

## Religion and Family Structure: Two Factors Affecting on Consumer Decision Making Styles in Iran

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### ABSTRACT:

**Purpose-** The aim of this essay is to attempt to explain the impact of religion and family structure on consumer decision-making style within a Muslim country. This paper wants to demonstrate how and why husbands/wives with Eastern culture and Islamic norms use different decision-making styles.

**Design/methodology/approach-** Literature reviews on consumer decision-making, religion and family structure served to develop conceptual arguments.

**Findings-** Family structure (which is male-dominate or traditional, in-transition, modern or joint decision-making and/in post modern families) and religion, which are expressed as sources leading the behaviors of individuals in all their life periods and dimensions, should be included as determinant dimensions in consumer decision making styles.

**Research limitations/implications-** This paper doesn't include children as an effective family member and also considers one religion (Islam), therefore, arguments presented in this paper will be limited.

**Originality/value-** Demonstration of CDMS and family structure could be useful for both researchers and marketing practitioners. Moreover, these items determine the decision-making process of the consumer.

**Keywords:** *Consumer decision making style, Family structure, Consumer behavior, Religion, Muslim*

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### INTRODUCTION

Culture and subculture are essential issues in any consumer behavior research. Thompson and Tambyah (1998), Shaw and Clarke (1998) and Schouten and McAlexander (1995) identified culture as the main external factor that shapes consumption behavior of individuals. This culture will even affect the motives and choices while consuming or shopping (Chang, 2005). The most important element of culture is religion. In the lifecycle of individuals, religion intervenes even in shopping and economic decisions. Individuals have been known to react quite differently to the same situations according to their religion. Therefore, to understand the

behavior of people, knowledge of the influence of religion is necessary (Kamaruddin and Kamaruddin, 2009). Islam is a religion that guides Muslims in every aspect of life and not just specific acts of worship.

Moreover, Arrow (1951, p. 134) draws an analogy between the theory of the firm and consumer behavior: "The unit of the theory of production is not really the individual but the firm, which is an operating organization of individuals. Similarly, the unit of the theory of consumption is really the household, not the individual consumer" (Davis, 1976). So, the family is regarded as an important decision-

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making unit, due to their everyday consumption of products and services in large quantities. Therefore, firms must be conscious about family purchasing behavior in order to exert appropriate marketing strategies.

It assumes that decision-making styles can be determined by identifying general orientations towards shopping and buying. This is useful for marketers since it provides a quantitative instrument for classifying heterogeneous decision-making styles among consumers.

Despite the fact that religion is an inseparable and influential element of culture, impacting family norms and structures at the individual behavior must be regarded as an important element that can shape decision making styles.

This study aims to develop the current limited body of literature by investigating the effect of religion and family structure on one specific aspect of consumer behavior, that is, consumer decision making styles.

#### **Decision Making Style (DMS)**

Consumers are motivated and take action through their goals. In order to reach these goals, they undergo intellectual, emotional and behavioral processes that create their style of shopping.

A consumer decision-making style is defined as “a patterned, mental, cognitive orientation towards shopping and purchasing, which constantly dominates the consumer’s choices, in essence we are speaking of a relatively enduring consumer personality, analogous to the more general concept of human personality in psychology” (Sproles, 1985).

The examination of the decision-making construct can be categorized into three major approaches: the psychographic/lifestyle approach (e.g., Wells, 1974), the consumer typology approach (e.g., Shim and Kotsiopulos, 1993; Ownbey and Horridge, 1997; Kenson, 1999) and the consumer characteristics approach (Sproles and Sproles, 1990; Walsh et al. 2001). Among these three approaches, the consumer characteristics approach has been widely acknowledged by consumer researchers as the most explanatory and powerful construct because it focuses on a cognitive and affective aspect of consumer behavior. This approach deals with consumers’ general predisposition

towards the act of shopping and describes the mental orientation of consumers in their decision-making process (Lysonski et al., 1996).

