

FAMILY INFLUENCE IN THE CHOICE OF AUTOMOBILE PRODUCTS

CHRISTOPHER Ihionkhan, Agbonifoh (Ph.D)

Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Management Sciences, University
of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria
christopher.agbonifoh@uniben.edu

PATIENCE Uwaraye, Oware

Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Management Sciences, University
of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria

Abstract:

*This study investigates family influence in the choice of automobile products as well as examines the influence of demographic variables on the choice of automobile products. A 25- item questionnaire was designed to measure the variables. It was administered on a sample of 150 respondents consisting of automobile owners in Benin City. On the whole 141 copies of the questionnaire were returned and found usable giving 94 % response rate. Data obtained were coded and analyzed using means, standard deviation, frequency distributions, T-test and regression analysis. The results revealed that wives and children influenced the choice of automobile products. Also, Toyota cars are the most preferred brand of cars amongst consumers in Benin City. The study further revealed that family prestige is a major factor in the choice of automobile. The outcome of the demographic variables indicates that there is no significant effect with the choice of automobile products. **It is therefore recommended that** manufacturers of automobile products should recognize that family prestige is a major factor in the choice of automobile in Benin City. In addition, automobile merchant should pay attention to the importance that consumers placed on Toyota automobile as their most preferred brand. Since demographic variables are downplayed by consumers in the selection of automobile product, automobile dealers should disregard segmenting the market on the basis of these variables.*

Keywords: Automobile, decision, demographics, family, products.

Introduction

Consumers are confronted with numerous challenges when it comes to making purchase decisions. The decision is more complex especially for technical and complex products such as automobile as well as for consumers who are making such novel decisions for the first time. Members of the same family play diverse roles in the purchase decision making process, such as initiator, information collector, influencer, gatekeeper, decision maker, user and purchaser (Lien, Westberg, Stavros, & Robinson, 2018). The family has been identified as the most important decision making and consumption unit (Assael, 1998). Therefore, the area has attracted the interest of marketers and academics over the years (Kim & Lee, 1997; Moore, Wilkie, Lutz, 2002; Shoham & Dalakas, 2005).

A considerable share of consumption decision takes place within the family setting and is thus collective rather than individual in nature. As members of a family, children have also been recognized as playing key role within purchasing decision process

(Ahamad & Sekhar, 2014). The wife traditionally has been the main purchasing agent for most family, especially in the areas of foodstuffs, household products, and clothing. But with most metropolitan women holding jobs outside the home and the willingness of husbands to do more of the family's purchasing, changes are most likely to occur. Children may also have a strong influence on family buying decisions. In the case of expensive and technical products and services, husbands and wives often made joint decisions. Over the years, there has been a trend toward children playing a more active role in what the family buys, as well as in the family decision-making process. This change is as a result of families having fewer children, more dual-income couples who can afford to permit their children to make a greater number of choices, and the encouragement by the media to allow children to express themselves (Schiffman, 2007). In addition, single-parent households often push their children toward household participation and self-reliance (Wimalasir, 2004). Though the role played by the children as an influencer in the decision-making process in his/her family has stimulated interest in some researchers (Foxman, Tansuhaj, & Ekstrom, 1989; Beatty & Talpade, 1994; Palan & Wilkes, 1997), social and economic changes may not represent exactly the decision-making process of the family. Palan and Wilkes (1997) averred specifically, that there is a lack of research that details the interaction level between relatives, children and their parents during the decision-making process. Therefore, this study intends to fill these gaps by empirically investigating family influence in the choice of automobile products in Benin City.

Objective of the study

The following are the objectives of this study.

1. To evaluate the influence of wives, husbands, children and relatives on the choice of automobile product.
2. To examine the influence of generational preference, family size, family income and family prestige on the choice of automobile product.
3. To investigate the influence of demographic variables (sex, age, marital status, education, occupation, and religion) on the choice of automobile product.

Hypotheses of the Study

The following hypotheses were tested in this study

- H_{01} : There is no significant influence between husbands, wives, children and relatives and the choice of automobile products.
- H_{02} : There is no significant influence between generational preference, family size, family income and family prestige and the choice of automobile product.
- H_{03} : There is no significant influence between demographic variables and the choice of automobile product.

