

**Family buying behavior during the COVID 19 health crisis
- A field study-****السلوك الشرائي للعائلة في ظل جائحة كوفيد 19 (كورونا) -دراسة ميدانية-****Bouklikha latifa¹**¹ university Abou Bekr Belkaid- Tlemcen (Algeria), latifa.bouklikha@univ-tlemcen.dz**Received:** 15/10/2022**Accepted:** 31/12/2022**Published:** 31/12/2022**Abstract:**

The objective of this research is to analyze the purchasing behavior of the Algerian consumer in the epidemic crisis since March 2020, and its impact on the purchasing decision, in addition to the economic, social, psychological and cultural factors affecting his behavior. The buying behavior of sample members was affected by the Corona crisis due to their fear of scarcity of resources and appetite for acquiring goods during quarantine.

This document essentially aims to build a theoretical framework regarding the changes made by consumers in their behavior. The study particularly focused on the behavior of the family members (parents, children) during the buying process.

Keywords: Consumer behaviour; Family; Covid-19; Change.

JEL Classification Codes: L12 ; L67 ; D19

ملخص:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل السلوك الشرائي للمستهلك الجزائري في ظل الأزمة الوبائية ومدى تأثيرها على القرار الشرائي، فبالإضافة إلى مختلف العوامل الاقتصادية، الاجتماعية، النفسية والثقافية المؤثرة على سلوكه برزت الأزمة الوبائية (كوفيد 19) كعامل مهم في التأثير على النشاط الاقتصادي وتوجهات المستهلكين منذ شهر مارس 2020. وتوصلت الدراسة إلى تأثير السلوك الشرائي للأسرة (اباء - الابناء) بتداعيات أزمة كورونا نتيجة خوفهم من ندرة الموارد والإقبال على اقتناء السلع أكثر من الأيام العادية خاصة أثناء فترة الحجر الصحي، دون إهمال أثر العوامل النفسية والاجتماعية ومحدودية الدخل على القرار الشرائي أثناء الأزمة.

كلمات مفتاحية: سلوك المستهلك، العائلة، جائحة كورونا، التغيير.

تصنيفات JEL: D19 ،L67 ،L12

INTRODUCTION:

Since March 2020, many people in Algeria and around the world as well have been confined to their homes for months, following the measures put in place by governments to curb the spread of Covid-19. This new ways of daily living and consuming has had a direct impact on everyone's purchasing behavior. It should be emphasized that some of these changes could well last even beyond confinement, and become lasting new consumption habits. Social psychology and environmental psychology theorists have specifically addressed the main sources of influence that motivate individuals to change their behaviors (Gudgion and Thomas, 1991).

It is well acknowledged that certain factors favor the act of purchase, while others slow it down or impede it. Indeed, the act of purchase should therefore depend on all these factors. According to (Bernard Dubois ,1994), there are three levels of factors that are likely to explain the purchasing behavior of a consumer; each level includes a number of factors that would influence the consumer behavior when faced with an act of purchase.

Furthermore, the family is generally viewed as one of the most influential agents of socialization. Indeed, the child can be confronted with the space of consumption within his family first. In addition, the child learns to become a potential consumer within the family.

It is generally acknowledged that the child is born unworldly and credulous, but quickly becomes a consumer. It should be noted that this prominent place given by marketing professionals to the child did not come out innocently because these people have been able to develop the necessary elements to create this new generation of “King” children.

It is widely accepted that children constitute an important audience that is targeted by marketers because these children possess their own purchasing power and have the ability to influence the purchasing decisions of their parents; they are the consumers of tomorrow. While still in primary school or in the first years of college, children, whether girls or boys, manage quite well to impose their tastes and desires.

How does the Corona pandemic affect the purchasing behavior of the Algerian family?

1- Parent behavior:

The Covid 19 pandemic generated great instability for several weeks, and may several months. The coronavirus disease (Covid19) has introduced more or less significant disruptions that have greatly influenced the consumer behavior. It has caused significant changes in the lives of consumers.

