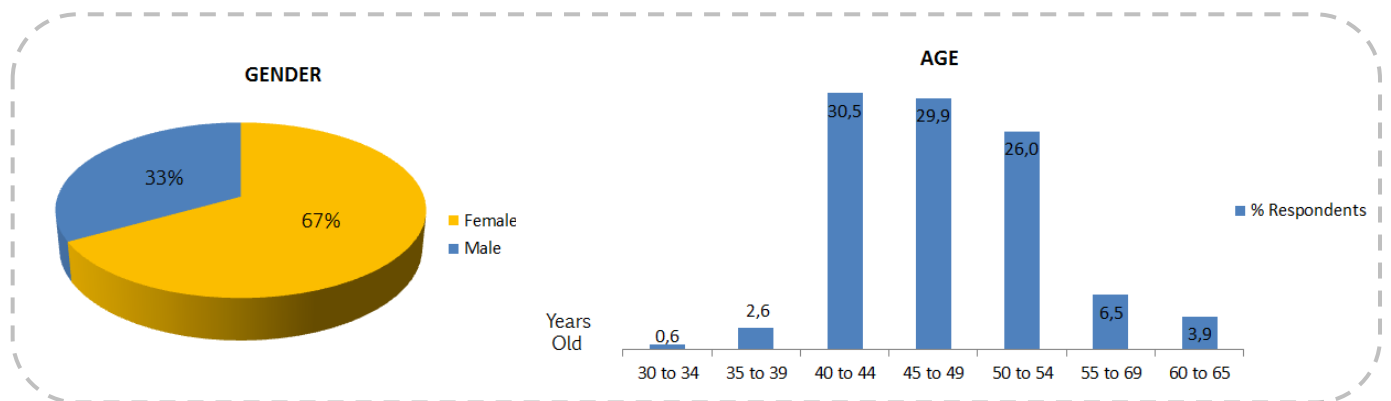
4.1.3 RESPONDENTS

Within the two weeks dedicated to data collection, 358 participants started to fill the questionnaire. However, only 246 interviews were entirely completed. From these, 90 respondents did not have children aged between 13 and 26 living with them, so they were eliminated from our sample. Also, respondents who were presented with the word task scenario and did not comply with its rules – by writing random words rather than the ones they should – were eliminated. The total sample considered for data analysis was constituted by 154 participants. From these 154 final subjects, 78 (50.6%) belonged to the control group while the remaining 76 (49.4%) were faced with the word task previously described.

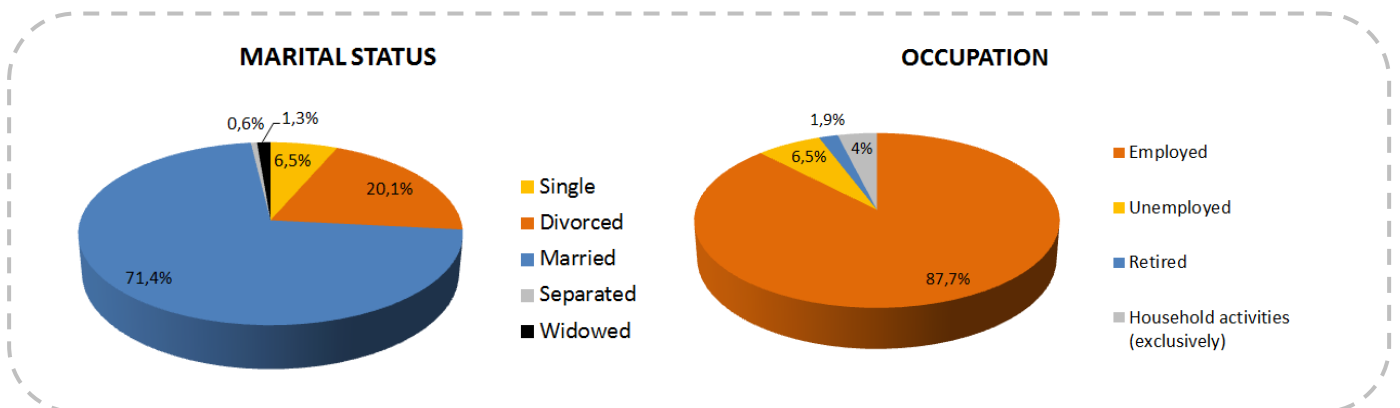
4.1.4 SAMPLE CHARACTERIZATION

With the purpose of obtaining an accurate portrait of the final sample, some demographic characteristics were analyzed concerning not only the respondent as an individual but also his/her household and corresponding child.

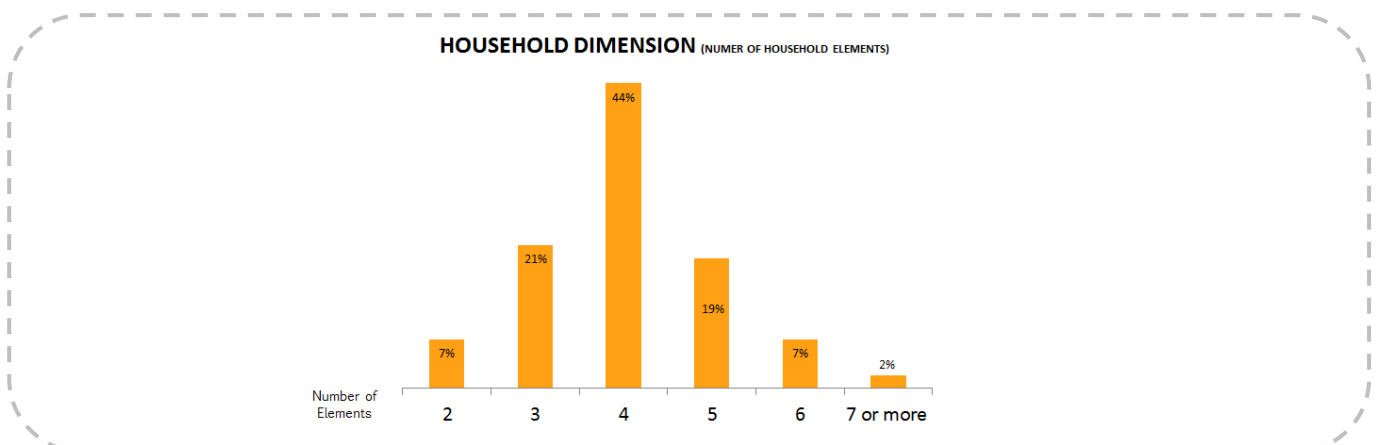
As far as gender is concerned, 33.1% of the total sample consisted of male respondents whereas 66.9% consisted of female ones. Regarding the age, 30.5% of the participants belonged to the interval between 40 and 44 years old, 29.9% had between 45 and 49 years old and 26% were included in the group “50 to 54”. The remaining participants (13.6%) participants were between 30 and 39 or between 55 and 65 years old.



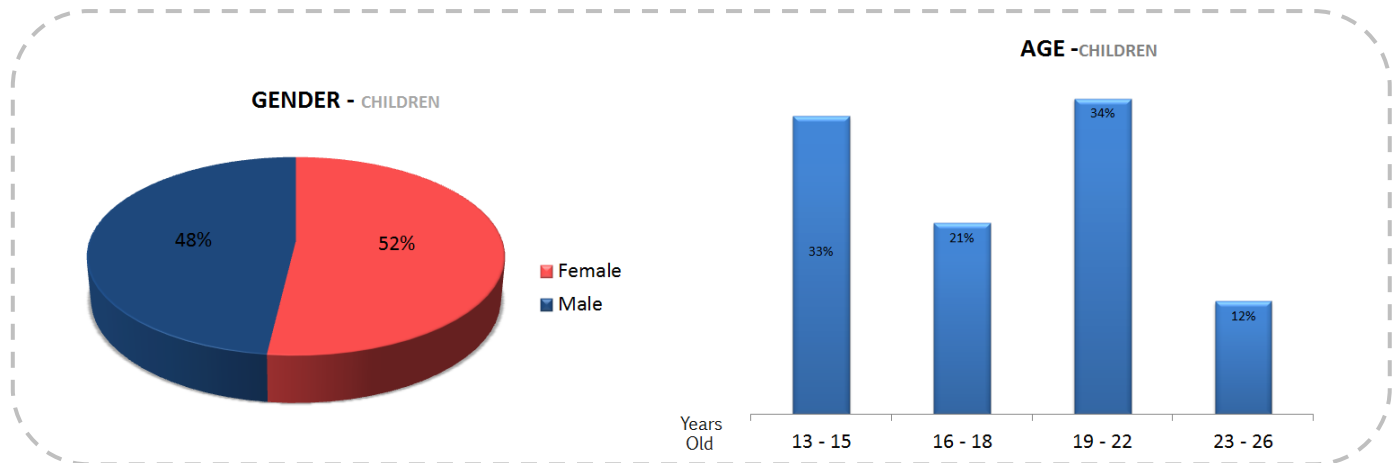
The majority of participants (71.4%) was married or divorced (20.1%) although there were also participants who were single (6.5%), separated (0.6%) and widowed (1.3%). In terms of occupation, 87.7% of the respondents were employed, 6.5% were unemployed and 5.8% were either retired or dealing exclusively with household activities.