Review of Literature

Family Purchase Decisions

A family is defined as two or more individuals related by blood, marriage, or

adoption who reside together. In a more dynamic sense, the individuals who constitute a family might be described as members of the most social group who live and interact to satisfy their personal and mutual needs (Schiffman, 2007). Marketing literature differentiates nuclear from extended family. Nuclear family consists only of parents and children. On the other hand, extended family extends beyond the nuclear family, consisting of parents like father, mother and their children, aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, all living in the same household (Lien et al., 2018).

As stated by Assael (1987), family decision making is different from individual decision making and is more complex because of the likelihood of joint decisions and different role specifications from members. Family members can also strongly influence buyer behaviour. Marketers should be interested in the roles and influence of the husband, wife, and children on the purchase of different products and services. Buying roles change with evolving consumer lifestyles (Perner, 2010).

The purchase decision-making process can be influenced generally by how much he/she knows about the product (Steg, Perlaviciute, Werff, & Lurvink, 2014). However, consumption choices are not only oriented by individual factors; other individuals may affect such consumption, especially in family circles. Research on the family consumption behaviour usually emphasizes the capacity of influence of the members, father, mother or children (Batra & Ali, 2015). The influence occurs when the influencer provokes an intentional change in the behaviour of another individual, that is, when the impact is significant. When considering the family as a group, children become an object of interest of the marketing field because they can be agents in three different markets: primary, in which they are consumers; influencer, where their needs, desires and opinions matter for family consumption decisions; and future, as potential consumers of products they have contact with currently, that is, one of the most profitable markets for several businesses (Batra & Ali, 2015).

Decision Making Process

The consumer decision process also known as buyer decision process refers to the decision making stages that a consumer undergoes before, during and after they purchase a product or service.

Problem recognition

Problem or need recognition is the first stage of the buying decision process. It appears when a family member recognizes a perceptible and big enough difference between the actual level of satisfaction of a certain need and the amount of satisfaction that he longs for (Munthiu, 2009). The existence and the manifestation of the need can be caused by *internal* or by *external stimuli*. The internal stimuli can be triggered by the most basic needs that are generally situated at the base of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, that is, hunger, thirst, sex and so on. As for the external stimuli, a well-designed advertisement or a mere discussion with a friend might get one thinking for example about buying a car.

Information search and the identification of alternatives

Information search is considered the second of five stages that comprise the consumer decision process. During this stage, a consumer who recognizes a specific problem or need will then likely be persuaded to search for information, whether it is internally or externally. Information is fundamental for the future buying decision. The quantity and

the accuracy of the information depend on the consumer, that is, the product or the service to be purchased. The more the product or the service has a higher value and a reduced buying frequency, the more researched information tends to be more thorough, from multiple sources, as compared to the products or services that any consumer buys on a regular basis. The amount and the thoroughness of the newly researched information are deeply connected to the previous experiences of the consumer and to the error cost that he perceives when taking a wrong decision. An aroused consumer usually searches for more information (Munthiu, 2009).

Evaluation of alternatives

After information research and the identification of possible alternatives, the consumer goes to the next phase of the decision buying process, the mental evaluation of the existent alternatives. It is now when the consumer processes information to arrive at brand choices (Munthiu, 2009). Consumers do not use a simple and single evaluation process in all buying situations. The degree of complexity of the evaluation process is influenced by various factors which include: the consumer's experience; the importance of the service/product considered; the cost of making a bad decision; the complexity of the evaluated alternatives and the urgency with which the decision must be taken

The purchase decision

The purchase decision is the fourth stage in the consumer decision process and when the purchase actually takes place. During this time the consumer may form an intention to buy the most preferred brand because he has evaluated all the alternatives and identified the value that it will bring him. Generally, the consumer's purchase decision will be to buy the most preferred brand.

Post-purchase actions

The extent to which the customer is satisfied with his buying decision will clearly influence his behaviour from that moment on. If the customer is satisfied, he will exhibit a higher probability of purchasing the product again. The satisfied customer usually tends to say good things about that brand to others (Munthiu, 2009).