Consumers have shown radical changes in their purchasing behavior. Indeed, the behavior of consumers has significantly changed, evolved, or shifted from one situation to another. It should be noted that the change in behavior of an individual means the change in his way of acting and also in his way of living (Ajzen and Fishbein, 2011). It is useful to remember that when examining and assessing the changes in the behavior of individuals, one must first analyze the approach these individuals have adopted to modify their practices; he has also to examine the different steps consumers follow to achieve their objectives. In this case, it can be said that the individual moves from the current unwanted behavior to the desired behavior.

It is worth emphasizing that in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic and the imposed restrictions, a large number of individuals have changed their daily habits.

During the time of a health crisis, the purchasing behavior of all types of consumers may

undergo several dramatic changes that are determined by a set of fundamental factors. In this regard, (Perriman et al, 2010) considers that the most obvious and direct factor is the uncertainty of the future. Indeed, it has been revealed that in the time of Covid 19, many unexpected and unpredictable changes can make consumers feel insecure. In this case, the consumers become apprehensive and even wary of the nature of the upcoming events, which means that they turn much more cautious in their dealings with some specific expenses.

With regard to (Perriman et al,2010), they indicated that in times of health crisis, as is currently the case with the corona virus disease, consumers are forced to reassess their own beliefs and attitudes towards their purchases. Moreover, these individuals become more rational and cautious about the purchases they make. In this regard, (Pop D. and Rosca D, 2009), Pricewaterhouse (Coopers L.L.P. and Kantar Retail (2010), Leinwand P., Moeller L.H., and Shriram K.B. (2008), as well as Goodell and Martin (1992) all believe that changes in consumer behavior occur very quickly in times of crisis. They also claim that crises do not affect individuals in the same way since the effects can be direct, indirect, financial or psychological.

Beyond the expenses incurred, the key question that arises is whether this health crisis will cause lasting changes in people's consumption behaviors. Of course, confinement has led to countless upheavals in people's consumption habits and methods. Indeed, research by the Wall Street Journal showed *"a sharp drop in expenditures on hotels, restaurants, airlines, entertainment, car sales, and more"*. However, many storage behaviors were observed. To this end, Vicki Yeung, a professor at the University of Hong Kong, suggested that these storage behaviors correspond to a mechanism of *"informational conformity"*, which means that *"when people are in a situation of uncertainty and lack of information, they tend to follow the behavior of the group and blindly conform to it"*. These behaviors primarily concern food and hygiene products. Furthermore, still according to the Wall Street Journal, the impact of these *"crisis consumption"* behaviors depends on *"the duration of the crisis and the possible occurrence of new waves of contamination"*. In this context, Charley Ballard, professor of economics at the University of Michigan, explicitly indicated that *"the longer the period of confinement, the more profound the transformations in consumer psychology will be"*.

However, beyond these behaviors that are specific to the crisis, the majority of people agree to say that *"the pandemic should accelerate the changes in consumption practices that were already present before the appearance of Covid-19"*, as previously explained by (Julien Bouillé ,2020).

2- Children: a category to be defined

No one can categorically answer the question: *"What is a child?"*

In this case, one should rather present arguments that are likely to help better understand cognitive situations in children. Consequently, this would lead to consider studying the child based on a psychological approach.

One should first note that a child is a human being whose development takes place between birth and puberty. It is useful to remember that the etymology of this word is Latin, and for the Romans, the term *"infant"* means *"a human who does not speak"*.

Furthermore, according to Le Grand Larousse (2005), childhood is the period of human

life extending from birth to adolescence. However, infancy or early childhood is the period between late infant age (around two years old) and schooling (around six years old). According to (Piaget and Inhelder ,1996), childhood is a period during which an individual structures himself and acquires new capacities regarding information processing.