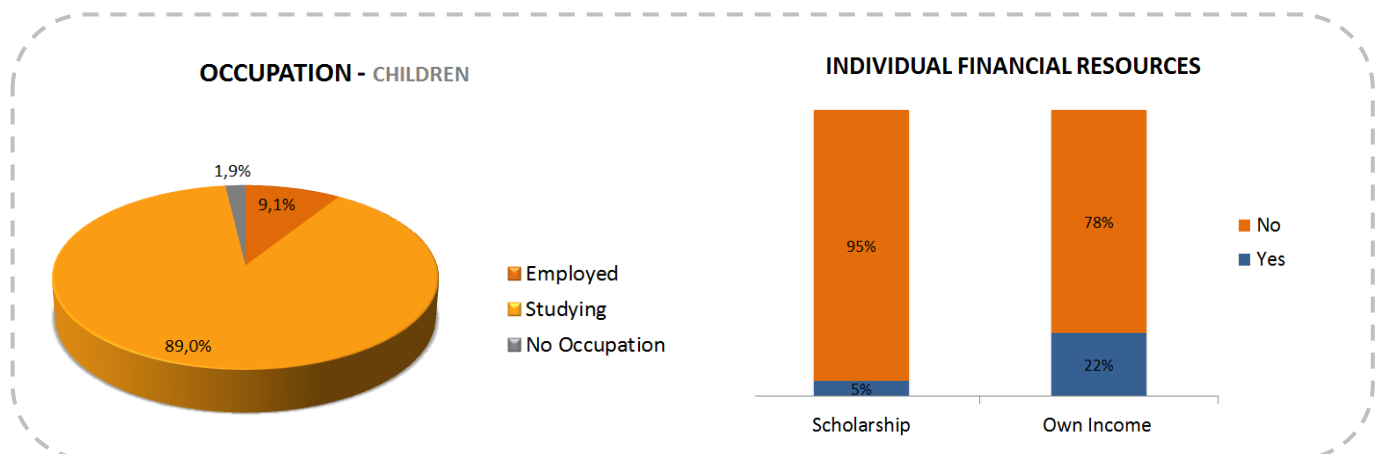
The majority of respondents belonged to households composed by three (20.8%), four (44.2%) and five (18.8%) elements.



Demographics regarding respondents' eldest children were also examined. Given this, 51.9% of the respondents based their answers on their daughters while 48.1% referred to sons. Concerning age, 32.5% of respondents' children were aged 13 to 15, 20.8% fell within the interval 16 to 18 and 34.4% of the children have between 19 and 22 years. Finally, the older group, 23 to 26, accounted only for 12.3% of the respondents.



In terms of occupation, the vast majority of children were still studying (89%) and 9.1% were employed. In line with this, only 22.1% of the children had their own regular income while 77.9% were still dependent on their parents when it comes to financial resources. Additionally, 5.2% of respondents' children benefited from scholarships.



5. RESULTS' ANALYSIS

5.1 DATA RELIABILITY

Since most of the scales measuring the main constructs of the study were adapted from previous studies, it seemed important to re-evaluate these scales' reliability. Thus, the Cronbach's alpha was calculated for each scale that had three or more items.

Table 1

SCALES' RELIABILITY

| Scale | Initial number of items | Cronbach's Alpha * | Cronbach's Alpha if item deleted ** | Item deleted | Final number of items |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| Market Mavenism | 5 | 0,854 | . | . | 5 |
| Family Importance | 5 | 0,592 | 0,728 | 1 | 4 |
| Influence - Stages TP | 4 | 0,893 | . | . | 4 |
| Influence - Stages TVOP | 4 | 0,954 | . | . | 4 |
| Influence - Stages Car | 4 | 0,902 | . | . | 4 |
| Influence - Subdecisions TP | 4 | 0,893 | . | . | 4 |
| Influence - Subdecisions TVOP | 4 | 0,903 | . | . | 4 |
| Influence - Subdecisions Car | 5 | 0,913 | . | . | 5 |

*Cronbach's alpha for the total measure

**Cronbach's alpha after excluding items

As demonstrated by **Table 1**, the scales revealed good levels of internal consistency. Except for "Family Importance", all scales had alpha values greater than 0.8. In some cases, scales' reliability could be improved by deleting one item, but the difference was marginal so all items remained intact.

Concerning the "Family Importance" scale, the Cronbach alpha could be substantially enhanced by eliminating the item "*It is possible for me to be happy without being married*". By deleting the item, the Cronbach alpha was improved to 0.728.

5.2. RESULTS

5.2.1 CHILDREN CHARACTERISTICS

Child's knowledge, age and gender

Previous studies have found a significant and positive correlation between child's age and child's perceived influence in the decision-making process i.e. **the older the child, the higher the level of perceived influence on the decision making process**. The Pearson correlations between *age of the child*² and *child influence* (**Table 2 - 1**) do not support the previous hypothesis when considering the purchase of the toothpaste (low involvement product) ($r=.078$; $p=.337$). However, in the cases of the other product categories studied, the *age of the child* proves to be positively correlated both with *child's influence when deciding on a TV Operator* ($r=.34$, $p<.01$) and *child's influence when deciding on a new car* ($r=.27$, $p<.01$).

Additionally, we analyzed whether the knowledge parents perceive children to have is associated with the level of input they display concerning family decision-making. A positive relationship was expected - **the more knowledgeable the child was perceived by the parent, the higher the level of perceived relative influence on the decision making process**. The hypothesis was supported for the three products considered in the study (**Table 2 - 2**). In the case of the toothpaste purchase, we are in the presence of low a correlation between *child's perceived knowledge* and *child's influence* ($r=.22$, $p<.01$). Both in the case of the TV Operator contract and in the case of the car purchase, the correlation between *child's perceived knowledge* and *child's perceived influence* can be considered moderate, with ($r=.36$, $p<.01$) and ($r=.3$, $p<.01$) respectively. So, the more the child is perceived to have knowledge about the market, the greater the perceived influence attributed to him/her.

The correlation analysis was repeated, this time round considering the specific knowledge parents perceive their children to have regarding each of the products studied (**Table 2 - 3**). Strong and positive correlations were found between *child's perceived influence* and (1) *child's perceived knowledge regarding toothpaste offer* ($r=.58$, $p<.01$) and (2) *child's perceived knowledge regarding TV operators' offer* ($r=.6$, $p<.01$). Additionally, *child's*

² The term *child* stands for *teenagers and young adults*

perceived knowledge regarding cars' offer and child's perceived influence were found to be moderately correlated ($r=.48, p<.01$).

Table 2

PEARSON CORRELATIONS BETWEEN CHILD'S PERCEIVED INFLUENCE AND CHILD'S CHARACTERISTICS

| | CHILD'S PERCEIVED INFLUENCE | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------|---------|
| | TOOTHPASTE | TV OPERATOR | CAR |
| (1)Age of the child | .078 | .342*** | .272** |
| (2) Perceived Knowledge (General) | .215** | .357*** | .297*** |
| (3)Perceived Knowledge (Specific) | .582*** | | |
| (3)Perceived Knowledge (Specific) | | .602*** | |
| (3)Perceived Knowledge (Specific) | | | .478*** |

Further tests were performed in order to evaluate the existence of differences between genders. **Female and male children were expected to have a similar input on family purchase decisions.** Through the analysis of **Table 3 (A)**, it is possible to conclude that the female and male children are perceived to exert the same amount of influence in a car purchase and in the choice of a TV operator. Independent samples t-test showed that differences between means are not statistically significant. However, when it comes to the toothpaste scenario, female children are perceived to have more influence in the process when compared to male children.

In line with this, it makes sense to assume that parents perceive **female and male children as being equally knowledgeable regarding market offers.** In order to test this hypothesis, another independent samples t-test was conducted and results are summarized in **Table3 (B)**. Just as in the previous analysis, the results for overall market knowledge indicate that the difference between the two groups is not statistically significant.

Even though no statistical difference was found between the two genders regarding overall market knowledge, dissimilar results were obtained concerning specific market offers. Additional independent samples t-tests were performed in order to test for differences in boys' and girls' perceived knowledge when focusing on specific product categories. As illustrated in **Table 3 (C)**, in the cases of toothpaste and TV operator, there was no significant

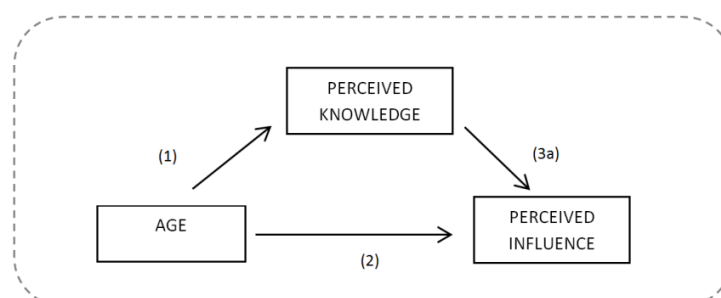
difference between the two conditions. Opposite results were obtained for knowledge regarding cars. In this case, the difference between means is significant at a confidence level of 99%. It can be concluded that male children are perceived to be more knowledgeable than female children regarding cars.

