

Purchase Decision-Making in the Couple. Conflict-Solving Tactics

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Abstract

The aim of the present work is to analyze which spouse has the greatest influence on household purchases, as well as to observe, whenever purchase conflicts arise, the influence tactics employed and whether these tactics have a relationship with socio-demographic characteristics. Information was obtained through 300 questionnaires applied to co-habiting couples. A convenience sampling ("snowball" method) was carried out between the end of 2006 and the beginning of 2007. We use a Factor Analysis of Principal Components (FAPC), t-test for independent samples and variance analysis. Results show an unmistakable tendency towards joint decisions in the couple, with women playing the specialized role of grocery buyer. Gender differences are also confirmed in the use of influence tactics. These results may be of interest to both firms and public institutions.

Key Words: sex role, decision making, conflict, influence tactics, consumer behavior

1. Introduction

Family purchase behavior is a research field of special interest for firms and institutions. The democratization of society and family has led to changes in the way that both society and household members understand genders. These changes have been decisive in the move from a traditional family model, hierarchically organized and with well-defined tasks for each member, to a new, more reduced, less hierarchical model, including new family patterns (single-parent, multinuclear, registered co-habiting couples and homosexual couples). This work uses the terms 'couple', 'husband/man' and 'wife/woman', since the articles which we cite explicitly refer to 'husband' and 'woman/wife'. Although the couple is a classical decision unit, few works have tackled the study of the mutual influence between spouses. Conflicts are likely to appear in the family as a result of disagreements, mainly when it comes to the acquisition of durable goods (Kaur and Singh, 2005). Analyzing household conflicts is essential to understanding the dynamics of family decision-making and the strategies applied in family decision-making processes. The role of women in the home and at work, as well as their role as wives and mothers, is perceived in different ways today (Tong, 2007). From the perspective of firms and institutions, it seems natural to wonder whether these changes have an impact on purchase behaviour. The answer is probably affirmative, although the changes are slow in coming into effect. The typical situation is to find women working out of the home who still take care of household chores, with scarce participation of men in the housework (Valdivia, 2000; Pedersen et al. 2006).

The changes in the perception of the role of women may alter the influence of each spouse on the purchase of products that were traditionally associated with a particular sex (Webster and Reiss, 2001; Khemakhem, 2005) and they can also affect conflict-resolution tactics. Firms and institutions can benefit from the information on who buys which products and the tactics used by each family member. Likewise, finding a potential relationship between the use of certain tactics and socio-demographic variables would allow firms to adapt their tactics to today's reality. In this context, the purpose of the present work is twofold. First, to find out which spouse has the greatest influence on a set of important purchase decisions and, second, when a purchase conflict arises, to analyze the most widely-used influence tactics and their potential relationship with socio-demographic variables.

2. Purchase Decision-Making in the Couple

The significant changes in family roles in recent decades have led women to increase their influence on all decision areas, a fact that reveals the need for firms to rearrange their marketing strategies for some products or services (Belch and Willis, 2002). Indeed, the relevance of the roles that men and women play in the couple has been the object of study in consumer purchase behavior (Davis and Rigaux; 1974; Martínez, 1996; Berg and Teigen, 2009). Some works establish the impact of Sex Role Orientation (SRO) on household decision-making. This concept refers to attitudes, values, opinions, behavior standards and cultural rules that define the appropriate behavior of men and women in society (Qualls, 1981). So, in couples with a more modern SRO, the husband's relative influence decreases as the wife's increases (Webster, 1995; Bailey, 1998; Meier, Kirchler and Huvert, 1999). In mixed SRO couples, men with modern wives take fewer decisions compared to men with traditional wives (Green and Cunningham, 1975; Madill and Bailey, 1999). On the other way, appears that disagreement is likely arisen between parents and its child rather than between husband and wife (Wut and Chou, 2012).

Several authors claim that different cultures and nationalities lead to different domination degrees of each spouse in purchase decisions, and to a higher or lower number of joint decisions (Hoyer and MacInnis, 2004; Harcar and Spillan, 2006; Frikka, 2010). Socializing children develops expectations about appropriate behavior patterns for men and women, as well as for husbands and wives, and youths use their families as a reference for their own behavior as consumers (Bravo, Fraj and Montaner, 2008). Multiple factors influence in the couple's purchase decision-making process. We are interested in this paper in the aspects related to the purchase decision conflict and in the influence tactics that each spouse uses to modify the other's preferences and opinions.

2.1. Purchase decision conflict

Purchase decision-making processes in the household are more complex than those of individuals for three reasons: the difficulty of reaching a joint decision, the different roles of each spouse in the decision-making process and the need to solve conflicts between spouses. In other words, conflict is an inherent element in family purchase decision-making (Assael, 1998). The closer the personal relationships are, the more likelihood of disagreements (Scanzoni, 1979). The family, a small involuntary group, is a common scene of conflicts (Davis, 1976).

The scant research on how men and women resolve their differences when making joint decisions has focused on the following areas: the most commonly used resolution strategies (Belch et al., 1980); types of conflict-resolution strategies (Davis, 1976; Sheth and Cosmas, 1975; Nelson, 1988; Kwai-Choi and Collins, 2000; Su et al., 2003); the mixture of conflict-resolution strategies used by the couple depending on their age, years of cohabitation, income, education, occupation and SRO (*Sex Role Orientation*) (Kim and Lee, 1996); and how the choice of a strategy is influenced by factors like age, conflict situation, satisfaction with marriage and relative domination (Kirchler, 1993; Kirchler et al., 2001). More recently, some studies have examined whether ethnic differences can affect the choice of conflict-resolution strategies (Makgosa, 2007, Makgosa y Kang, 2009).