Buying Roles within the Family

The stages in the decision making process are usually linked to the decision making roles. An understanding of this linkage could enable the business people to monitor more effectively the information requirements of the individuals as well as to identify the key members in the family throughout the process (Assael, 1987). These roles include: the *initiator* who recognizes the problem or need for an item; the *influencer* who exerts personal influence on other family members with regard to a particular purchase situation; the *information gatherer* is the individual or individuals who assemble the information related to a possible purchase; the *gatekeeper* who controls the flow of information to other family members; the *decision maker* who has the authority to make the buying decision, and finally, the *purchaser* who acts physically to complete the purchase process.

Given roles can be connected to different stages of purchase decision making process. Initiators usually play role in realizing the problems, though the role of influencers can be connected to different stages. Making the final decision can be

connected mainly to decision makers and buyers while users play the most important role in post purchase decisions (Verma, 2003).

Methodology

A combination of the descriptive and correlational research design was employed in this study. Correlation research enables the direction and magnitude of relationship between variables to be established (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000). This study focuses on family influences in the choice of automobile products. The population of the study consists of the totality of families who owns automobile in Benin City, Edo state. The sample size for the study is 150 respondents. A non-probability convenience sampling was used to distribute questionnaires to the respondents. According to Agbonifoh and Yomere (1999), the benefits of convenience sampling are low cost and time saving, which is most convenient for study with homogeneous population. The 25 item questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part captured the respondents' selected demographic and socio-economic characteristics, which include: sex, age, occupation, educational qualification, marital status, religion and position in the family. The second part of the questionnaire contained items measuring selection of automobile products. Hypotheses were tested using T-test and regression. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 20.0) was used for all the analyses. All tests were carried out at the 5% level of statistical significance.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents along the selected demographic dimensions. One hundred and fifty (150) copies of the questionnaire were distributed. One hundred and forty-one (141) were returned and found usable. This represents a response rate of 94 per cent. The response rate was high because it was self-administered. Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents. With respect to sex, 66 (48.8%) of the respondents were male while 75 (41.1.2%) were female. Many of the respondents were in the age group of 26 – 35 years (41.1%); this was closely followed by the group, 18– 25 years (31.9%). A total of 67 respondents (48.2%) had B.Sc./HND while 34 respondents (24.5%) had NCE/OND. In terms of occupation, the majority of the respondents were employees (58.2%) while the remaining were students (41.4%), and retired workers (0.7%). Many of the respondents (80.9%) were Christians; Muslims (15.5%) and traditionalist (3.5%). In terms of marital status, 78 respondents were married (56.1%); 59 (42.4) were single while 2 (1.4%) were divorced. As it relates to position in the family, 45(30.7%) respondents were husbands; 55 (39.3%) were wives; children were 36 (25.7%) while relatives were 6 (4.3).

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Demographic characteristics	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	66	46.8
	Female	75	53.2
	Total	141	100
Age	18-25 years	45	31.9
	26-35 years	158	41.1
	36-45 years	26	18.4
	46-55 years	8	5.7
	56 years and above	4	2.8
	Total	141	100
Education	SSCE	11	7.9
	NCE/OND	34	24.5
	B.Sc./HND	67	48.2
	M.Sc./MBA/PGD	22	15.8
	Ph.D	5	3.6
	Total	141	100
Occupation	Students	58	41.4
	employees	82	58.2
	Retired	1	0.7
	Total	141	100
Religion	Christianity	114	80.9
	Islam	22	15.5
	Traditionalist	5	3.5
	Total	141	100
Marital status	Single	59	42.4
	Married	78	56.1
	Divorced	2	1.4
	Total	141	100
Position in the family	Husband	45	30.7
	Wife	55	39.3
	Children	36	25.7
	Relatives	6	4.3
	Total	141	100

Source: Authors' fieldwork

Choice of Preferred Brand of Automobile

This section describes the choice of preferred brand of automobile. Table 2 shows that Toyota is the most preferred brand of automobile. 47 (33.3%) respondents selected Toyota as the most preferred brand. This was closely followed by Honda in the second position with 20(14.3%) respondents. Nissan was rated in the penultimate position (6.4%) while Volkswagen was rated in the last position (2.1%).Forty one (29.3%) respondents based their choice of automobile brand on individual preference. 31 (22.1%) respondents based their choice on family prestige. This was closely followed by family size 28(20.0%). Next is family income, with 23 (16.4%) respondents while others not specifically mentioned is 2 (1.4%). Sixty five (65) of the respondents representing 46.1% of the total respondents were from pluralistic families. Fifty seven (57) respondents, representing 40.4% of the total respondents was from consensual families while 19 (13.5%) respondents were from protective families.