Table 3

INDEPENDENT SAMPLES T-TEST FOR DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CHILDREN’S GENDER

| | PRODUCT CATEGORY | MEAN _{MALE} | SD _{MALE} | MEAN _{FEMALE} | SD _{FEMALE} | MEAN _{FEMALE} – MEAN _{MALE} |
|--|------------------|----------------------|--------------------|------------------------|----------------------|---|
| (A) CHILD’S PERCEIVED INFLUENCE | TOOTHPASTE | 3,26 | 1,66 | 3,85 | 1,85 | 0,59* |
| | TV OPERATOR | 3,75 | 1,96 | 3,5 | 1,93 | -0,25 |
| | CAR | 3,07 | 1,56 | 3,28 | 1,83 | 0,21 |
| (B) PERCEIVED KNOWLEDGE | GENERAL | 3,41 | 1,54 | 3,84 | 1,33 | 0,43 |
| (C) PERCEIVED KNOWLEDGE | TOOTHPASTE | 2,77 | 0,97 | 2,91 | 1,06 | 0,14 |
| | TV OPERATOR | 3,49 | 1,23 | 3,3 | 1,01 | -0,19 |
| | CAR | 3,08 | 1,29 | 2,56 | 1,13 | -0,52** |

The results obtained in the previous tests led us to a new hypothesis – **the relationship between child’s age and child’s relative influence is not direct but mediated by child’s perceived knowledge (market mavenism)**. In order to test this hypothesis, the Baron and Kenny (1986) analytical framework for mediational analysis was followed. This framework outlines that three independent conditions must be met: (1) the independent variable (age) must affect the mediator (perceived knowledge) in the first equation; (2) the independent variable (age) must have a significant effect on the dependent variable (perceived influence) and (3a) the mediator (perceived knowledge) must affect the dependent variable (perceived influence) in the third equation. Finally, (3b) after verifying these three conditions, a regression of the dependent variable (perceived influence) on both, the independent variable (age) and the mediator (perceived knowledge) must show that the relationship between the independent variable (age) and the dependent variable (perceived influence) is either reduced – partial mediation – or becomes non-significant - full mediation.



The results of the mediation analysis are reported in **Table 4**. Regarding the TV Operator decision, results confirm that (1) *child's age* has a significant effect on *perceived knowledge* ($R^2 = .052$, $F(1,152) = 8.414$, $p < .01$, $\beta = .0886$), (2) *child's age* has a significant effect on *child's perceived influence* ($R^2 = .117$, $F(1,152) = 20.172$, $p < .001$, $\beta = .1775$) and also that exists (3a) a significant direct relationship between *perceived knowledge* and *child's perceived influence* ($R^2 = .127$, $F(1,152) = 22.211$, $p < .001$, $\beta = .3942$). Although the relationship between *child's age* and *child's perceived influence* remains significant when *child's age* and *perceived knowledge* are included simultaneously in the model (3b), the strength of this relationship is considerably reduced ($R^2 = .199$, $F(2,151) = 18.771$, $p < .001$, $\beta = .1425$). Given these results, we can assume to be in a scenario of partial mediation. The Sobel significance test confirms this result (Sobel $t = 3.187$, $p = .001$). In addition to this test, a bootstrap analysis was performed in order to reassure the significance of the mediation effect. Results ($\beta = .0354$; C.I. $(95\%) = .0105$ to 0.0737) confirmed the mediating role of *perceived knowledge* in the relation between *child's age* and *children perceived influence*.

For the car purchase scenario we found that (1) *child's age* has a significant effect on *perceived knowledge* ($R^2 = .052$, $F(1,152) = 8.414$, $p < .01$, $\beta = .0886$). In the second step, it is confirmed that (2) *child's age* has a significant effect on *child's perceived influence* ($R^2 = .074$, $F(1,152) = 12.185$, $p < .001$, $\beta = .1241$) and, in the third stage, the existence of (3a) a significant direct relationship between *perceived knowledge* and *child's perceived influence* ($R^2 = .088$, $F(1,152) = 14.736$, $p < .001$, $\beta = .2919$) is verified. Again, the relationship between *child's age* and *child's perceived influence* remains significant when *child's age* and *perceived knowledge* are included simultaneously in the model (3b) but the strength of this relationship is considerably reduced ($R^2 = .132$, $F(2,151) = 11.526$, $p < .01$, $\beta = .0982$). Accordingly, this scenario also represents a situation of partial mediation. The Sobel significance test confirms this result (Sobel $t = 2.99$, $p = .003$). Finally, a bootstrap analysis was conducted in order to reassure the significance of the mediation effect. The results ($\beta = .0260$; C.I. $(95\%) = .0071$ to 0.0557) confirmed the mediating role of *perceived knowledge* in the relationship between *child's age* and *child's perceived influence*.

Table 4

MEDIATION TESTS

| | Perceived Knowledge TV Operator | Perceived Knowledge Car |
|--|--|------------------------------------|
| STEP 1 | .0886** (.031) | .0886** (.031) |
| STEP 2 | .1775*** (.040) | .1241*** (.036) |
| STEP 3a | .3942*** (.102) | .2919*** (.091) |
| STEP 3b | .1425*** (.035) | .0982** (.035) |
| Mediation | Partial Mediation | Partial Mediation |
| <p>Note. Step 1 = regression of the independent variable on the mediator; Step 2 = regression of the independent variable on the dependent variable; Step 3a = regression of mediator on dependent variable; Step 3b = regression of dependent variable on both, independent variable and mediator. In the table, only the coefficient of the independent variable is shown</p> <p>*Significant at 5% level **Significant at the 1% level ***Significant at the 0.1% level</p> | | |

In the scenario of the toothpaste purchase, *child's age* did not have an effect on *child's perceived influence*. In that sense, the hypothesis the existence of a mediator was not possible from the outset.

As mentioned in the first chapter, the literature on family decision-making indicates that delegation to the most knowledgeable family member is a common practice among households when it comes to the decision-making process. Based on, it was considered interesting to assess knowledge in a relative perspective. **Parents who perceive themselves as being relatively more knowledgeable than their children would be expected to disregard children influence attempts to a greater extent, when compared to those who perceive themselves as being relatively more uninformed.** To test this hypothesis, two different regression models were run for each of the three products covered by the study. In the first model, the dependent variable (*child's perceived influence*) was regressed on the difference between *child's perceived knowledge* and the *respondent's knowledge*. In the

second, the two knowledge variables entered the regression separately, rather than as a difference.

MODELS 1: $Child's\ Perceived\ Influence = \beta_0 + \beta_1 K_p - K_c + \varepsilon$

MODELS 2: $Child's\ Perceived\ Influence = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 K_p - \alpha_2 K_c + \varepsilon,$

Where, K_p = Parent's own knowledge; K_c = Child's perceived knowledge

Results are summarized on **Table 5**.

Table 5

IMPACT OF CHILD'S PERCEIVED KNOWLEDGE AND RESPONDENT'S OWN KNOWLEDGE DIFFERENCE ON CHILDREN PERCEIVED INFLUENCE.

| | TOOTHPASTE | | TV OPERATOR | | CAR | |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| INDEPENDENT VARIABLES | MODEL 1 | MODEL 2 | MODEL 1 | MODEL 2 | MODEL 1 | MODEL 2 |
| Kc | | 1.025*** (.13) | | 1.1*** (.115) | | .633*** (.097) |
| Kp | | -.05 (.16) | | -.261* (.131) | | .273* (.11) |
| Kc - Kp | .724*** (.137) | | .753*** (.106) | | .242** (.086) | |
| R² | .156 | .339 | .25 | .379 | .049 | .259 |
| DEPENDENT VARIABLE = Child's Perceived Influence | | | | | | |
| N= 154 | | | | | | |

Since the regressions are based on the same variables, the first model can be seen as a restricted version of the second model. More specifically, Model 1 can be obtained by imposing $\alpha_1 = -\alpha_2$, which is the same as saying that *child's knowledge* and *parent's knowledge* are equally important when explaining *child's perceived influence*. Consequently, the two models may be compared through an F-test for model restriction (**Table 6**).

Table 6

F-TEST FOR MODEL RESTRICTION

| H0: $\alpha_1 = -\alpha_2$ | F STATISTIC | p.value |
|----------------------------|-------------------|---------|
| TOOTHPASTE | F (1,151) = 41,72 | .000 |
| TV OPERATOR | F (1,151) = 31,4 | .000 |
| CAR | F (1,151) = 42,86 | .000 |

In all cases, the restriction is rejected. So, across the three products studied, it is possible to conclude that *parent's knowledge* and *child's knowledge* have a different impact on *child's perceived influence*.

Results from Models 1 illustrate that the more parents perceive their children as being more knowledgeable than them regarding a product offer, the more influence children will have. The independent variable coefficients are especially expressive for Toothpaste and TV Operator models. For the car purchase scenario, *knowledge difference* is less significant in explaining *child's perceived influence*.