Generally speaking, two contrary suppositions exist about conflicts in family decision-making. The first is based on the idea that spouses try to avoid conflicts because of the cooperative nature of the family (Corfman and Lehmann, 1987) that fosters empathy with the other's preferences (Straus and Sweet, 1992; McGonagle, Kessler and Schillin, 1992). The second supposition, however, emphasizes the conflictive nature of family decisions, considering the family as a system more prone to disagreement than to consensus or to a stable equilibrium between the two parts (Sprey, 1969). It is claimed that both manifest and latent conflicts often arise, preventing the final decision from being made unless conflicts are solved (Qualls, 1987; Surra and Longstreth, 1990 and Gottman, 1994).

Nevertheless, other researchers prefer to combine the two perspectives, assuming that the couple attempt to reach their own goals simultaneously but that they also try to adapt to the other's wishes (Kirchler, 1993; Su, et al., 2003). Individuals want to satisfy their own needs but, at the same time, they do not want to hurt their relationship with their spouses (Ben-Yoav and Pruitt, 1984; Kirchler, 1995). These models establish that the satisfaction of an individual need may have consequences for the other spouse and, therefore, the aim is to maximize joint benefits. Consequently, research on this point should consider both models of conflict resolution (either trying to avoid them or generating confrontation) (Qualls, 1988). Some authors like Qualls and Jaffe (1992) have designed conflict models, concluding that if both spouses have similar perceptions of the role of gender, their influence on decisions and its importance, they will generate fewer conflicts than couples with different perceptions. Other authors attempt to establish conflict types (Qualls, 1988; Kirchler et al., 2001) and some determine the strategies used by the couple for conflict resolution (Davis, 1976; Sheth and Cosmas, 1975; Nelson, 1988; Kwai-Choi and Collins, 2000; Su et al., 2003).

2.2. Influence tactics

Whenever a conflict arises during the purchase decision-making process, each spouse is likely to consider the other's preferences and adapt their viewpoints to their own, thus attempting to modify their position (Szinovacz, 1987). The communication process is employed to modify viewpoints. This step-by-step transformation is obtained not only through the exchange of objective information but also by using tactics. Influence tactics refer to the "maneuvers" that each spouse uses to modify the other's preferences and opinions. The influence of each spouse on joint decisions is related to factors like the intensity of the preferences, the decision process, expertise (Corfman and Lehman, 1987), product category (De Bourdeaudhuij and Van-Oost, 1998), the importance of the product (Cuccaro, 1996) and the stage of purchase decision (Beatty and Talpade, 1994).

The use of one or the other tactic depends on multiple factors such as the family's underlying structure, which can be described through the concepts of power and cohesion (Kirchler, 1989), the family's social class, the SRO (Sex Role Orientation) (Schaninger et al., 1982; Bailey 1998; Webster and Reiss, 2001) and the stage of the family life cycle. These factors lead to the use of different strategy mixes and/or influence tactics so the review of the literature on the issue revealed very different forms of classifying them. Some authors use a typology that divides influence strategies into broad categories (Nelson, 1988; Webster and Reiss, 2001), while others resort to more detailed categories (Kirchler, 1989; Su et al., 2003). One of the most complete studies in terms of analysis and approach to influence tactics in the couple's purchase decisions was conducted by Kirchler (1993). His taxonomy includes 18 tactics in 4 groups: A first group is made up of conflict-avoiding tactics, the second group includes just one tactic known as problem resolution, the third group gathers persuasion tactics and the last group contains the so-called haggling or negotiation tactics. Kirchler used his tactics taxonomy in 1993 by applying it through questionnaires to Austrian and Italian couples and, later, in 2001 (Kirchler et al. 2001), to couples resident in Vienna.

For one year, the participants completed, every day and separately, a questionnaire that he called the *diary*. In both cases, the most widely-used tactics among the respondents were the same: presenting well-reasoned arguments (*problem-resolution tactics*) and integrating haggling (*haggling tactics*). Nevertheless, some differences in terms of gender and satisfaction with the couple's relationship were detected. Women, more often than men, use tactics of *negative emotions* (threatening, yelling) and *show weakness*, but they use *well-reasoned arguments* less frequently. That is, gender differences, non-existent in Kirchler (1993), are found. It is more likely to find a politically correct answer in a one-questionnaire work because the response is almost automatic. However, the longitudinal structure of the diary is more likely to dilute this type of answer over time. Other observational studies also reveal gender differences, with women having a more active emotional role and using negative tactics, compared to men. For instance, some works conclude that women show more emotional expressiveness, whereas men make use of excuses and explanations based on facts when facing a conflict (Margolin and Wampold, 1981; Thompson and Walker, 1989). Women generate more feelings and negative conduct than men (Rausch et al., 1974; Notarius and Johnson, 1982), are more demanding and do not avoid confrontation, whereas men do and abandon the scene (Heavey, Layne and Christensen 1993; Black, 2000). Additionally, women are more active in the use of negative tactics than men, who are more passive and positive (Hojjat, 2000). Nevertheless, a work by Kozak (2010) finds no gender difference in the tactics used.

and persuasion are the most significant tactics for both sexes. Most authors detect gender differences when considering influence tactics in the couple's purchase decisions, as our empirical study will attempt to prove.

3. Methodology

This paper is part of a broader research line that focuses on comparing the couple's role in the purchase of products and services in a determined area of Spain on the basis of questionnaires. We will focus on each spouse's role in the purchase decision-making of different products and services, as well as on the conflicts that arise in the decision-making process. The study's target population is cohabiting couples. A convenience sampling was carried out between the end of 2006 and the beginning of 2007. The reason for using the "snowball" method was twofold. First, convenience samples are common practice in this type of studies. Second, the difficulties of finding couples willing to take part in a study that analyzes sensitive issues like conflicts in decision-making processes. After two pretests to control for potential errors, two surveys were generated, one aimed at men and the other at women. 300 pairs of valid surveys were obtained, enough for an empirical study. The characteristics of the sample are shown in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1. Characteristics of male and female samples