The result show that 68 (48.2%) respondents were of the opinion that husbands initiates the purchase decision of a particular brand of automobile. Fifty nine (41.8%) respondents were of the opinion that wives initiates the purchase decision of a particular brand of car. This is closely followed by children (6.4%) and lastly, relatives (3.5%).On the basis of who collects information before purchasing your family's preferred brand of automobile, 67 (48.2%) were of the opinion that husbands collect information before purchasing their family's preferred brand of automobile. This was closely followed by wives 62(44.6%) while relatives came last (4.3%).

On the basis of who evaluates the different brands of cars before purchase is made, 67 respondents, representing (47.5%) were wives. Next were husbands with 46.8% while 1 of the respondent representing (0.7%) is of the opinion that children evaluate the different brands of cars before purchase decision is made. As it relates to who makes the last decision on the type of car to buy, 81 respondents (57.4%) were of the opinion that husbands make the last decision on the type of car to buy. This was trailed by wives with 34.8%. The least was relatives with (3.5%).Lastly, in terms of the major determinants of the type of car to be purchased in the family, 97 (68.8%) respondents were of the opinion that husbands were the major determinants of the type of car to be purchased in the family while only (5.0%) were of the opinion that children are the major determinants of the type of car to be purchased in the family.

Table 2: Choice of Preferred Brand of Automobile

S/N	Parameters	Categories	Frequency	Percentage	
1	Which is your most preferred brand of automobile	Toyota	47	33.3	
		Honda	20	14.3	
		Ford	19	13.6	
		Mercedes	19	13.6	
		Audi	15	10.7	
		Kia	8	5.7	
		Nissan	9	6.4	
		Volkswagen	3	2.1	
		Total	141	100	
2	On what basis did you select the above choice as your preferred brand?	Individual preference	41	29.3	
		Generational preference	15	10.7	
		Family size	28	20.0	
		Family prestige	31	22.1	
		Family income	23	16.4	
		Others	2	1.4	
			Total	141	100
		3	How do you describe your family type?	Pluralistic	65
Consensual	57			40.4	
Protective	19			13.5	
Total	141			100	
4	Who is your preferred brand automobile	Husband	68	48.2	
		Wife	59	41.8	
		Children	9	6.4	
		Relatives	5	3.5	
		Total	141	100	
5	Who collects information before purchasing your family's preferred brand of automobile?	Husband	67	48.2	
		Wife	62	44.6	
		Children	4	2.9	
		Relatives	6	4.3	
		Total	141	100	
6	Who evaluates the different brands of cars before purchasing decision is made	Husband	66	46.8	
		Wife	67	47.5	
		Children	1	0.7	
		Relatives	7	5.0	
		Total	141	100	
7	Who makes the last selection decision on the type of car to buy	Husband	81	57.4	
		Wife	49	34.8	
		Children	6	4.3	

Influence on the Choice of Automobile

The mean value of 3.93 indicates that family influence on the choice of automobile is far above average. The result in Table 3 shows that "wives" to a very large extent have a great influence on the choice of automobile with the highest mean value of 4.40. This was trailed by "husbands" with a mean of 4.35; "relatives" have the least

influence on the choice of automobile brand with a mean value of 2.95. In terms of satisfaction with the choice of automobile, the mean value of 4.25 shows that consumers were very satisfied with the choice of automobile.