However, by contrasting these results with the ones from Model 2, it is possible to conclude that *child's perceived knowledge* and *respondent's own knowledge* deliver richest information when considered separately. This is shown by the R^2 values, which are substantially higher in Model 2. While *child's perceived knowledge* extremely affects *child's perceived influence* - the more knowledgeable is the child, the higher his influence on the decision-making process - *parent's own knowledge* is only significant at a 5% significance level for TV Operator and car purchases. Given this, we may infer that *child's knowledge* is substantially more important than *parent's knowledge* in determining the child's influence.

In case of the toothpaste purchase, the variable *parent's own knowledge* becomes insignificant. As expected, the coefficients corresponding to *parents' knowledge* are negative in most of the cases – the less knowledgeable the parent, the more he/she will let the child influence him/her. However, concerning the car purchase, the coefficient is positive and significant, which basically contradicts the previous argument. One explanation may be the moderate correlation ($r=.43$, $p<.01$) existing between *respondent's knowledge* and *importance attributed by the respondent to the car purchase*. So, the greater the importance attributed by the parent to the car purchase, the more he/she will know about the topic and the more he/she will want to involve his/her child in that purchase decision.

Product importance

All products considered in the study have in common the fact of being consumed collectively by the family. Nevertheless, the importance attributed by each family member to each product purchase may vary according to several factors. For example, if I am a person who is very interested on TV shows, probably the quality of the TV Operator is likely to be very important for me. Other family members who do not share this concern, are probably less interested in the quality of service and, so, they will consequently have relatively less influence on the decision-making process. In line with this reasoning, **parents should be more willing to accept children opinions and to yield to their requests when they realize their kids attribute greater importance to a given product purchase.**

Similarly to the previous procedure, two different regressions were considered for each of the three products: a simple linear regression with $IV = \text{Importance Difference}$ – restricted model - and a multiple linear regression in which $IV(s) = \text{Importance attributed by the child}$ and $\text{Importance attributed by the parent}$ – unrestricted model.

$$\text{MODELS 3: Child's Perceived Influence} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 (I_p - I_c) + \varepsilon$$

$$\text{MODELS 4: Child's Perceived Influence} = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 I_p - \alpha_2 I_c + \varepsilon$$

Where $I_p = \text{Importance attributed by the parent}$ and $I_c = \text{Importance attributed by the child}$

Results are summarized on **Table 7**.

Table 7

IMPACT OF IMPORTANCE ATTRIBUTED BY THE CHILD AND IMPORTANCE ATTRIBUTED BY THE PARENT ON CHILD'S PERCEIVED INFLUENCE

| INDEPENDENT VARIABLES | TOOTHPASTE | | TV OPERATOR | | CAR | |
|---|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| | MODEL 3 | MODEL 4 | MODEL 3 | MODEL 4 | MODEL 3 | MODEL 4 |
| lc | | .867*** (.101) | | 1.002*** (.104) | | .633*** (.097) |
| lp | | -.123 (.143) | | -.177 (.126) | | .089 (.126) |
| lc-lp | .752*** (.11) | | .694*** (.099) | | .4*** (.094) | |
| R² | .234 | .384 | .244 | .384 | .107 | .249 |
| DEPENDENT VARIABLE = Child's Perceived Influence | | | | | | |
| N= 154 | | | | | | |

Similarly to the procedure adopted before, F tests for model restriction were performed.

Table 8

F TEST FOR MODEL RESTRICTION

| H0: $\alpha_1 = -\alpha_2$ | F STATISTIC | p.value |
|----------------------------|-------------------|---------|
| TOOTHPASTE | F (1,151) = 36,88 | .000 |
| TV OPERATOR | F (1,151) = 34,3 | .000 |
| CAR | F (1,151) = 28,62 | .000 |

Based on results from **Table 8**, we may conclude than the *importance attributed by the child* and the *importance attributed by the parent* have different impacts on the independent variable. So, model 3 is rejected against model 4.

Models 4 indicate that *importance attributed by the child* to each purchase extremely affects his/her the subsequent influence on the decision-making process. On the contrary, the *importance attributed by the parent* turns out to be insignificant. The coefficient from *importance attributed by the child* was expected to be positive – the greatest the importance he/she attributes, the greatest his/her influence in the DMP - and the opposite would be expected regarding *importance attributed by the parent* – the greatest the importance attributed by the parent, the more he or she will impose his/her ideas and wills, impacting the *child's influence* negatively.

Child's own resources and participation in the labor market

In order to assess whether **children who earn their own financial resources are perceived as more influent on the decision making process**, independent samples t-tests were performed. The sample was divided in two different groups: parents whose children possess their own financial resources vs. parents whose children do not possess their own financial resources. Results may be consulted on **Table 9**.

Table 9

INDEPENDENT SAMPLES T-TEST: *CHILD'S PERCEIVED INFLUENCE* BY FINANTIAL RESOURCES

| | PRODUCT CATEGORY | MEAN _{RESOURCES} | SD _{RESOURCES} | MEAN _{NORESOURCES} | SD _{NORESOURCES} | DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MEANS |
|-----------------------------|------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| CHILD'S PERCEIVED INFLUENCE | TOOTHPASTE | 3,73 | 1,89 | 3,52 | 1,75 | 0,21 |
| | TV OPERATOR | 4,00 | 2,00 | 3,51 | 1,91 | 0,49 |
| | CAR | 3,47 | 1,69 | 3,1 | 1,7 | 0,37 |

Although the *perceived influence* means from the first group were greater than the ones from the second across the three product categories, the analysis failed to reveal a significant difference between the two groups.

In addition, we tested whether **children who were already on the job market had greater influence in their families' DMP.**

Table 10

INDEPENDENT SAMPLES T-TEST: CHILD'S PERCEIVED INFLUENCE BY EMPLOYMENT STATUS

| | PRODUCT CATEGORY | MEAN _{EMPLOYED} | SD _{EMPLOYED} | MEAN _{NOTEEMPLOYED} | SD _{NOTEEMPLOYED} | DIFFERENCEBETWEENMEANS |
|-----------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| CHILD'S PERCEIVED INFLUENCE | TOOTHPASTE | 3,89 | 2,05 | 3,53 | 1,75 | 0,36 |
| | TV OPERATOR | 4,68 | 1,76 | 3,51 | 1,93 | 1,17* |
| | CAR | 3,95 | 1,58 | 3,12 | 1,7 | 0,83 |

As presented on **Table 10**, although results from *child's perceived influence* are consistently higher for employed children when compared with children who do not perform professional activities, only in the case of TV Operator the difference between means was found to be statistically significant.

5.2.2 HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS

Family size

Until now, there has been no consensus in literature regarding the relationship between family size and children relative influence on the family decision-making activity. The most recent results, obtained by Mangleburg & Tech (1990) indicate that an **increase in the number of household elements leads to a decrease in the child's perceived influence.** As illustrated on **Table 11**, Pearson product-moment correlations between *number of family elements within the household* and *child's perceived influence*, indicate that for two product categories – toothpaste and TV Operator – the hypothesis is supported, whilst for the third one – the Car – the two variables seem to be unrelated.

Household income

As expected, *household overall income* is not associated with children input on family-decision making. The results from the Person correlations are summarized on **Table 11** and indicate that income does not affect child's perceived influence.

Table 11

PEARSON CORRELATIONS BETWEEN HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS' VARIABLES AND CHILD'S PERCEIVED INFLUENCE

| | CHILD'S PERCEIVED INFLUENCE | | |
|---|-----------------------------|------------|--------|
| | TOOTHPASTE | TVOPERATOR | CAR |
| Number of elements within the household | -0.23 ** | -0.27** | -0.102 |
| Household Overall Income | -0.1 | -0.137 | 0.064 |

5.2.3 PARENTAL CHARACTERISTICS

Parents' knowledge and importance attributed to the purchase

As described in the previous section, we found that the knowledge of the parent and the importance that he or she attaches to the product do not have a significant effect.

Parents' age

As it can be inferred from **Table 12**, *parents' age* affects significantly *child's perceived influence*, for both TV Operator and Car scenarios - the older the mother or the father, the higher the level of influence the child is perceived to have. However, there is no relationship between the variables when considering the toothpaste purchase.

Also, the relationship among the *difference between respondent's age and his/her child's age* and *perceived influence* was tested. As shown in **Table 12**, this difference between ages does not significantly correlate with *child's perceived influence*. These results are consistent across the three product categories.

Given this, it is possible to conclude that, parents' maturity (age in absolute terms) is the critical influencing factor, rather than the stage in *parental life-cycle* or the seniority of parents relatively to their children.