3- The perception of information by the child consumer

The perception and processing of information by the child are important concepts that must be well understood and monitored by marketers because making a mistake in understanding the information processing course of action will certainly lead the child to misunderstand the messages that are addressed to him. It is worth emphasizing that good information processing would greatly help children to develop a consistent consumer attitude and know-how that can assist them in telling the difference between two products.

It was revealed that the child uses the concepts given below in the information processing activity:

- *Egocentrism*. This is an important characteristic of childish thinking. It should be noted that until the age of 6 or 7, the child makes a partial difference between himself and his environment. In addition, for the child, the manifestations of this egocentrism represent a heavy handicap because they transform the perception of the stimuli reaching him into a global representation and a bad understanding of the essential elements.

- *Analogy*. The child does not feel the new factors or new pieces of information. However, he strives only to link these elements to the perception of things he already knows. Indeed, a child who is asked to reproduce a character or an object will certainly begin by first drawing what he knows before moving on to what he sees (Piaget, 1995).

- *Affectivity*. This human characteristic constitutes the energy factor of behaviors. According to (Piaget ,1963), there is no action that does not involve affective factors.

- *Emotion*. This characteristic leads the child to be totally involved in everything he is interested in and in everything he undertakes (Leif and Delay, 1965).

3-1- The consumer child

The increasing participation of children in the consumption world is the logical and direct consequence of the growing identification of the status of children as competent social actors who today possess an important growing economic activity (Mizen, Pole, Bolton, 2001; James and Prout, 1998). It should be noted that the child first starts out as a fully fledged consumer using his direct purchasing power as parents often allocate a certain amount of pocket money to their young children in order to teach them how to efficiently manage a budget.

3-2- The child as prescriber

Over the last few years, families have significantly evolved (single parents, blended families, etc.) and the social conditions of women (work, place in the household, etc.) have generated profound transformations within family relations, with a growing sharing of power within the family. This power sharing is based on dialogue and continuous consultation between family members. Nowadays, families seek advice from children more often than in the past because it is one way of avoiding conflicts. This is a new era where parents and children must constantly negotiate, consult, discuss, and respect each other. Moreover, the power of persuasion of the child, as well as his status within the family, has significantly progressed. His opinion counts more and more for his parents.

3- The child as future consumer

The child not only constitutes two major potential markets (consumer and prescriber), but he also represents a virtual market, i.e. the market of tomorrow. It is important to consider the child as a potential future market that must be satisfied now in order to make him a loyal customer. It should be emphasized that the image of a given brand is built from childhood. The child living in a world of consumption quickly forms an opinion on such and such a brand of product, and consequently, as a future adult, he will remain attracted by the brand. This child will certainly remain so even when he becomes an adult.

4- Parenting style and socialization of child consumption

Parenting styles provide a family socialization context in which parents orient some parenting practices toward their children and progressively achieve their parenting goals and values. It should be noted that children are socialized differently depending on the styles that characterize the parents.

A number of studies conducted in the past have succeeded in highlighting the different dimensions that ought to be considered when studying parenting styles. In this context, (Becker, 1964) suggested that the parenting behavior could be reflected in the three general dimensions which are warmth/hostility, restriction/permissiveness, and anxiety/detachment.

- *Notion of warmth/hostility.* Warm parents are generally tolerant and very concerned about what affects their child. They will gladly let him express himself, try to understand him, give all kinds of explanations to his questions, and use very little physical punishment, and no harsh discipline.
- *Notion of Restriction/Permissiveness.* Restrictive parents expect their child to behave in an exemplary manner. They want him to be clean, take good care of the family's belongings, tidy his room and his belongings, and above all, obey them.
- *Notion of Anxiety/ Detachment.* Anxious parents exhibit an overprotective behavior with their child. They show a rather emotional conduct in their relationship with the young child, as they care a lot for his well-being.