Socio-demographic variables		Percentage of WOMEN	Percentage of MEN
Age	Under 30	13.7	8.1
	Between 31-45	60.3	59.7
	Between 46-60	22.3	27.2
	Over 60	3.7	5
Studies	No studies	0.7	1
	Primary	11.4	16.7
	Secondary	33.0	33.3
	University	54.9	49
Personal income (euro)	Under1000	22.3	5.9
	Between 1000-2000	50.7	53.3
	Between 2001-3000	10.3	30
	Between 3000-4000	1	5.7
	Over 4000	0.7	3.7
	No answer	15	1.4
Occupation	Employee	47.7	56.6
	Self-employed	8.5	8
	Professional	1.0	3.7
	Businessman/woman	3.0	8.7
	Civil servant	23.3	17
	Retired	0	3.3
	Others	3.4	2.7
	Not working out of home	13.1	0
Working out of home	Yes	86.9	95.7
	No	13.1	4.3

Table 2. Common characteristics of the couple

Socio-demographic variables		F	%	Socio-demographic variables		F	%
Children	Yes	204	68	Number of children	None	97	31.9
	No	96	32		One	10	26.8
					Two	97	33.2
			Three		25	8.1	
Years of marriage or cohabitation	Less than 5 years	80	26.6	Family income (euro)	Under 1000	4	1.3
	5-10 years	72	24		1000-2000	42	14
	11-15 years	50	16.7		2001-3000	120	40
	16-20 years	27	9		3000-4000	80	26.7
	More than 20 years	71	23.7		Over 4000	46	15.3
				No answer	8	2.7	

Note: F: frequency (N=300). (%): percentage.

Women answered the questionnaire using a 5-point scale where 1 meant “only the husband influences”, 2 corresponded to “the husband influences more than the wife”, 3 “both have the same influence”, 4 “the wife influences more than the husband” and 5 “only the wife influences”. To fulfill the objective of our study, it was necessary to define the products and services to be used in the evaluation (Table 3). These elements were taken from Martínez and Polo (1999) who use the typology established by Davis and Rigaux (1974). Martínez and Polo (1999) choose 23 products and/or services, adapting the selection to the Spanish context by grouping some similar products and services together and eliminating others that have no relevance in our country. On the basis of the application of Multiple Correspondence Analysis, the 23 decisions were reduced to 15, the most relevant ones when analyzing the role of spouses in purchase decisions. Couples were asked about who had the most influence on the 15 decisions using the same 5-point scale described above. As for the tactics scale, we chose the one proposed by Su et al. (2003), very similar to the one used by Kirchler et al. (2001), with slight variations in the translation of the pretests conducted to detect potential errors. A 5-point scale was used, from 1 “I never use it” to 5 “I always use it” (Table 4).

Table 3. Types of products and services used in the study

Grocery and cleaning products	Home appliances (washing machine, fridge, etc.)	Housing purchase
Own personal care products	Furniture	Vacations
The partner's personal care products	Television	Life insurances
Own clothes and complements	VCR	Other insurances
The partner's clothes and complements	Stereo	Investment of savings

Source: Martínez and Polo (1999).

Table 4. Influence tactics used in the study

I keep repeating my viewpoint
I express my opinions loudly
I make him/her think that he/she is doing me a favor
I try to negotiate something beneficial for both
I get angry and ask him/her to give in
I tell him/her that he/she has no right to disagree on that issue
I tell him/her that I have more experience in that issue
I refuse to discuss the issue
I express sorrow so that he/she sees how his/her opinion hurts
I give my partner reasons to prove why he/she should agree with my arguments
I express my needs. I tell my partner what I want
I mention my children's or other people's preferences to return to my viewpoint

Source: Adapted from Su et al. (2003) and Kirchler (2001).

4. Result Analysis

The first objective of this work is to find out which spouse influences household purchase decisions. Table 5 gathers the response rate of the sample, which reveals that, as expected after the literature review, in most cases, the percentage of couples that make joint decisions is very high, while the area of personal care, clothes and complements is the one with a higher individual influence. Women's influence on clothes and complements purchase is higher than the influence of men on the purchase of female products. These results are no surprise if we consider women's traditional role as family shopper. Grocery and cleaning products are still the realm of women and, for a remarkable percentage of respondents, this is an area where women make purchase decisions with no other influences. Housing and vacations are the two products that obtain the highest response rates in the item “both have the same influence”. After the revision of response rates, it can be concluded that classifying the decisions according to who has a dominant role in each of them may be extremely useful.

The global behavior of families could, in this way, be better explained. To do this, we applied the procedure designed by Davis and Rigaux (1974) and Martínez (1996). This procedure classifies purchase decisions through graphs that clearly depict which decisions are under the influence of each spouse, which decisions are jointly made and which ones are defined as autonomous.

Table 5. Response rate on the spouse's degree of influence upon product and services

	Only the husband influences		The husband influences more than the wife		Both have the same influence		The wife influences more than the husband		Only the wife influences		Doesn't know/Didn't answer	
	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W
Grocery and cleaning	1	1	6	4.7	27.3	22.7	44	43.3	21	28.3	0.7	0
Own personal care	29.7	1	20	2	19.7	16.3	21.7	22.7	9	57.7	0	0.3
The partner's personal care	1	29.3	1.3	23	11.3	22	24.3	16.3	61.3	9.3	0.7	0
Own clothes, complements	14.7	1.3	28.3	2.3	2.7	12.3	21.7	30.7	8.3	53	0	0.3
The partner's clothes and complements	1.7	12.7	0.7	32	8.7	30.3	39	20	48	4.7	2	0.3
Home appliances	2.7	2	12	10.3	57.3	63.7	18.3	15.7	9	8	0.7	0.3
Furniture	0.3	0.3	4	4.7	61.7	64.7	24.3	24.7	9.3	5.7	0.3	0
Television	7.7	6	28.7	29.3	54.7	56.7	6	6.7	1.7	1	1.3	0.3
VCR	9.7	7.3	28.7	31.7	50.7	53	5.3	6	2.7	1.3	3	0.7
Stereo	11	7.3	29.3	34	48.7	50.3	6.7	3.3	2	2	2.3	3
Housing	2.3	2	8	7	75.3	82.7	10	6.3	3.7	1.7	0.7	0.3
Vacations	0.3	0	0.7	4.3	70.3	71	16.7	20.7	6	3.7	0	0.3
Life insurance	8	7.3	23.3	21.3	46	52	10.3	6.3	2.7	3.3	9.7	9.7
Other insurances	9.3	7	26.3	26	45.7	52.3	9.7	6.3	2.7	3.3	6.3	5
Investment of savings	9.3	8.7	22.7	21.3	43	49	13.7	11.7	6	5	5.3	4.3

Note 1: In bold type, the highest rates for each purchase decision.