Table 12

PEARSON CORRELATIONS BETWEEN PARENTS' AGE AND CHILD'S PERCEIVED INFLUENCE

| | CHILD'S PERCEIVED INFLUENCE | | |
|--|-----------------------------|-------------|--------|
| | TOOTHPASTE | TV OPERATOR | CAR |
| Age | .079 | .289** | .221** |
| Age Difference (Respondent-Respondent's child) | .035 | .082 | .053 |

Parents' marital and employment status

Table 13

ANOVA³ TESTS: EFFECTS OF MARITAL AND EMPLOYMENT STATUS ON CHILD'S PERCEIVED INFLUENCE

| DV = CHILD'S PERCEIVED INFLUENCE | | | MEAN | SD | F | SIG. (P) |
|----------------------------------|-------------|--------------------|------|------|------|-------------|
| MARITAL STATUS | Toothpaste | Married | 3.41 | 1.70 | 3.09 | .081 |
| | | Other | 3.96 | 1.91 | | |
| | TV Operator | Married | 3.41 | 1.92 | 4.70 | .032 |
| | | Other | 4.15 | 1.90 | | |
| | Car | Married | 3.2 | 1.79 | .044 | .835 |
| | | Other | 3.18 | 1.48 | | |
| OCCUPATION | Toothpaste | Working | 3.59 | 1.80 | .3 | .584 |
| | | Without Occupation | 3.35 | 1.66 | | |
| | TV Operator | Working | 3.73 | 1.93 | 3.91 | .050 |
| | | Without Occupation | 2.8 | 1.85 | | |
| | Car | Working | 3.25 | 1.71 | 1.76 | .186 |
| | | Without Occupation | 2.70 | 1.60 | | |

Note. **Married**: assumed dual-parent family. **Other**: assumed single-parent family

ANOVA tests were performed in order to understand if parental marital and employment status impact child's perceived influence. As it may be concluded through the analysis of **Table 13**, only in the case of the TV Operator purchase the differences between conditions are statistically significant. As pointed out by previous literature, children from single-parent families appear to be more influent in the family-decision making process. Also, working parents perceive their children to be more influent. Interpretations for this evidence may be consulted in the chapter *Conclusions*.

³ ANOVA = Analysis of variance

5.2.4 PRODUCT CATEGORY AND DMP STAGES

Product category

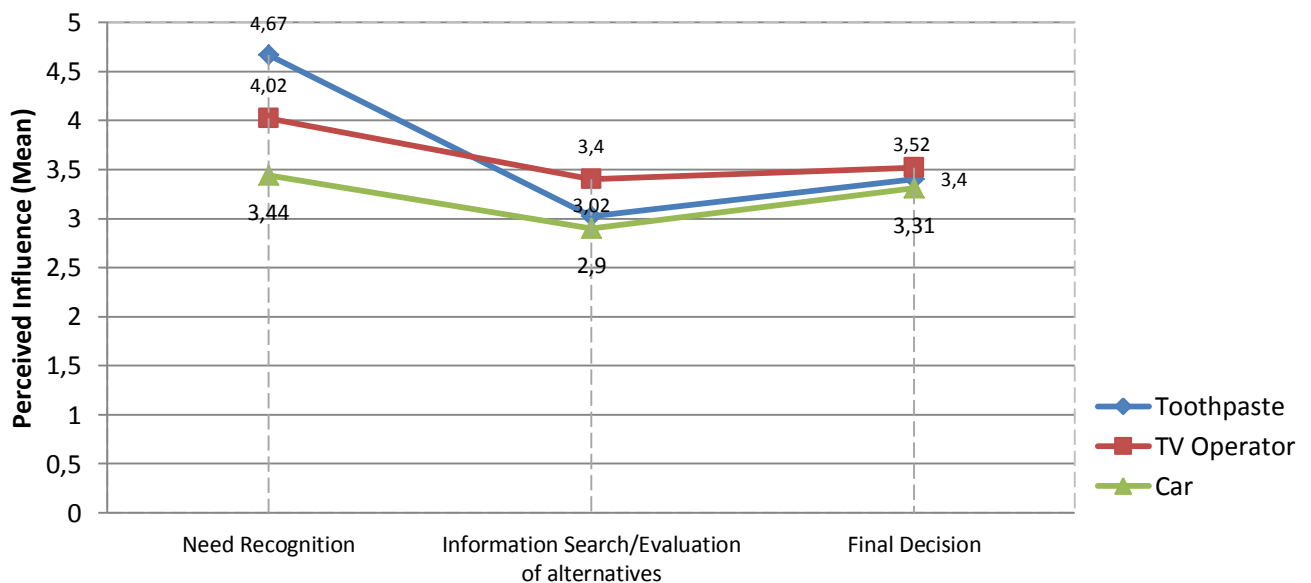
High involvement purchases are usually preceded by long periods of information search and alternative evaluation. During those periods, consumers are expected to call on the opinions from others, in an attempt to reduce the perceived risk associated to the final choice. Consequently, it seems reasonable to hypothesize that high involvement purchases will have more input from different household members when compared to low involvement purchases, which are usually made as a routine, without having financial or emotional risks associated. **So, adolescents and young adults were expected to have more influence in the decision-making of high involvement products when compared to low involvement products.**

In order to test this hypothesis, a paired sample t-test was conducted between the means resulting from *child's perceived influence – toothpaste* and *child's perceived influence – car*. Unlike the expected parents perceive children to exert a greater influence in the low involvement scenario ($M_{\text{toothpaste}}=3.56$, $SD=1.78$) than in the high involvement one ($M_{\text{car}}=3.18$, $SD=1.7$). This difference is significant at a 95% level ($p=.015$).

Stages of the decision-making process

Figure 1

CHILD'S PERCEIVED INFLUENCE ACROSS THE SEVERAL STAGES OF THE DMP



As illustrated on **Figure 1**, *child's perceived influence* has its highest levels during the first phase of *need recognition* for three products considered. From the first to the second stage, this influence decreases significantly ($p = .000$ for all the three products) and, afterwards, it increases again. However, in the case of TV Operator, the difference between the means (information search/evaluation of alternatives and final decision) is not significant ($p=0.064$).

These results partially support the hypothesis that children exert the most influence in the first stages of the DMP, as suggested by the previous literature. On one hand, the first stage of the DMP is the one which presents the highest levels of influence. However, on the other hand, previous studies indicated that children influence also decreased from *information search/evaluation of alternatives* to *final decision* which did not proved to be true. This result was expected in the case of the toothpaste purchase, since it is a low-involvement product, which does not usually require an alternative evaluation stage but it was not expected for the car purchase.

5.2.5 GENERAL MODEL OF CHILD'S INFLUENCE

In accordance with Beatty & Talpade's article (1994), we have defined Teenage Influence as a function of Teenage Characteristics, Parental/Household Characteristics and Decision Characteristics. The relationship proposed is the following:

$$\text{Teenage Influence} = f(\text{Teenage Characteristics} + \text{Parental or Household Characteristics} + \text{Decisional Characteristics})$$

Until this point, we have analyzed the explanatory variables separately. However, in order to understand which factors mostly contribute to *child's perceived influence*, multiple regressions were run, where variables pertaining to each parcel of the above equation were analyzed jointly, in a single model for each product category.

Results are reported on **Table 14**. Regarding the toothpaste model, only two independent variables were found to have a significant – and positive – effect on *child's perceived influence*: *child's perceived knowledge* and *importance attributed by the child*. The later was found to have the strongest impact on the dependent variable.

For the TV Operator decision-making process, there are five independent variables significantly affecting children perceived influence. *Respondent's age*, *child's overall market*

knowledge, product-specific child's knowledge and importance attributed by the child were found to have a positive effect on the child's influence. *Child's perceived influence* decreases once the respondent is a male. This means that mothers perceive children to have more influence in this DMP. *Child's knowledge* has the strongest effect on the dependent variable, followed by *importance attributed by the child* and *child's general knowledge*.

Regarding the car purchase scenario, significant positive effects were found for *child's overall market knowledge, importance attributed by the child* and *child's utilization*. The last variable was used exclusively in this scenario. In the other cases, products were assumed to be shared equally among family members. In fact, *child's utilization* is the variable which has the strongest effect on the DV, followed by *importance attributed by the child*.

In addition to the product-specific regressions, the data from the three product categories was pooled together in order to obtain a more comprehensive analysis. In this model, product categories were also introduced using dummy variables. Eight independent variables were found to have a significant effect on *child's perceived influence*. *Child's perceived knowledge, child's overall market knowledge and importance attributed by the child* account for a positive effect on the dependent variable whereas *respondent's gender, respondent's knowledge and respondent's occupation* have a negative effect. Therefore, it can be concluded that *child's perceived influence* decreases when the respondent is a male and also when the respondent does not have a professional occupation. Also, the more knowledgeable parents perceive themselves to be, the less influence children are perceived to exert. These findings are consistent with this study's previous results. Furthermore, the dummy variables corresponding to the product categories are also statistically significant. In line with previous section's findings, results reveal that *child's perceived influence* reaches the highest value in the toothpaste scenario while the car purchase scenario is the one in which children are perceived to have less influence.