The topic of parenting styles was the subject of a research study that was carried out by Carlson and Grossbart in 1988, under the original title: *Parental style and consumer socialization of children*. These two researchers attempted in fact to establish the relationship between parenting style and the child's socialization as a consumer.

5- Identifying parenting styles

The parental styles, which have been identified using a typology, are 5 in number. These are primarily: *authoritarian parenting, permissive parenting, rigid controlling parenting, authoritative parenting, and neglectful (or uninvolved) parenting.*

- *Authoritarian parenting:* Parents show the tendency of relative hostility, restriction, but also anxiety towards their child.
- *Permissive parenting:* Parents are not at all restrictive and the family atmosphere is relatively warm.
- *Rigid controlling parenting:* Parents exercise some restrictions equivalent to those of authoritarian parenting. However, they do not show any anxiety.
- *Authoritative parenting:* Parents adopt an authoritative style and show relative restraint.

However, they try at the same time to create a warm and calm family atmosphere.

- *Neglectful (or uninvolved) parenting*: Parents neglect their child; there is no restriction, anxiety, or warmth either.

6- The relationship between parenting styles and child consumption patterns

It is worth emphasizing that authoritative parents are more interested in their child's consumption patterns compared to authoritarian and neglectful parents. They are more implicated in consumer communication and are not positive towards advertising. This category represents the most active parents in the socialization of the child as a consumer.

Regarding the authoritative parents, they are more concerned about their child's exposure to the world and want to guide him in his development.

However, neglectful parents generally acknowledge the absence of such facts, while authoritarians shun intimacy, discourage communication, and do not do enough to teach their offspring the caution to exercise in the face of influences from the outside world.

It must also be recognized that the major concern of authoritative parents mainly concerns their influence on the development of their child, which makes it understandable that they have more consumer goals than rigid controlling parenting. As for the permissive parents, they expose their child to the world with minimal interference; they are less capable than authoritarians in guiding and counseling their child.

With respect to the authoritative parents, they restrict consumption and pay particular attention to their child's exposure to the media and give their opinion on advertising, which permissive parents do not despite the fact that these two parent categories (authoritative and permissive parents) allow for a similar level of autonomy and interaction.

Furthermore, compared to authoritarians, permissive parents have multiple goals in the socialization of consumption; they communicate more on the subject of consumption and are naturally less restrictive. Permissive parents do in fact express their intention to serve the desires of their children, which means that they try to promote the learning of consumption through communication and not through controls or interventions. Therefore, one may say that permissive parents interact more with their child and have more consumption goals than neglectful parents. As for neglectful parents, they show less caution towards the media than rigid controlling parents. This is certainly due to their weaker restrictive dispositions and also to the lack of interest in socializing their child.

With regard to authoritarian parents, due to their significant anxiety, they are more restrictive on consumption in comparison with rigid controlling parents. However, this last category of parents has more consumption purposes.

7- Circuits of socialization within the family

The cascade vision regarding the influence of the family on the socialization of the child with respect to consumption remains firmly anchored in marketing. Various studies, which have recently been carried out, try to nuance this pattern of analysis regarding the influences between generations, while noting at the same time the increasingly frequent appearance of reverse socialization phenomena (Polachek, 1989).

8- The classic socialization circuit

It is noteworthy that the process of consumer socialization begins when the young child accompanies his parents to stores and is therefore exposed to marketing stimuli for the first time. It is therefore useful to expose the five stages that are involved in the consumer buying

process. First, during his first two years, the child begins to express his desires for objects. Next, when he starts walking, he learns to choose the products on the shelves for himself. Then, around the age of 5, his is able to make purchases with the assistance of his parents or grandparents, and by the age of 8, he can purchase things he likes without any assistance, and he finally becomes an accomplished consumer.