Table 3: Influence on Choice of Automobile

S/N	Parameters	Mean	St. Dev.
1	To what extent does the wife influence the purchase of a brand of automobile	4.40	0.72
2	To what extent does the husband influence the purchase of a brand of automobile	4.35	0.88
3	To what extent does the children influence the purchase of a brand of automobile	3.9	1.07
4	To what extent does relatives influence the purchase of a brand of automobile	2.95	1.45
5	To what extent does family choice of a car depend on generational preference	3.47	1.38
6	To what extent does family size influence the choice of car selection	3.96	0.98
7	To what extent does family income influence the choice of car selection	4.28	0.85
8	To what extent does family prestige influence the choice of car selection	4.16	0.92
	Overall Mean for Family Influence on Choice of Automobile	3.93	
	Satisfaction with Selected Choice of Automobile		
1	I am satisfied with my family's choice of automobile brand in the future	4.25	0.78
2	I am willing to continue the purchase of my family's choice of automobile brand in the future	4.15	0.96
3	I am willing to recommend my family choice of automobile to others	4.35	0.89
	Overall Mean Satisfaction with Selected Choice of Automobile	4.25	

Source: Authors' field work

Influence of Husbands, Wives, Children and Relatives on the Choice of Automobile Products

The result in Table 4 shows that there is no significant influence between husbands, wives and relatives on choice of automobile brand. The p-values of (0.224) and (0.995) for husbands and relatives respectively show that husbands and relatives do not have a significant influence on the choice of automobile products. On the other hand, there is a significant influence between wives and children on choice of automobile brand. The p-value for wives which is (0.015) and p-value for children (0.000) show that wives and children are significant at the 0.05 level of significance. The value of R-Square which is 0.134 indicates that the independent variables (husbands, wives, children and relatives) together explain only 13.4 % of the variation in selection of automobile brand. The F-statistic of 5.264 and p-value of 0.001 is significant at 1%.

Table 4: Influence of Husbands, Wives, Children and Relatives on the Choice of Automobile Brand

Variable	coefficients	T-test	P-value	Decision
Constant	4.242	26.689	0.000	
Husband	0.129	-2.467	0.224	Not Significant
Wife	-0.218	1.221	0.015	Significant
Children	-0.017	2.858	0.005	Significant
Relatives	0.072	0.006	0.995	Not Significant
R-Square = 0.134		Adj. R-Square = 0.109		
F-Stat = 5.264		Prob. (F-Stat) = 0.001		

Source: Authors' field work

Influence of Generational Preference, Family Size, Family Income and Family Prestige on the Choice of Auto Mobile Brand

The result in Table 5 shows that there is no significant influence between generational preference, family size, family income and family prestige on the choice of automobile brand. The p-values of (0.277); (0.555); and (0.408) for generational preference, family size and family income respectively show that generational preference, family size and family income do not have a significant influence on the choice of automobile products. Only family prestige has a significant influence on the choice of automobile products. The p-value for family prestige which is (0.024) shows that family prestige is significant at the 0.05 level of significance.

The value of R-Square which is 0.067 indicates that the independent variables (generational preference, family size, family income and family prestige) together explain only 6.7 % of the variation in selection of automobile brand. The F-statistic of 2.387 and p-value of 0.054 is not significant at 5%.

Table 5: Influence of generational preference, family size, family income and family prestige on the Choice of Auto Mobile Brand

Variable	coefficients	T-test	P-value	Decision
Constant	4.112	28.858	0.000	
Generational preference	0.039	1.097	0.275	Not Significant
Family size	-0.030	-0.592	0.555	Not Significant
Family income	0.049	0.830	0.408	Not Significant
Family prestige	0.112	2.279	0.024	Significant
R-Square = 0.067		Adj. R-Square = 0.039		
F-Stat = 2.387		Prob. (F-Stat) = 0.054		

Source: Authors' field work

Influence of Gender on the Choice of Automobile Products

The result presented in Table 6 shows that gender $\{t=-1.055; p=0.293\}$ does not significantly influence the choice of automobile products at 5% level of significance. This means that the male respondents' are not significantly different from female in their choice of automobile products

Table 5: Influence of Gender on the Choice of Automobile Brand

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-statistics	p-value
Selection of automobile products	Male	66	1.5189	0.415	-1.055	0.293
	Female	75	1.6120	0.602		