Table 14

VARIABLES AFFECTING CHILDREN PERCEIVED INFLUENCE

| | TOOTHPASTE | TV OPERATOR | CAR | POOLED REGRESSION |
|--|-------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| AGE CHILD (D) | -.183 (.259) | .13 (.275) | .326 (.241) | .193 (.154) |
| GENDER RESPONDENT(D) | -.36 (.255) | -.55* (.265) | -.074 (.257) | -.346* (.146) |
| OCCUPATION RESPONDENT (D) | -.535 (.344) | -.327 (.368) | -.436 (.321) | -.486* (.204) |
| MARITAL STATUS RESPONDENT (D) | .034 (.252) | .058 (.268) | -.009 (.235) | -.005 (.149) |
| AGE RESPONDENT | -.001 (.024) | .051* (.025) | .011 (.022) | .021 (.014) |
| WORKLOAD (h/week) | .000 (.008) | -.003 (.008) | .006 (.007) | .000 (.005) |
| OVERALL MARKET KNOWLEDGE CHILD | .036 (.080) | .228** (.083) | .187* (.073) | .156*** (.047) |
| KNOWLEDGE RESPONDENT | -.267 (.174) | -.117 (.142) | .178 (.122) | .143* (.071) |
| KNOWLEDGE CHILD | .673*** (.158) | .600** (.17) | .215 (.113) | .412*** (.078) |
| IMPORTANCE RESPONDENT | .081 (.162) | .108 (.141) | -.056 (.129) | .032 (.078) |
| IMPORTANCE CHILD | .553*** (.126) | .421** (.152) | .382** (.110) | .501*** (.071) |
| UTILIZATION (CHILD) | - | - | .02*** (.004) | - |
| TV OPERATOR (D) | - | - | - | -.388* (.16) |
| CAR (D) | - | - | - | -.48** (.159) |
| CONSTANT | .407 | -3.246 | -1.508 | -1.571 |
| R ² | .482 | .516 | .523 | .447 |
| N | 154 | 154 | 154 | 462 |
| DEPENDENT VARIABLE = Child's Perceived Influence | | | | |
| Coding of Dummy Variables: Children Age: 0 = Teenager, 1 = Young Adult. Respondent Gender: 0 = Female, 1=Male. Respondent Occupation: 0 = Working, 1= Without Occupation. Marital Status: 0= Married (assumed dual-parent family), 1=Other (assumed single-parent family). TV Operator: 0 = Car or Toothpaste, 1 = TV Operator. Car: 0 = TV Operator or Toothpaste, 1 = Car. | | | | |

Based on the analysis performed so far, it becomes clear that the knowledge parents perceive their children to possess is one of the main drivers of influence. Given this, we tried to understand if parents' perception of children expertise could be stimulated through

communication, as it is described in research design chapter. The ANOVAs reported in **Table 15** examined how respondents' perceptions of their children's knowledge were affected by the experimental factor.

Table 15

ANOVA TESTS: EXPERIMENTAL VERSUS CONTROL GROUP

| KNOWLEDGE | | Mean | SD | F | Sig. (p) | |
|--------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|
| Overall Market Knowledge | F + M | ControlGroup | 3.35 | 1.48 | 6.234 | .014 |
| | | ExperimentalGroup | 3.92 | 1.36 | | |
| | F | ControlGroup | 3.13 | 1.51 | 9.493 | .003 |
| | | ExperimentalGroup | 4.01 | 1.41 | | |
| | M | ControlGroup | 3.78 | 1.36 | .015 | .904 |
| | | ExperimentalGroup | 3.73 | 1.25 | | |
| Knowledge Toothpaste | F + M | ControlGroup | 2.65 | 1.09 | 5.630 | .019 |
| | | ExperimentalGroup | 3.04 | .92 | | |
| | F | ControlGroup | 2.57 | 1.14 | 10.623 | .002 |
| | | ExperimentalGroup | 3.21 | .85 | | |
| | M | ControlGroup | 2.81 | 1.00 | .288 | .594 |
| | | ExperimentalGroup | 2.67 | .96 | | |
| Knowledge TV Operator | F + M | ControlGroup | 3.23 | 1.10 | 3.213 | .075 |
| | | ExperimentalGroup | 3.55 | 1.12 | | |
| | F | ControlGroup | 3.27 | 1.1 | 1.94 | .167 |
| | | ExperimentalGroup | 3.6 | 1.24 | | |
| | M | ControlGroup | 3.15 | 1.13 | 1.213 | .276 |
| | | ExperimentalGroup | 3.46 | .83 | | |
| Knowledge Car | F + M | ControlGroup | 2.73 | 1.24 | .677 | .412 |
| | | ExperimentalGroup | 2.89 | 1.23 | | |
| | F | ControlGroup | 2.63 | 1.2 | 2.18 | .143 |
| | | ExperimentalGroup | 2.98 | 1.23 | | |
| | M | ControlGroup | 2.93 | 1.33 | .365 | .549 |
| | | ExperimentalGroup | 2.71 | 1.23 | | |
| | ExperimentalGroup | 2.57 | 1.41 | | | |

Note. **F** = Female; **M** = Male
Knowledge: Knowledge parents perceive their children to have regarding each of the three products considered.

Significant differences were found between the two conditions when considering overall market knowledge ($p=.014$; $M_{\text{ControlGroup}} = 3.35$, $M_{\text{ExperimentalGroup}} = 3.92$) and specific knowledge regarding toothpaste offer ($p=.019$; $M_{\text{ControlGroup}} = 2.65$, $M_{\text{ExperimentalGroup}} = 3.04$). For the TV Operator scenario, the difference found between the control group and the experimental group

is only significant at a 90% confidence level ($p=.075$; $M_{\text{ControlGroup}} = 3.23$, $M_{\text{ExperimentalGroup}} = 3.55$). Finally, no significant difference was found between conditions for the car purchase scenario. The priming effect seems to fade along time, as the survey evolves. The analysis was repeated considering female and male respondents independently. In the cases of overall market knowledge and specific knowledge regarding toothpaste offer the difference between the control group and the experimental group is highly significant for female respondents ($p=.003$; $M_{\text{ControlGroup}} = 3.13$, $M_{\text{ExperimentalGroup}} = 4.01$ and $p=.002$; $M_{\text{ControlGroup}} = 2.57$, $M_{\text{ExperimentalGroup}} = 3.21$, respectively) whereas it is non-significant for male respondents. No difference was found between the two conditions when testing for *children perceived influence*.

6. CONCLUSIONS, FUTURE RESEARCH AND LIMITATIONS

6.1 CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This work has made a number of contributions to the empirical evidence on the influence of adolescents and young adults on family decision-making.

Firstly, we have analyzed how the child's influence varies with his/her characteristics. Our results support the prediction that older children have greater influence in the family decision-making process. However, the mediator analysis revealed that the relationship between the two variables is not direct but partially mediated by the knowledge parents perceive their children to have regarding the marketplace. Therefore, age has a direct and positive effect on the influence children have upon family DMP as well as has an indirect effect – older children are perceived as more knowledgeable and, consequently, they have greater input on the DMP. This finding is in line with prior research by Mangleburg & Tech (1990). However, as illustrated by the results from the toothpaste scenario, this relationship may not apply to low involvement products probably since those DMP does not imply extensive thinking or planning.

Results do not confirm the existence of a relationship between children's knowledge and time spent surfing the Internet. Parents may have poor perceptions of the time their children spent on the computer for other purposes that work, ending up rating this aspect inaccurately. Attention should be paid to this aspect, especially in studies evaluating parents' and children's perceptions simultaneously.

Our analysis has further provided evidence that the knowledge children are perceived to possess is one of the main drivers of their influence. Furthermore, it was shown that children's knowledge is substantially more important than parents' knowledge when predicting children perceived influence. Also the importance attributed by children to a given purchase was found to be another key driver of influence.

Previous studies have not accounted for differences between genders. Although the results from this study generally lead to the same conclusion, it is important to notice that female children were found to be perceived as more influent in the toothpaste DMP. Justifications may be linked to the type of product concerned (body care/health product) or to a higher level

of involvement into daily life purchases displayed by female children. Differences among genders should be further analyzed, especially in cross-category studies.

Secondly, we have also looked at how parental and household characteristics impact the child's influence. Our analysis suggests that the absence of consensus in the literature regarding the relationship between family size and children relative influence on the DMP probably derives from the diversity of product categories considered by different studies. Our results partially show that children influence is reduced in households with a greater the number of family members. In the case of the car purchase, the relationship is inexistent. Additionally, household income proved to be unrelated to children influence. Other household variables should be included in future research.

This study is the first to uncover the effect of parents' age on children perceived influence. Despite the non-correlation between the two variables in the low-involvement scenario, the remaining results led us to conclude that parents' maturity is positively correlated with children perceived influence i.e. kids from older parents are more influent in the DMP. It is worth mentioning that the difference between parents' age and their children's age does not affect children influence. This means that parents' age (in absolute terms) is the critical factor rather than the seniority of parents relatively to their children (*parental life-cycle*). Moreover, results from multiple regressions show that, for some product categories, mothers are more susceptible to children's influence.

We found mixed evidence regarding the effect of parents' knowledge on children's influence—the more knowledgeable the mother or the father feels, the less she/he will yield to children's influence attempts. However, for the car purchase, parental knowledge positively affects children perceived influence. This may be due to the moderate correlation existing between parental knowledge and importance attributed by the parent to the car purchase – the greater the importance attributed the more he/she knows about cars and the more he/she wants to involve his/her child in the process.