9- The reverse socialization circuit

Spiro ,(1983) indicated that the rhythm of the evolution of our society sometimes seems to be better understood and assimilated by children and adolescents. It should be known that one of the most remarkable manifestations of our society is the dynamism involved in introducing new products and services into the market. Parents, who are generally concerned with staying connected with new social and technological trends, can view their children as effective agents capable of bringing these developments closer together. As a result, the socialization relationship is sometimes reversed, and hence children and adolescents socialize their parents as much as they learn from them. Parents then use that contact and relationship with their children for the purpose of instilling in them the skills they need to assume their role as efficient consumers in this fast-paced and ever-changing market. For example, the expertise of teenagers in emerging technologies can be an asset and make these teenagers valuable advisers when buying microcomputers. Moreover, their sensitivity to novelty can facilitate the introduction of new products or new experiences in the field of cosmetics, hygiene and ecology as well.

10- Empirical study:

The present study aims to analyze the purchasing behavior of Family consumers during the COVID-19 crisis. This work was particularly interested in The socialization factors of parents.

The review of literature made it possible to put forward the following hypotheses:

H1: socialization *have an effect on the* Family’s buying behavior

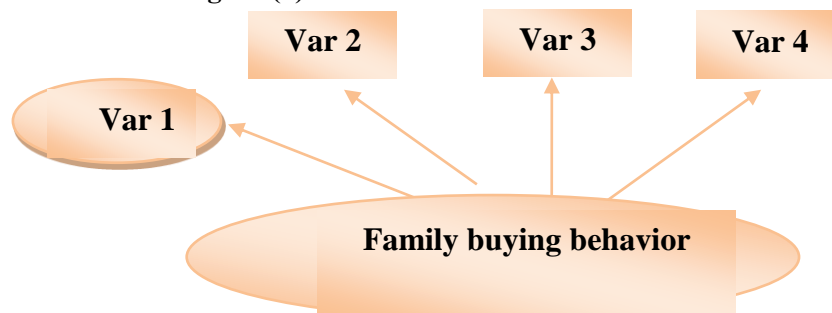
H1.1: Warm parents are generally tolerant and very concerned about what affects their child

H1.2: Restrictive parents expect their child to behave in an exemplary manner

H1.3: Anxious parents exhibit an overprotective behavior with their child

All of these hypotheses allowed developing the following research model.

Figure (1): Presentation of the research model



Source: Model developed by author

The survey was carried out on a convenience sample made up of 290 Algerian respondents of various profiles working in a hypermarket.

An exploratory analysis was performed on 4 variables

Var1: socialization

Var2: *warmth/hostility*

Var3: *Restriction/Permissiveness*

Var4: *Anxiety/ Detachment*

The results of the principal component analysis (PCA) of consumer behavior indicated that the behavioral changes induced by the COVID-19 pandemic may push consumers to adopt new consumption patterns. It should be noted that the need for millions of people to be self-quarantined, due to the epidemic, has led to drastic changes in the way a large number of individuals have behaved over the past several weeks. Being locked away at home for such a long time has left an unforgettable change.

The covariances between items were investigated in order to calculate the Cronbach's alpha coefficient. In this regard, D. Laveault (1993) points out that "*The higher the covariances between all the items taken in pairs, the more these items are homogeneous and measure the same thing*". The results obtained are quite interesting. It should be recalled that Cronbach's coefficient guarantees the reliability (internal consistency) of a test, but is not sufficient to validate a model. Therefore, it was considered more judicious to calculate the KMO which represents a statistically acceptable factorial solution. It also illustrates the relationships existing between the different variables. Note that the Bartlett's sphericity test is almost always significant.

Table 1: The following table summarizes all the reliability indices.

Variables	K M O	Cronbach α			Bartlett's sphericity
			Khi square	Sig	
Var1	0.706	0.779	785,154	0.000	0.000
Var2	0.815	0.881	2746,595		
Var3	0.844	0.720	1168,93		
Var4	0.747	0.633	615,994		

Source: Prepared by the author using the software Statistica (N = 290).