Note 2: M = men's responses; W = women's responses.

Accordingly, each decision is positioned on two axes. The y-axis considers a 1-to-3 scale that measures the positional relative mean influence between men and women. The term *positional* is used to describe the relative influence of each member of the couple in the graph, since the scale does not allow us to assess the mean obtained. Consequently, the 5-point scale that measures the degree of influence on decisions becomes a 3-point scale (1: "only the husband influences" and "the husband influences more than the wife"; 2: "both have the same influence"; and 3: "only the wife influences" and "the wife influences more than the husband") so that it gathers the global feeling about whether men, women or both influence decisions.

The x-axis represents a scale of the specialization role, measured through the percentage of respondents who claim to have made joint decisions, ranging from 0 to 100%. The graphic representation adopts the shape of a triangle generated from the lines that cut at the point (100%, 2) and divided into four areas. The area determined by a percentage of individuals who respond "both have the same influence" over 50% and a positional relative mean influence between 1.5 and 2.5, corresponds to joint decisions in the couple. When the percentage of "both have the same influence" responses is below 50%, there are three areas according to the value of the positional relative mean influence.

When this influence is below 1.5, the decisions located in that area are controlled by men; if the positional relative mean influence is over 2.5, the decisions are dominated by women; and when the influences ranges from 1.5 to 2.5, the decisions are autonomous. Thus, the square that gathers the so-called autonomous decisions includes those decisions where the percentage of respondents who claim to make joint decisions is below 50% but the others are positioned with a similar pattern between those who consider that women influence more and those who say that men do, so that the positional mean is between 1.5 and 2.5.

Figure 1 displays the results of the global male and female sample. It can be observed that most decisions are rated as jointly made, whereas “clothes and complements for men”, “men’s personal care products” and “investment of savings” appear in the area of autonomous decisions. Purchase decisions about “grocery and cleaning products”, “women’s clothes and complements” and “women’s personal care” fall into the area of women’s decisions. Male-dominated areas show no purchase decisions. Decisions related to “housing” “vacations”, “furniture” and “home appliances” are clearly labeled as joint decisions. As well as the area where decisions are located, the exact situation of each decision in the area offers useful information. The decision on “investment of savings” borders the joint decisions area; the decision appears to be autonomous, although it may well be a joint one. Likewise, purchase decisions on “television”, “VCR”, “stereo”, “life insurance” and “other types of insurance” are very close to the autonomous decisions area, and they even border the male decision area, although they are actually found in the joint decisions area.

When observing men’s and women’s responses separately, the female sample (Figure 2), shows no relevant changes with regard to the situation described in Figure 1. Nevertheless, in Figure 3, which shows men’s responses, the situation of some decisions differs. More exactly, decisions related to “life insurance”, “other insurance” and “stereo” are classified in the men’s sample as autonomous and not joint decisions, as occurred in the women’s and the global samples. Nevertheless, these three decisions border the area of joint decisions, closer to men’s domination areas. Decisions on “men’s clothes and complements” are classified, both in male and female samples, as autonomous, although their situation in this area is quite different. In the male sample, it is located near the y-axis, whereas in the female and global samples it occupies a central position. This would indicate that the percentage of men that consider this as a joint decision is lower than the one obtained in the female and global samples.

Figure 1. The couple’s role in final purchase decisions (joint responses from men and women)

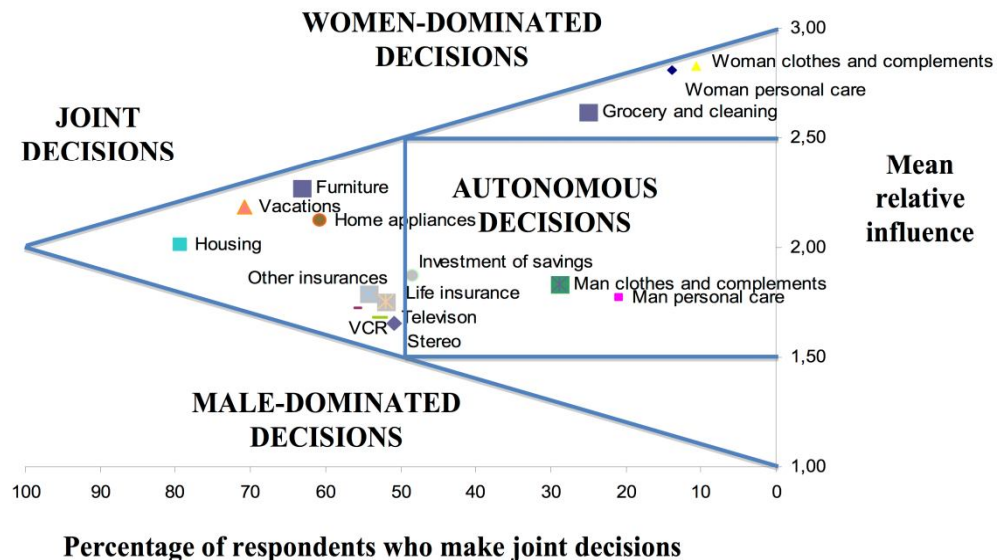


Figure 2. The couple’s role in final purchase decisions (female responses)