In his study, Jenkins (1979) argues that parents who spent more time working away from home were more vulnerable to children influence due to “self-actuated guilt”. Results from this study show that, in fact, working parents perceive their children as being more influent in the DMP. Besides from Jenkins argument, other explanations may exist. For example, working may be linked to higher income and, as a consequence, those parents will feel more

comfortable in yielding to their children requests. Children from single-parent families were found to be more influential in the DMP for some product categories. This finding is consistent with the results obtained for the relationship between family size and child's relative influence, i.e. in a household composed by few elements, the influence is heavily concentrated on those family members. Personal and family values have not produced any relevant results.

Thirdly, we found that the influence of the child also varies across product categories and stages of the DMP. Teenagers and young adults were expected to exert higher levels of influence in high involvement purchases, since these DMP are usually characterized by longer periods of information search and evaluation of alternatives. Our results did not support this hypothesis. Children are perceived to have less influence in the car purchase when compared to the toothpaste purchase. Two possible justifications arise, either the results are due to peculiarities inherent to the product categories chosen - products may have their own characteristics that can overlap the low or high involvement criteria, e.g. Jenkins (1979) found out that specifically automobiles are considered husband-dominant purchases – or parents are not willing to share the most complex, decisive and risky tasks. The second argument is consistent with Foxman's (1989) finding that children tend to have more to say in the products that are less expensive.

Regarding the stages of the decision-making process, children influence was found to reach its highest levels in the first stage of need recognition but, contrarily to what is suggested by literature, this influence increases from information search/evaluation of alternatives' stage to final decision stage (except from the TV Operator scenario). On one hand, it might be that teenagers and young adults are more present at the final stage of the decision-making process nowadays (e.g. going to the store/supermarket with parents). On the other hand, when rating their kids in terms of influence in the final choice, parents may think of *passive influence* they have, even without participating in the purchasing process.

Lastly, it was analyzed whether it is possible to foster parents' perception of children's knowledge. Results have shown that parents primed with words relating to sources of knowledge acquisition considered their kids more knowledgeable. This is an important finding since, as we have seen, knowledge was found to be one of the main determinants of children influence. Nevertheless, more detailed results show that only mothers are responsive to the stimuli; one justification may be the greater involvement and attention granted to this

study by female participants – 67% of the sample was constituted by women. Also, it is possible to conclude that the priming effect fades away along the questionnaire, which is coherent with Srull & Wyer (1979) conclusions that the effects of priming associated to semantic tasks appear to dissipate very rapidly. Future experimental studies should explore whether the *importance attributed by children to a given purchase* can also be stimulated through communication.

Several explanatory variables were analyzed. However, by comparing the three general models predicting children influence (see **Table 14**), not only it is possible to conclude that the variables affecting children perceived influence are different across product categories, supporting that “perceptions of child influence are product specific” (Darley & Lim, 1986, pp.372), but also that *children’s knowledge* (overall knowledge and specific knowledge considered interchangeably) and *importance attributed to the purchase* are consistently relevant for all purchases. Regarding the car purchase, the utilization rate by the child proves to be the most relevant factor accounting for influence. Approximately 50% of the variation of children perceived influence is explained by these models. Additional determinants of children influence should be explored and analyzed.

6.2 IMPLICATIONS

“Marketers must remain abreast of the impact of these family role changes and their concomitant consumer purchasing patterns in order to modify marketing and advertising strategies accordingly” (Jenkins, 1979)

By way of general conclusion, more important than stating that companies and brands should heavily consider the impact children have on family decision-making it is to advise them to try to understand which factors determine children’s influence regarding the specific product or service marketed. As proven by our results, there is not a golden formula and each product category should be given special attention.

Furthermore, marketers should take advantage of the importance that children’s perceived knowledge has in predicting children’s perceived influence. From our results, it is possible to conclude that two different approaches should be employed simultaneously. Firstly, teenagers and young adults should be taught and informed in respect to the company’s offer so that they represent a real and positive source of knowledge within their households. Secondly, *children’s market mavenism* concerning the company’s offer should be effectively

communicated to parents in order for them to acknowledge their expertise on the topic. Consequently, parents are encouraged to trust their children's opinions and advice. Combining these two strategies with positive attitudes towards the company's offer should lead to a positive contribution from children when deciding on a family purchase. These tactics should be especially effective when targeting older parents.

A parallel reasoning may be applied to the importance attributed by children to a given purchase. Not only communication efforts directed to teenagers and young adults should emphasize the benefits resultant from buying the company's product or service - increasing the purchase's importance – but also, parents should be motivated to acknowledge that importance.

6.3 LIMITATIONS

Even though interesting academic and managerial insights were achieved, some limitations aroused during the development of this study. First of all, assessing *perceived influence* has its particular limitations. According to Jenkins (1979), the definition of influence varies from one person to another. While some respondents perceive only the “active” dimension of the word, others perceive the word to encompass both the “active” and “passive dimensions. In the study, we allowed respondents to make use of their own definition of influence, without guiding them towards a common or pre-established meaning of the concept. Therefore, they possibly had different evaluations depending on their predetermined beliefs and notions.

Secondly, respondents were asked to self-report their perceptions of past decision-making processes. This procedure does not prevent from lapses in memory, especially if decisions may have been made long time ago.

In addition, there is also a great probability of being in the presence of a strong social desirability bias. Even after assuring respondents of the existence of absolute anonymity and confidentiality, we cannot dismiss that they are probably motivated to provide socially desirable answers to the questionnaire since family interaction is a sensitive topic.

Lastly, although 358 participants started to fill in the online survey, only 154 questionnaires were consistent with our criteria. The number of valid answers was not as high as coveted in the beginning of the study. Moreover, fathers' willingness to participate in the questionnaire was lower when compared to that of mothers. Some efforts were made to counteract the

situation but, in the end, only 33% of the sample was composed by male participants, which is below our expectations and desire.

7. APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 - PRIMING PRE-TESTING

Gostaria de o/a convidar a responder a este questionário, pois a sua opinião é única e relevante. Os dados recolhidos neste estudo serão utilizados numa tese de mestrado da *Católica Lisbon - School of Business and Economics* da Universidade Católica Portuguesa que pretende analisar a influência dos adolescentes e jovens adultos no processo de tomada de decisão dos pais, no que respeita ao consumo de bens e serviços. As suas respostas são totalmente **anónimas e confidenciais**, sendo utilizadas apenas para investigação académica. Não há respostas certas ou erradas.

O estudo demora cerca de 5 minutos a ser preenchido.

Muito obrigada pela sua colaboração!

Q1*. Tem filhos com idades compreendidas entre os 13 e os 26 anos?

Sim

Não

R1* Por favor, reorganize as letras apresentadas na coluna da esquerda de forma a criar palavras - escreva as palavras obtidas nos espaços correspondentes.

siverdedauni

terinnet

çãomainfor

eslaco

sãotevile

gialonotec

Q2. Por favor, classifique as seguintes afirmações de acordo com o seu grau de concordância, utilizando valores entre 1 e 7.

1=Discordo Totalmente; 7=Concordo Totalmente

- O meu filho gosta de mostrar novas marcas e produtos aos amigos e família.
- O meu filho gosta de ajudar as pessoas, dando-lhes informações sobre vários tipos de produtos.
- No geral, as pessoas pedem ao seu filho informação sobre produtos, locais de compra e promoções ou saldos
- No geral, os familiares e amigos consideram-no uma boa fonte de informação no que respeita a produtos e promoções.
- O meu filho seria capaz de indicar a alguém qual o melhor local para comprar um determinado tipo de produto ao melhor preço.

Q3. Como classifica a influência do seu filho nas seguintes decisões? (Nenhuma influência, Muito pouca influência, Pouca influência, Alguma influência, Muita influência, Total influência)

- Compra de um automóvel
- Compra de pasta de dentes
- Aquisição de um serviço de televisão (NOS, MEO etc.)
- Compra de uma televisão
- Compra de mobília

*Q1 is a screening question. When selecting the option “Não”, respondents were automatically excluded from the remaining questions; exiting the questionnaire.

**R1 was presented only to some respondents while others were not given access to this task.

APPENDIX 2 - ON-LINE QUESTIONNAIRE

SECTION 1

Gostaria de o/a convidar a responder a este questionário, pois a sua opinião é única e relevante. Os dados recolhidos neste estudo serão utilizados numa tese de mestrado da *Católica Lisbon - School of Business and Economics* da Universidade Católica Portuguesa que pretende analisar a influência dos adolescentes e jovens adultos no processo de tomada de decisão dos pais, no que respeita ao consumo de bens e serviços.

As suas respostas são totalmente **anónimas e confidenciais**, sendo utilizadas apenas para investigação académica. Não há respostas certas ou erradas.

O estudo demora cerca de 15/20 minutos a ser preenchido

Muito obrigada pela sua colaboração!

Q1*. Quantos filhos, com idades compreendidas entre os 13 e 26 anos, tem a viver consigo?

0

1

2

3

4 ou mais

Por favor, responda a este questionário **considerando apenas um dos seus filhos** (com idade entre os 13 e os 26 anos). Caso tenha mais do que um, considere apenas o mais velho.

As respostas devem ser dadas considerando apenas esse/a filho/a.

*de forma a simplificar o questionário, as perguntas que se seguem serão formuladas de acordo com o sujeito masculino.