Based on a review of previous literature, Sproles (1985) has identified 50 items related to consumers’ cognitive and affective orientation towards shopping activities. Employing a factor analysis technique, Sproles founds that six out of nine traits were confirmed to be present. Sproles and Kendall (1986) have refined this inventory and accordingly developed a more parsimonious scale consisting of 40 items. The Consumer Style Inventory (CSI) that they have developed consists of eight mental consumer style characteristics:

1: *Perfectionistic, high-quality conscious consumer* – a characteristic measuring the degree to which a consumer searches carefully and systematically for the best quality in products

2: *Brand conscious, “price equals quality” consumer* – measuring a consumer’s orientation to buying the more expensive, well-known brands

3: *Novelty-fashion conscious consumer* – a characteristic identifying consumers who appear to like new and innovative products and gain excitement from seeking out new things

4: *Recreational, hedonistic consumer* – a characteristic measuring the degree to which a consumer finds shopping a pleasant activity and shops just for the fun of it

5: *Price conscious, “value-for-money” consumer* – a characteristic identifying those with particularly high consciousness of sale prices and lower prices in general

6: *Impulsive, careless consumer* – identifying those who tend to buy on the spur of the moment and appear unconcerned how much they spend or getting “best buys”

7: *Confused by overchoice consumer* – a characteristic identifying those consumers who perceive too many brands and stores from which to choose, experiencing information overload in the market

8: *Habitual, brand-loyal consumer* – a characteristic indicating consumers who have favorite brands and stores, who have formed habits in choosing these repetitively.

Consumers' decision making styles were examined in terms of different country, culture, gender and product. In the studies focusing on countries, due to cultural differences, consumer styles did not show the same results in every country. While some of them displayed similar features, others showed different characteristics.

These are a series of investigations which were conducted and aimed at testing the generalisability of the CSI within a single country (e.g. Korea: Hafstrom, Chae and Chung, 1992; China: Fan and Xiao, 1998; Hiu, Siu, Wang and Chang, 2001; New Zealand: Durvasula, Lysonski and Andrews, 1993; India: Canabal, 2001; Mishra, 2010; Iran: Hanzaee and Aghasibeig, 2008; Germany: Walsh, Mitchell and Thurau, 2001; Walsh and Vincent, 2001; UK: Mitchell and Bates, 1998; South Africa: Radder, Li and Pietersen, 2006; Turkey: Gonen and Osmete, 2006; Kavas and Yesilada, 2007; Malaysia: Wan Omar et al. 2009; Mokhlis, 2009; Mokhlis and Salleh, 2009, Taiwan: Hou and Lin, 2006; Brazil: Dos Santos and Fernandes, 2006) as well as across different countries (e.g. USA, New Zealand, India and Greece: Lysonski, Durvasula and Zotos, 1996; China and Macau: Ng, 2005; USA and Korea: Wickliffe, 2004).

Few other studies have attempted to thoroughly explore the antecedents and consequences of consumer decision-making styles. McDonald (1993) studied the roles of shopper decision-making styles in predicting consumer catalogue loyalty. Shim and Koh (1997) explored the effects of socialization agents and social-structural variables on adolescent consumer decision-making styles. Salleh (2000) investigated analyzed consumers' decision-making style dimensions across different product classes. Wesley, LeHew and Woodside (2006) examined how consumers' decision-making styles relate to their shopping mall behavior and their global evaluations of shopping malls. Cowart and Goldsmith (2007) investigated the influence of consumer decision-making styles on online apparel consumption by college students. More recently, Kwan, Yeung and Au (2008) explored the effects of lifestyle characteristics on consumer decision-making

styles of young fashion consumers in China. Bakewell and Mitchell (2003) examined the decision-making styles of adult female Generation Y consumers in the UK.

Mitchell and Walsh (2004) compared the decision-making styles of male and female shoppers in Germany. A recent study conducted by Hanzaee and Aghasibeig (2008) in an Iranian setting also indicated that Generation Y male and female consumers differ in their decision-making styles.

Results of studies on decision making styles in various countries can be found in table 1.

Despite all of these researches, there are many limitations and shortcomings related to studies on decision making styles which some researchers have pointed out. Some of them are listed below:

1- One of the most obvious shortcomings of Sproles and Kendall's CSI can be found in the formulation of the items.

2- With regard to its theoretical basis and validity, it has to be remarked that the choice of decision relevant purchase characteristics appears to be a rather arbitrary selection of relevant concepts mentioned in the marketing literature.

3- The lack of an adequate theoretical framework can for example be demonstrated by taking a closer look at three of the eight sub-constructs of the CSI.

a: Firstly, the CDMS 'Novelty Fashion Consciousness' seems to represent a style incorporating two factors: innovativeness and fashion consciousness (Moreover, two of the CSI constructs do not seem to frame direct purchase-relevant dimensions as claimed by the authors).

b: The fashion consciousness cannot be regarded as product neutral since the items show a factual relationship to the subject of fashion and clothing.