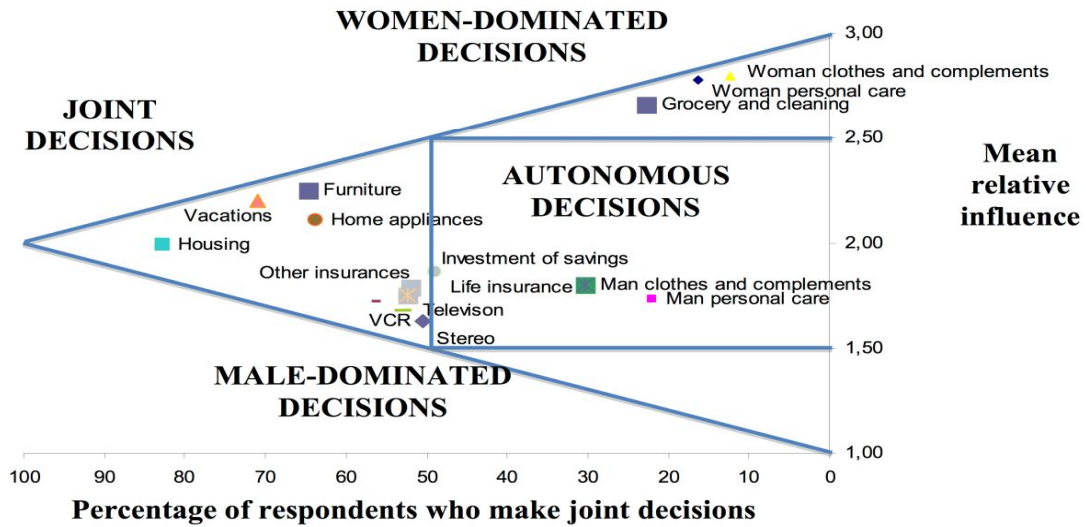
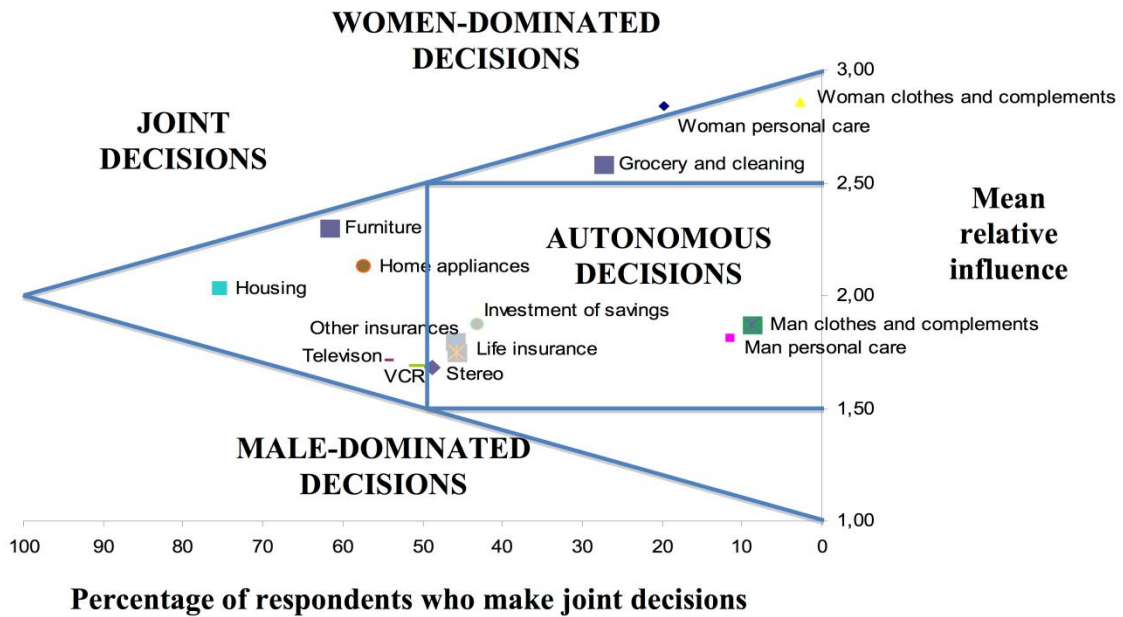


Figure 3. The couple’s role in final purchase decisions (male responses)



4.1. Influence tactics used in the couple's decision-making conflicts

One of the aims of the present work is to analyze the existence of gender differences in the influence tactics used when a conflict arises in the purchase process. The following section will tackle this objective. First, we obtain the response rates obtained in each of the tactics proposed to respondents, distinguishing between male and female responses. Then a Factor Analysis of Principal Components (FAPC) will be conducted to group the tactics and observe the ones more commonly used by men or women.

Table 6 shows the response rates for each influence tactic used in the study. Some gender discrepancies are observed for the highest response rates in three of the twelve tactics. For example, "I try to negotiate something beneficial for both" is a tactic in which 37.3% of men obtain an intermediate score (the highest percentage for men in this tactic), which reveals that they sometimes use it, whereas 33.7% of women score 4 (the highest percentage for women in this tactic), which denotes that they use it more frequently than men. The tactic "I refuse to discuss the issue" obtains its highest response rate in the item "I never use it" for women whereas, for men, the score is 2, revealing a slightly higher use by men. "I mention my children's or other people's preferences to return to my viewpoint" is a more common tactic among women. They score their highest response rate for this tactic in the intermediate item (27%), whereas men score their highest in the item "I never use it" (33%)

Table 6. Influence tactics according to sex (%)

	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W
I keep repeating my viewpoint	13.3	10.3	25	14	33.3	38.3	18	26.7	10.3	10.7
I express my opinions loudly	44.3	43.3	25	27.7	17.3	19.7	8	6.3	5.3	3
I make him/her think that he/she is doing me a favor	62.3	66	18.3	16.7	13	13.3	3	3	3.3	1
I try to negotiate something beneficial for both	8	8.7	12.7	10.7	37.3	31	27	33.7	15	16
I get angry and ask him/her to give in	54.3	47	24	30.7	16.3	16	3	5	2.3	1.3
I tell him/her that he/she has no right to disagree on that issue	64.7	62.7	13.3	20	12	12.3	6.7	2.7	3.3	2.3
I tell him/her that I have more experience in that issue	34.3	35.7	29	26	17	24	13	12	6.7	2.3
I refuse to discuss the issue	26	35.3	28	26.7	26.3	21.3	12.3	12.7	7.3	4
I express sorrow so that he/she sees how his/her opinion hurts	54.7	49	21.7	19.3	15.7	16.3	7	12.3	1	3
I give my partner reasons to prove why he/she should agree with my arguments	5	3.3	10	10.3	26.7	25.3	33	35.3	25.3	25.7
I express my needs. I tell my partner what I want	6.7	5	13.3	9	27	19.7	31.7	37	21.3	29.3
I mention my children's or other people's preferences to return to my viewpoint	33	25.7	22	17.3	29.3	27	12.3	20.7	3.3	9.3

Note 1: In bold type, the highest response rates for each tactic.