SECTION 2

R1** Por favor, reorganize as letras apresentadas na coluna da esquerda de forma a criar palavras - escreva as palavras obtidas nos espaços correspondentes.

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R2** Por favor, clique na tecla "**avancar**".

SECTION 3

Q2. Por favor, indique o género do seu filho

Feminino

Masculino

Q3. Indique a idade do seu filho

13, 14, 15 (...) until 26 – (Multiple selection box)

Q4. Qual a ocupação do seu filho?

Estudante

Trabalhador

Sem ocupação

Q5. Em média, quantas horas por dia o seu filho passa a navegar na Internet, para outros fins que não trabalho/estudo?

Menos de 1h/dia

1h - 3h / dia

3h - 5h / dia

Mais de 5h /dia

Q6. O seu filho obtém rendimentos próprios, de forma regular?

Sim

Não

Q7. O seu filho usufrui de algum tipo de bolsa de estudos?

Sim

Não

Q8. Por favor, classifique as seguintes afirmações de acordo com o seu grau de concordância, utilizando valores entre 1 e 7.

1=Discordo Totalmente; 7=Concordo Totalmente

- O meu filho gosta de mostrar novas marcas e produtos aos amigos e família.
- O meu filho gosta de ajudar as pessoas, dando-lhes informações sobre vários tipos de produtos.
- No geral, as pessoas pedem ao seu filho informação sobre produtos, locais de compra e promoções ou saldos
- No geral, os familiares e amigos consideram-no uma boa fonte de informação no que respeita a produtos e promoções.
- O meu filho seria capaz de indicar a alguém qual o melhor local para comprar um determinado tipo de produto ao melhor preço.

SECTION 4

Q9. Por favor, indique se o seu filho participa na decisão de compra de cada um dos seguintes produtos:

(Arraste o produto/serviço para a coluna correspondente)

Item:

Refeição num restaurante



Férias em família



Despertador digital



Artigos de mercearia



Televisor para toda a família



Artigos de limpeza



Participa

Não participa

Por favor, tente recordar a última vez que comprou **pasta de dentes...**

Q10. Tendo em conta a existência das várias marcas e modelos de pasta de dentes no mercado, diria que...

| | Muito Baixo | Baixo | Nem baixo nem elevado | Elevado | Muito Elevado |
|--|-----------------------|-------|-----------------------|---------|---------------|
| O meu conhecimento face à oferta deste produto é... | <input type="range"/> | | | | |
| O conhecimento do meu filho face à oferta deste produto é... | <input type="range"/> | | | | |

Q11. Qual a importância de fazer a escolha certa em relação a este produto?

| | Nada importante | Muito pouco importante | Pouco importante | Algo importante | Muito importante | Extremamente importante |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| Para si é... | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Para o seu filho é... | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Q12. Utilizando valores compreendidos entre 1 e 7, por favor indique o grau de influência que o seu filho teve neste processo de compra.

1=Nenhuma influência; 7 = Total influência

- Influência Geral
- Reconhecimento da necessidade de adquirir pasta de dentes
- Recolha de informação/avaliação das alternativas disponíveis
- Escolha final

Q13. Como classifica a influência do seu filho nas seguintes decisões?

(Nenhuma influência, Muito pouca influência, Pouca influência, Alguma influência, Muita influência, Total influência)

Local de compra



Ocasião de compra

Marca

Modelo

Por favor, tente recordar a aquisição do seu **actual serviço de televisão (MEO, NOS, Vodafone etc)**

Q14. Tendo em conta a existência de vários operadores de televisão no mercado, diria que...

| | Muito Baixo | Baixo | Nem baixo nem elevado | Elevado | Muito Elevado |
|--|--|-------|-----------------------|---------|---------------|
| O meu conhecimento face à oferta deste produto é... |  | | | | |
| O conhecimento do meu filho face à oferta deste produto é... |  | | | | |

Q15. Qual a importância de fazer a escolha certa em relação a este serviço?

| | Nada importante | Muito pouco importante | Pouco importante | Algo importante | Muito importante | Extremamente importante |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| Para si é... | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Para o seu filho é... | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Q16. Utilizando valores compreendidos entre 1 e 7, por favor indique o grau de influência que o seu filho teve neste processo de compra.

1=nenhuma influência; 7 = Total influência

- Influência Geral
- Reconhecimento da necessidade de adesão ao serviço/alteração de operador
- Recolha de informação/avaliação das alternativas disponíveis
- Escolha final

Q17. Como classifica a influência do seu filho nas seguintes decisões?

(Nenhuma influência, Muito pouca influência, Pouca influência, Alguma influência, Muita influência, Total influência)

Local de adesão ao serviço



Ocasião/altura de adesão

Marca

Tipo de serviço (eg. Conjunto de canais subscritos)

Por favor, tente recordar a última vez que um **automóvel** foi adquirido pelo seu agregado familiar...
(exclua automóveis de utilização profissional)

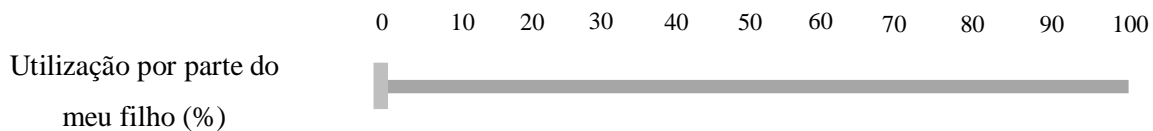
Q18. Tendo em conta a existência das várias marcas e modelos de automóveis no mercado, diria que...

| | Muito Baixo | Baixo | Nem baixo nem elevado | Elevado | Muito Elevado |
|--|--|-------|-----------------------|---------|---------------|
| O meu conhecimento face à oferta deste produto é... |  | | | | |
| O conhecimento do meu filho face à oferta deste produto é... |  | | | | |

Q19. Qual a importância de fazer a escolha certa em relação a este produto?

| | Nada importante | Muito pouco importante | Pouco importante | Algo importante | Muito importante | Extremamente importante |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| Para si é... | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Para o seu filho é... | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Q20. Da utilização total do automóvel pelos membros da família, qual a percentagem que cabe ao seu filho?



Q21. Utilizando valores compreendidos entre 1 e 7, por favor indique o grau de influência que o seu filho teve neste processo de compra.

1=Nenhuma influência; 7 = Total influência

- Influência Geral
- Reconhecimento da necessidade de adquirir um automóvel
- Recolha de informação/avaliação das alternativas disponíveis
- Escolha final

Q22. Como classifica a influência do seu filho nas seguintes decisões?

(Nenhuma influência, Muito pouca influência, Pouca influência, Alguma influência, Muita influência, Total influência)

Local de compra

Ocasão de compra

Marca

Modelo

Cor

SECTION 5

Q23. Por favor, ordene os seguintes valores, consoante a importância que têm para si, sendo:

1= O mais importante para si ; 8 = O menos importante.

*para alterar a ordem dos valores, basta arrastá-los para a posição que desejar.

Amor-próprio

Segurança

Relações calorosas com os outros

Auto-realização

Sentimento de dever cumprido

Ser respeitado

Sentimento de pertença

Diversão e alegria na vida

Q24 - Por favor, classifique as seguintes afirmações, utilizando uma escala de 1 a 7 (1=Discordo Totalmente e 7= Concordo Totalmente)

- Considero possível ser feliz sem ser casado/a
- Não trabalharia horas extra se isso interferisse com as minhas actividades familiares
- As recompensas de criar uma família são mais importantes do que qualquer outra coisa
- As relações realmente importantes para mim estão em casa
- O jantar em família é uma das actividades mais importantes do meu dia

SECTION 6

Q25. Por favor, indique o número de elementos que compõe o seu agregado familiar.

2

3

4

5

6

7 ou mais

Q26. Por favor, indique o rendimento mensal do seu agregado familiar, líquido de impostos.

Menos de 500 euros

500 – 1.000 euros

1.000 – 1.500 euros

1.500 – 2.000 euros

2.000 – 3.000 euros

3.000 – 4.000 euros

4.000 – 5.000 euros

5.000 – 6.000 euros

6.000 – 7.000 euros

Mais de 7.000 euros

Q27. Por favor, indique o seu género

Feminino

Masculino

Q28. Por favor, indique a sua idade

(Open question)

Q29. Qual o seu estado civil

Solteiro

Divorciado

Casado

Separado

Viúvo

(if, casado is selected : **Q29b) Qual a ocupação do seu marido/mulher?** Trabalhador, Reformado, Desempregado, Doméstico)

Q30. Indique a sua ocupação:

Trabalhador

Desempregado

Reformado

Doméstico

Q31. Em média, quantas horas trabalha por semana?



Q32. Em média, quantas horas por dia navega na Internet, para outros fins que não trabalho?

Menos de 1h/dia

1h - 3h / dia

3h - 5h / dia

Mais de 5h /dia

Muito obrigada! A sua colaboração é muito importante.

*Q1 is a screening question. When selecting the option 0, respondents are automatically excluded from the remaining questions; exiting the questionnaire.

**R1 and R2 are randomly presented to the respondents. So, these questions are displayed with the same probability of 50%.

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