Table 2: Absolute adjustment indices

Absolute adjustment indices	
Indices	Values
Chi ₂	1486.88
Degree of freedom (DF)	372
Level p	0000
<i>Standardized root mean square residual</i>	0.140
(GFI). Joreskog	0,562
(AGFI). Joreskog	0.512
Population Noncentrality Parameter	7.680
McDonald's Noncentrality Index	0.020
Root mean square error of approximation (<i>RMSEA- Steiger & Lind</i>)	0.165
Population Gamma index	0.735
Adjusted Population Gamma Index	0.676
<i>Incremental fit indices</i>	
Bentler-Bonett Normed Fit Index	0.752
Bentler-Bonett Non-Normed Fit Index	0.785
Bentler Comparative Fit Index	0.857
Bollen's Rho	0.785
Bollen's Delta	0.856
<i>Parsimony-based Fit Indices</i>	
James-Mulaik-Brett Parsimony-based Fit Index	0.645
Ch ₂ /DF	5.673

Source: Prepared by the author using the software Statistica (N = 290).

The adjustment indices are generally good. In addition, the calculated values and those observed are practically close to each other. This confirms that the constructs studied using the measurement and structural models gave satisfactory results.

Table 3: Equations of the structural model

Manifest variables	Equation $V_{con_i} = \lambda_i \cdot VCCON + E_i$	T >1.96	P < 0.05
*Var1= β_1 FBH+E ₁ +	*Var1= 0.701 FBH +0.081	2 3.236	0. 000
*Var2= β_2 FBH + E ₂	*Var2=0.801 FBH + 0.165	4 3.770	
*Var3= β_3 FBH + E ₃	*Var3=0.878 FBH +0.067	5 2.571	
*Var4= β_4 FBH + E ₄	*Var4=0.678 FBH + 0.165	5 0.663	
FBH= Family buying behavior			

Source: Prepared by the author using the software Statistica (N = 290)

The influence of parents on the socialization of consumers

This influence can be both direct and indirect:

1- First of all, the family has an instrumental role in the socialization of the child in terms of consumption. In this regard, Riesman and Borough (1955) indicated that “*the first function of the family will therefore be to teach children the basic rational aspects*”. Parents try to instill their own consumer values in their children, for example, by teaching them to develop a better perception of the value of money. They also seek to effectively transmit rational and immediate know-how such as the effective management of a purchasing budget and the good understanding of prices. Parents also take care to determine in a rational manner the intensity of their children's exposure to various sources of information, such as television and internet. They also teach them to be wary of those around them, like friends and classmates.

2- Parents can transmit certain materialistic attitudes. They influence the motivations or preferences of their children. For example, parents can help their children choose the most appropriate clothes for some specific situations and events; they can recommend them the stores to visit and those to avoid. It should also be noted that adults are generally viewed as important models for observational learning. Children learn a lot about consumerism by observing their parents' purchasing behavior; they try to imitate them.

Nowadays, marketing professionals encourage observational learning by presenting products intended for adults in children's versions. It is important to note that the intergenerational transmission of product preferences makes it possible to develop a certain level of loyalty to a given brand.

A number of studies conducted in the past have succeeded in highlighting the different dimensions that ought to be considered when studying parenting styles. In this context, Becker (1964) suggested that the parenting behavior could be reflected in the three general dimensions which are warmth/hostility, restriction/permissiveness, and anxiety/detachment.

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Conclusion

For the purpose of determining the reasons and incentives that urge the consumer to change his purchasing behavior, it is highly important to understand him first. Over the last years, advertisers and marketers have realized that children represent a huge and very attractive market because they have showed increasing influence on the daily purchases of their families. However, as this social category is an evolving target (a child evolves over time, psychologically, intellectually and emotionally), finding appropriate means of communication and promotion remains a very delicate process. The child is an integral part of our consumer society; he constitutes the center of the contemporary family. Today, the child should be seen as an economic agent of significant importance as a consumer and even as a prescriber of purchase.

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