Note 2: Scale from 1: I never use it to 5: I always use it.

Note 3: M = men's responses; W = women's responses.

With the aim of grouping the items of the scale used and adapting it to the objective cited at the beginning of the present section, several FAPCs were conducted through the SPSS v. 15.0. This analysis consisted of condensing the information offered by a set of variables into a smaller group of principal components or factors which is the linear combination of the variables. Various methods can be used to verify the degree of correlation, with Bartlett's sphericity, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test and multiple correlations being the most common tests (Santos et al., 2003). These methods were applied to the influence tactics scale, obtaining the results shown in Tables 7 and 8. These tables include Cronbach's Alpha, which analyzes the scale's internal consistency, thus eliminating those items that do not improve this statistical value, which should, in a study like ours, have a minimum value of 0.6 (Miquel et al., 1999). As indicated by Hutcheson and Mountinho (2008), there is no point in applying confirmatory analysis techniques, since the study has an exploratory approach. Likewise, those items that pass the reliability analysis are required to have a factor loading exceeding 0.5. Otherwise, they are also removed. Finally, two dimensions are obtained for the female sample from the FAPC that explain 50.26% of the total variance.

The four items that constitute the first principal component or factor (Table 7) share the condition of being tactics that seem to stem from women's position of inferiority, hence the use of direct confrontation tactics, like shouting, or indirect tactics that utilize strategies like persistently repeating, sorrow, or using the children's or other people's opinion. For this reason, the factor is labeled as "Inferiority tactics" (IT). The three items that form the second principal component or factor seem to be related to more direct tactics and direct confrontation, anger, having rights or experience are used as deterrent strategies to persuade the other spouse. These tactics reveal a supposed authority of women, hence the term "Authority tactics" (AT) (Table 7).

As for the male sample, the analysis yielded just one five-item dimension that gathers 55.99% of the variance. The five tactics reflect, on the whole, a certain position of superiority or arrogance from men: no reasoning, no arguments on equal terms and an attitude that is somehow patronizing ("I make him/her think that he/she is doing me a favor", "I get angry and ask him/her to give in") or a direct imposition of one's opinion because they assume, be it true or not, a wider knowledge ("I express my opinions loudly", "I tell him/her that he/she has no right to disagree on that issue", "I tell him/her that I have more experience in that issue"). Consequently, this factor is called "Arrogance tactics" (AT) (Table 8). The appearance of the inferiority dimension only in the female sample might be explained by the stereotyped role of women as the weaker sex, which may lead them to assume this role and employ tactics "forbidden" to men.

Table 7. Factor analysis of the influence tactics scale (female sample)

Identified components: 2 ($\alpha=0.718$) KMO: 0.713 Total variance: 50.26	Factor loadings
IT: INFERIORITY tactics	
($\alpha=0.710$) KMO=0.634 Bartlett $\chi^2 = 104.432$ (Sig.=0.000) Self-values>1 Explained variance: 25.219	
I keep repeating my viewpoint	0.824
I express my opinions loudly	0.602
I express sorrow so that he/she sees how his/her opinion hurts	0.523
I mention my children's or other people's preferences to return to my viewpoint	0.565
AT: AUTHORITY tactics	
($\alpha=0.704$) KMO=0.630 Bartlett $\chi^2 = 107.741$ (Sig.=0.000) Self-values >1 Explained variance: 25.044	
I get angry and ask him/her to give in	0.719
I tell him/her that he/she has no right to disagree on that issue	0.842
I tell him/her that I have more experience in that issue	0.602

Note: α = Cronbach's Alpha; KMO= Kaiser-MeyerOlkinTest; Bartlett χ^2 = Barlett's sphericity test.

Table 8. Factor analysis of the influence tactics scale (male sample)

Identified components: 1	Factor loadings
AT: ARROGANCE tactics	
($\alpha=0.799$) KMO: 0.819 Bartlett $\chi^2 = 429.981$ (Sig.=0.000) Self-values >1 Explained variance: 55.99	
I express my opinions loudly	0.712
I make him/her think that he/she is doing me a favor	0.749
I get angry and ask him/her to give in	0.783
I tell him/her that he/she has no right to disagree on that issue	0.801
I tell him/her that I have more experience in that issue	0.651

Note: α = Cronbach's Alpha; KMO= Kaiser-MeyerOlkinTest; Bartlett χ^2 = Barlett's sphericity test.

4.2. Influence of socio-demographic variables on the influence tactics used

The second objective of this work is an analysis of the influence of socio-demographic characteristics on the type of tactics used. To do this, we employ the means of the dimensions of the Factor Analysis of Principal Components calculated in the previous section. The t-test for independent samples was used when the means are related to dichotomic variables, and variance analysis (ANOVA) was employed when the variables gave more than two response categories.

The socio-demographic variables used as independent variables in the analysis are shown in Tables 1 and 2 and indicate the need for further recoding of the response categories. The dependent variables are the factors resulting from the application of FAPC to the tactics, that is, the factors “inferiority tactics” and “authority tactics” in the female sample and “arrogance tactics” in the male one. The following section highlights the differences of means where the value of the tests conducted reveals significant differences at the 5% level, first in the female sample and second in the male one.