C: Confusion by Over choice' related to principles of product selection, not to a state of information overload and 'Recreational Hedonism' not represents a concrete decision-making style, but instead covers general shopping attitudes of consumers.

**Table 1: Results of Consumer Decision Making Style Studies in Various Countries**

<b>Perfectionism</b>	Brand conscious	Perfectionism	Brand conscious	Perfectionism	Brand conscious	Brand conscious	Recreational*	Fashion conscious	Quality consciousness	Novelty/Brand consciousness	Perfectionism, High Quality Conscious
<b>Brand conscious</b>	Perfectionism	Brand conscious	Time Conscious	Price-Value Conscious	Brand conscious	High-Quality Conscious/Perfectionist	Perfectionism	Perfectionistic, high quality conscious	Brand consciousness	Perfectionism	Dissatisfied Shopping Consciousness
<b>Novelty/fashion consciousness</b>	Recreational - Shopping consciousness	Novelty/fashion consciousness	Quality Conscious	Brand conscious	Novelty/fashion consciousness	Confused by Overchoice	Brand consciousness	Recreational, hedonistic	Fashion consciousness	Confused by overchoice	Impulsiveness
<b>Recreational-Shopping consciousness</b>	Confused by overchoice	Recreational - Shopping consciousness	Price Conscious	Novelty/fashion consciousness	Recreational-Hedonistic	Impulsive/Brand Indifferent	Novelty/fashion consciousness	Confused and carelessness by overchoice	Confused by overchoice	Recreation - Hedonistic	Price-Value Conscious
<b>Price-Value Conscious</b>	Time-energy conserving*	Impulsiveness	Information Utilization	Confused by overchoice	Price Conscious	Time Conscious*	Confused by overchoice	Time-energy conserving	Satisfying*	Impulsiveness	Confused by overchoice
<b>Impulsiveness</b>	Impulsiveness	Confused by overchoice		Time-energy conserving	Confused by overchoice	Recreational Shopper	Price/value consciousness*	Brand conscious	Value seeking	Variety Seeking	Brand conscious
<b>Confused by overchoice</b>	Habitual, brand loyal*	Habitual, brand loyal		Recreational-Hedonistic	Habitual, brand loyal	Price/Value-Conscious*	Impulsive/careless	Careless*	Brand loyal	Habitual, brand loyal	fashion consciousness
<b>Habitual, brand loyal</b>	Price-Value Conscious*	Impulsiveness		Impulsiveness		Dissatisfied/Careless*	Time restricted	Habitual, brand loyal	Time-energy conserving*	Financial, Time-energy conserving*	Recreational
				Brand Loyal		Economy seeking	Time restricted	Habitual, brand loyal	Time-energy conserving*		Brand Loyal
				Store Loyal			Confused time restricted	Low price seeking			Store Loyal
							Store loyal/low price seeking				
							Store promiscuous				

Factors with Cronbach alpha levels below 0.4\*

4- Furthermore, the concept implies that decision-making styles can be utilized with regard to all kinds of products and product categories. Yet numerous studies provide evidence that purchase-relevant decision-making traits employed by consumers depend on the product category they intend to purchase and can, therefore, vary considerably.

5- Finally, consumer behavior in this context is strongly connected to the intensity of product involvement felt by the individual consumer.

There are many effective psychological and social variables that guide and affect decision making style. One of these variables is culture that is the basis of individual's consumption behavior. Culture has many elements and the most important of them is religion. Why and how a person purchases is related to his/her religion. This variable is regarded as the power directing a person throughout his or her life.

Another variable that affects decision making style is family and its structure because family is the most important social group that individuals contribute to and are affected by. People learn values and norms from the family in which they live. However, since everybody has a different psychological world and social environment, then the formation of behaviors will also differ. For consumer behavior, family and religion have important roles.

This study aims to contribute to the current stock of understanding of the mentioned items.

#### **Family and Its Structure**

According to Cox (1975), the individual members who make up the family unit exercise an influence over each other's behavior and, therefore, over the activities which form part of consumer decision-making.