Source: Authors' field work

Demographic Variable and Choice of Automobile Products

The results show that age does not have a significant influence on choice of automobile products. The F-value (0.980) and p-value (0.481) are strong evidences that age is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level of significance. This means that the choice of automobile products does not vary with age. Similarly, education does not have a significant influence on choice of automobile products. The F-value (0.815) and p-value (0.659) are strong indications that education does not influence the choice of automobile products at the 0.05 level of significance. This means that the choice of automobile products does not vary with the level of respondents' education. The result also showed that marital status does not have a significant influence on choice of automobile products. The F-value (0.846) and p-value (0.626) showed that marital status is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level of significance. This implies that the choice of automobile products does not vary with marital status. The results also revealed that occupation does not have a significant influence on choice of automobile products. The F-value (0.728) and p-value (0.753) are indications that occupation is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level of significance. This suggests that respondents' occupation does not affect their choice of automobile products. Lastly, the study showed that religion does not have a significant influence on choice of automobile products. The F-value (0.398) and p-value (0.525) indicate that religion is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level of significance. This indicates that the choice of automobile products does not vary with religion.

Table 7: Demographic variable and the choice of automobile products

		Sum of Square	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Age	Between groups	14.560	15	0.971	0.980	0.481
	Within groups	123.865	125	0.991		
	Total	138.426	140			
Education	Between groups	10.478	15	0.699	0.815	0.659
	Within groups	105.378	123	0.857		
	Total	115.856	138			
Marital Status	Between groups	3.518	15	0.235	0.846	0.626
	Within groups	34.108	123	0.277		
	Total	37.626	138			
Occupation	Between groups	2.748	15	0.183	0.728	0.753
	Within groups	31.223	124	0.252		
	Total	33.971	139			
Religion	Between groups	3.514	15	0.234	0.938	0.525
	Within groups	31.224	125	0.250		
	Total	34.738	149			

Source: Authors' field work

Discussion of Findings

The empirical analyses revealed a number of findings. This study found that there is no significant influence between husband and choice of automobile brand. This finding disagreed with the outcome by Razzaque (n. d.) that husbands dominated in buying decision making in Bangladesh and Sudan. The study also revealed that Toyota is the most preferred brand of automobile while Honda is the second most preferred brand of automobile amongst consumers in Benin City. This finding partially supports an earlier finding by Odia and Agbonifoh (2017) who reported that Toyota was the most popular and preferred brand of automobile by residents of Benin City, Nigeria. However, Mercedes Benz was rated as the second most preferred brand of automobile in their study. Similarly, this study also partly corroborates previous finding by Oduor, Lomkhosi and Sisusiso (2009) that Toyota came top as Swaziland's favourite car brand while Mercedes Benz occupy second place for its performance, classic and safety.

This study found that demographic variables (sex, age, education, marital status and religion) do not have a significant relationship with the choice of automobile products. The implication of this finding is that the demographic variables do not play a significant role in explaining the choice of automobile products by customers. This simply means that they are not significant determinants in the choice of automobile products in Benin City. The finding from this study partially supports previous findings by Odia and Agbonifoh (2017) who reported that of all the demographic variables investigated, only education and religion affect the choice of automobile products.

Conclusion

A critical attempt has been made in this study to investigate family influences in the choice of automobile products in Benin City. It also investigated the influence of demographic variables on the choice of automobile products. Analysis from this study revealed that wives and children played a dominant role in the selection of automobile brand. Also, Toyota cars are the most preferred brand of cars amongst consumers in Benin City. The study also showed that family prestige is a key factor in the choice of automobile products. The outcome of the demographic variables indicates that there is no significant relationship with choice of automobile products. Since demographic variables do not seem to describe dissimilarity in the selection of automobile products, researchers should look somewhere else in the quest for such determinants.

Managerial Implications

First, this study recommends that manufacturers of automobiles should recognize that family prestige is a major factor in the choice of automobile products in Benin City. Second, automobile merchant should pay close attention to the importance that consumers placed on Toyota automobile as their most preferred brand. Since demographic variables are downplayed by consumers in the choice of automobile product; automobile dealers should disregard segmenting the market on the basis of

these variables.

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