4.2.1. Female sample

The application of the t-test for independent samples and the one-factor ANOVA has disclosed some significant relationships for both factors. Of special relevance is the level of studies, where the negative sign of the difference between means indicates that the factor “inferiority tactics” is less common among women with no studies or primary studies, compared to the other levels considered. In the case of the factor “authority tactics”, those women with no studies or primary studies present a lower mean than that of women with secondary or university studies. The fact that women with no studies or primary studies present a lower mean in both factors may indicate that these women do not use tactics to persuade their spouses or that they do not regard them as such or, simply, that it is their spouses or themselves who carry the burden of decisions, and thus no conflict requires the application of influence tactics (Table 9).

Table 9. Relationship between the factors obtained in the factor analysis for the female sample and the level of studies of the surveyed women

Studies (a)	Studies (b)	Sig. Levene for variance equality	Mean differences (a-b)	Sig. (bilateral)
Factor “INFERIORITY tactics”				
No studies or primary studies (1.7500)	Secondary (2.4337)	0.006<0.05: No identical variances are assumed	-0.68371*	0.000
	University (2.4862)		-0.73620*	0.000
Factor “AUTHORITY tactics”				
No studies or primary studies (1.6667)	Secondary (1.8990)	0.018<0.05: No identical variances are assumed	-0.23232*	0.007
	University (1.8609)		-0.19427	0.001

Note: In brackets, the factor’s mean. If variances are different, Tamhane’s, Dunnet’s C, Gemes-Howell’s and Dunnet’s T3 contrasts are applied. If they are < 0.05, there is a significant relationship at 5% level marked with an asterisk (*).

As regards men’s education, it is observed that women whose spouses have no studies or primary studies show a higher mean for the factor “authority tactics”, compared to women whose spouses have a higher level of studies, i.e., when men have a lower level of studies women utilize more direct and authority-based tactics than those used when their spouses have a middle/upper-middle level of education. After all, education is another resource for power and influence distribution within the couple (Table 10). As well as the cited relationships, others emerge when using the Least Significant Difference (LSD) test. It is necessary to point out that this method has no control over the error rate and each comparison is carried out by using the established significance level, 0.05 in our case. For this reason, statisticians recommend using the test cautiously since its level of demand is lower than that of other procedures in the SPSS and it requires a lower difference to obtain significance. The factor “inferiority tactics” presents a significantly lower mean for women with incomes under 2,000 €, compared to those whose incomes are in higher intervals.

Likewise, the factor “authority tactics” shows a higher significant mean for women whose family incomes are lower than 2,000 € compared to those who claim to receive 2000-4000 €. Consequently, when women declare family incomes of under 2,000 € they also present a lower mean in both factors, which may indicate, as occurred with education, that these women use neither inferiority nor authority tactics to persuade their spouses, or the distribution of roles in purchase decisions is so obvious that no conflict arises that needs influence tactics.

It has to be considered that families with incomes of over 2,000 € are, in a large number of cases, the same as those where both spouses work out of the home, which may indicate that, according to the Relative Resources Theory (Webster, 1995; Martínez and Polo, 1999), an increase in the family resources leads to an increase in the influence degree of the spouse who produces this increase (Table 11). 67.8% of the families in the sample where both spouses work declare incomes of between 2,000 € and 4,000 €, and 14.4% declare more than 4,000 €. Only 17.8% declare incomes of less than 2,000 € when both work. Belonging or not to a large family also affects the tactics used by spouses. Women in large families (three or more children) tend to show a significantly higher mean for the factor “inferiority tactics” compared to those with two or with no children (Table 12).

Table 10. Relationship between the factor “Arrogance tactics” and the level of studies of the surveyed couples

Men’s studies (a)	Men’s studies (b)	Sig. Levene for variance equality	Mean differences (a-b)	Sig (bilateral)
No studies or primary studies (3.2222)	Secondary (1.8667)	0.084 > 0.05: No identical variances are assumed	1.35556*	0.006
	University (1.8685)		1.35374*	0.007

Note: In brackets, the factor’s mean. If variances are different, Tamhane’s, Dunnet’s C, Games-Howell’s and Dunnet’s T3 contrasts are applied. If they are < 0.05, there is a significant relationship at 5% level marked with an asterisk (*).

Table 11. Relationship between the factors obtained in the factor analysis for the female sample and the Family income level of the surveyed women

Income (a)	Income (b)	Sig. Levene for variance equality	Mean differences (a-b)	Sig. (bilateral)
Factor “INFERIORITY tactics”				
Less than 2000 € (2.2174)	2000-4000€ (2.4900)	0.057 > 0.05: No identical variances are assumed	-0.27261*	0.032
	More than 4000 € (2.5707)		-0.35326*	0.029
Factor “AUTHORITY tactics”				
Less than 2000 € (1.6594)	2000-4000€ (1.9333)	0.512 > 0.05: No identical variances are assumed	-0.27391*	0.029
	More than 4000 € (1.8623)		-0.20290	0.571

Note: In brackets, the factor’s mean. If they are < 0.05, there is a significant relationship at 5% level marked with an asterisk (*).

Table 12. Relationship between the factor “Inferiority tactics” and number of children

Number of children (a)	Number of children (b)	Sig. Levene for variance equality	Mean differences (a-b)	Sig (bilateral)
Three or more children (2.8229)	None (2.4122)	0.231 < 0.05: No identical variances are assumed	0.41068*	0.014
	One child (2.5000)		0.032292	0.070
	Two children (2.3929)		0.43006*	0.014

Note: In brackets, the factor’s mean. If variances are different, Tamhane’s, Dunnet’s C, Games-Howell’s and Dunnet’s T3 contrasts are applied. If they are < 0.05, there is a significant relationship at 5% level marked with an asterisk (*).

The last relationship found in the female sample indicates that self-employed women obtain a significantly higher mean for the factor “authority tactics” when compared to those who are employees. For working women, the variable occupation was recoded into two large groups: employees and self-employed and, as it was a dichotomic variable, the t-test of means for independent samples was applied. The result may be influenced by the fact that businesswomen and female professionals are part of the item “self-employed”. The condition of self-employment may involve the need to exert a type of authority that is somehow reflected in the relationship with the spouse when making purchase decisions (Table 13).

Table 13. Relationship between the factor “Arrogance tactics” and working as an employee or self-employed (female sample)

Occupation	Mean	Mean differences	Sig. Levene for variance equality	Sig (bilateral)
Employee	1.8045	-0.3576	0.000 > 0.05: No identical variances are assumed	0.007*
Self-employed	2.1622			

4.2.2. Male sample

After calculating the mean of the factor “arrogance tactics” and the corresponding analyses, a significant difference is obtained according to the couple’s cohabitation period. Cohabitation was recoded into three items: less than 5 years, between 5 and 15 years, and more than 15 years. When cohabitation was over 15 years, the mean is significantly higher for the factor “arrogance tactics”, when compared to cohabitation between 5 and 15 years (Table 14). Consequently, it appears that for long cohabitation periods (over 15 years) men more often use tactics like expressing opinions loudly, making the other think that he/she is doing a favor, getting angry and asking the other to give in, telling the other that he/she has no right to disagree on that issue or telling the other that one has more experience in that issue. Cohabitation seems to influence the type of tactics chosen by men. In this respect, some authors studying the Family Life Cycle have observed that men’s and women’s domination over the other spouse significantly varies in different stages, women gaining power and influence during the last stages of the cycle (Cosenza and Davis, 1981). Men tend to be tougher in the use of tactics, thus counteracting the increasing influence of their spouses, and this may be explained by the increase of the specialization role over time, which allows each spouse to better know the other’s attitudes and needs and, thus, act accordingly (Goodall, 2004).

Table 14. Relationship between the factor “Arrogance tactics” and the couple’s cohabitation time

Cohabitation (a)	Cohabitation (b)	Sig. Levene for variance equality	Mean differences (a-b)	Sig (bilateral)
5-15 years (1.7419)	Less than 5 years (1.9714)	0.018 < 0.05: No identical variances are assumed	-0.22955	0.090
	More than 15 years (2.0526)		-0.31075*	0.037

Note: In brackets, the factor’s mean.

By means of the LSD test, a relationship is obtained for level of studies. The factor “arrogance tactics” obtains a significantly higher mean for those with secondary studies compared to those with university education. A higher level of studies in men seems to reduce the use of these tactics, although no definitive conclusion can be obtained since no relationship was established for those with no studies or primary studies (Table 15).

Table 15. Relationship between the factor “Arrogance tactics” and respondents’ level of studies (male sample)

Studies (a)	Studies (b)	Sig. Levene for variance equality	Mean differences (a-b)	Sig (bilateral)
University (1.7918)	No studies or primary studies (1.8667)	0.220 < 0.05: No identical variances are assumed	-0.07483	0.877
	Secondary (1.9907)		-0.19883*	0.039

Note: In brackets, the factor’s mean. If variances are different, Tamhane’s, Dunnet’s C, Gemes-Howell’s and Dunnet’s T3 contrasts are applied. If they are < 0.05, there is a significant relationship at 5% level marked with an asterisk (*).

5. Conclusions

This paper has analyzed, first, who influences more (men or women) in a group of decisions and, second, whether men and women differ in their use of influence tactics when purchase conflicts arise. Its main contribution lies in providing data from a scarcely researched area for firms and academics. The study uses the data obtained from 300 couples that completed a questionnaire separately. They were asked about their degree of influence on 15 purchase decisions and their use of 12 influence tactics. The results indicate that family purchase decisions are made jointly by a large number of couples, while women tend to take the decisions related to food and cleaning and to their own clothes and complements. As in Davis and Rigaux (1974) and Martínez (1996), the role of women as purchasers of grocery and cleaning products is maintained. This result is coherent with the description of family structures made by Gutiérrez (2002), which finds an evolution towards an egalitarian model, but recognizes a traditional base.

Another interesting result is the different perception that men and women have of the purchase of some products, such as stereos, life insurance and other insurance. For women, these are joint decisions whereas, for men, they are autonomous decisions, closer to male control. As regards influence tactics, we can highlight that, only for women, do we obtain a group of tactics based on their considering themselves to be the weaker sex. This result may be due to the fact that women have traditionally assumed a subordinate role in families. The traditional idea of men as the head of the household might, in turn, explain why their influence tactics stem from a supposition of superiority. Nevertheless, we have also found some women who extend their role as grocery and household products purchaser, considering that they have enough authority to impose their criteria on other family purchase decisions and employ tactics that reflect this situation. When relating the resulting factors of the tactics with socio-demographic variables, some relevant results have been found. Some women tend to use inferiority tactics, some use superiority tactics and others simply use no tactics, which is the most common case when women have no studies or have low family incomes. They probably assume a large number of purchase decisions and they do not argue with their spouses. In the male sample, it is interesting that arrogance tactics are related to long cohabitation periods and a middle level of studies, but not to university education. Education as a resource for decision-making is likely to influence this type of tactics although, when the education level is higher, the resource is not used to impose viewpoints from arrogance.

Regarding the practical implications of our results, grocery and cleaning sector, clothes and complements business and insurance firms, should take into account the gender role's differences about purchase decision-making. The results obtained in terms of influence tactics will allow firms to adjust their communication and sale policies, adapting them to situations where conflict arises and knowing beforehand the type of tactics used by the couple depending on their socio-demographic characteristics

It is essential to indicate the limitations of the present study which, in turn, are the basis for future research lines. The survey method may be insufficient to study both the couple's decision-making process and the degree of influence of each spouse. Complementing this research with qualitative techniques and face-to-face surveys could improve results and the depth of the information obtained. It would also be necessary to include other purchase decisions, considering new products and services in the market like technology or services for the home. Finally, this study has not considered the role of children in the family decision-making process. This research line could provide essential information for firms, especially for decisions on products or services that families enjoy together, such as vacations or family leisure.

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