The differences as to who makes the decisions within the family can be determined by different variables, which will show how the power relations within the family unit are produced (MartóÁnez and polo, 1999). Theory suggests that a person's power to make decisions stems from the ability to provide for the fulfilment of his/her marriage partner's needs (Davis, 1976, Blood and Wolfe, 1960). Therefore, the more a husband fulfils his duty to provide for the family, the more the wife will allow the

husband to define the norms of decision making (Scanzoni, 1972). This would suggest that if the wife contributes significantly to the household income, then the wife's influence would be greater than in households where she does not contribute to the household income. This does not necessarily mean wives who contribute an income are dominant in their households; rather, it is more likely that there is more equality in the amount of influence exerted in the decision-making process (Green and Cunningham, 1970; MartóÁnez and Polo, 1999).

Today some social and cultural changes are occurring in the perception of the role of women in society. These changes, including education, growing number of double-income families, and the advent of working women, have resulted in challenges to earlier beliefs about the role structures and the purchase influence of family members (Commuri and Gentry, 2000). The prevalence of women working outside the home is not only because of the necessity of supplementing the family's income, but also because of changes in cultural norms and societal standards. These changes in sex role attitudes and behaviors can be explained using a sex-role paradigm (Qualls, 1987). A non-traditional sex-role orientation suggests that both family members will make decisions jointly, that is, a more democratic influence structure, while a traditional sex-role orientation; a more dictatorial role by the husband and decisions that are more autocratic (Lee and Beatty, 2002).

Numbers of studies on Iranian families and their structures have been reported in sociological literatures such as Shekarbeugi and Saroukhani, 2009.

Shekarbeugi and Saroukhani (2009) devoted considerable attention to family typology in Iran. They found that traditional families in Iran try to keep traditional values beside the acceptance of modernism. In this research they categorised Iranian families into 4 divisions: traditional, in-transition, modern and post modern families (table 2).

Table 2: Typologies of Iranian families (Shekarbeugi and Saroukhani, 2009)

Typological Families	Percentage
Traditional	46.2%
Run-away	30.4%
Modern	10.5%
Post-Modern	12.9%

In traditional families, women accept traditional roles that emphasize obedience, sacrifice, devotion to family, and respect seniors. Traditionally, the husband has been considered as an only sole responsible for family decisions. In contrast, social and economic independence represent modern orientations.

According to Ferber (1973), the responsibility of the husband in a traditional relationship is earning the money whereas the wife is responsible for the housekeeping and childcare. Davis (1976) claimed the existence of large authority differences in traditional relationships. Modern relationships are characterized by a high degree of joint participation in carrying out tasks and taking decisions. Hagenaaers and Wunderink-Van Veen (1990) stated that husband and wife have equal influence in a modern relationship.

Shekarbeugi and Saroukhani (2009) realized that despite the modern life styles of many Iranians, they keep their traditional norms and values as well. They construct modernism upon traditional norms. Indeed they localize modernism based on their values.

So we can conclude that there isn't a specific description of modernity for the whole world. Iran is a modified patriarchal society, in which traditional family norms are being challenged by egalitarian norms as a result of modernization and economic development. Husbands and wives may have different opinions in an important family purchase decision. Each one may have his/her way to influence or adapt to the other (Shekarbeugi and Saroukhani, 2009; Hanzaaee and Lotfizadeh, 2011).

### Religion

Religion is an important cultural factor to study because it is one of the most universal and influential social institutions that have

significant influence on people's attitudes, values and behaviors at both the individual and societal levels (Mokhlis, 2009).

It is widely acknowledged that religion has a strong influence on people's belief, personal identity and value systems, all of which have consumption implications. Religion provides people with a structured set of beliefs and values that serve as a code of conduct or guide to behavior (Delener, 1994).

There is a fact that religion is highly personal in nature and therefore, its impacts on consumer behavior depend on individuals' level of religious commitment or the importance placed on religion in their life.

Mokhlis (2009) gathered and categorized a number of definitions of religion which you can find a few of below:

"A belief in God accompanied by a commitment to follow principles believed to be set forth by God".

(McDaniel and Burnett, 1990)

"A cultural subsystem that refers to a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to a sacred ultimate reality or deity".

(Arnould, Price and Zikhan, 2004)

"A system of beliefs about the supernatural and spiritual world, about God, and about how humans, as God's creatures, are supposed to behave on this earth".

(Sheth and Mittal, 2004)

Hirschman (1983) ventured three possible reasons to explain why religion per se has not been adequately examined in the consumer behavior literature:

1. The first reason for the slow development of literature in this area is the possibility that consumer researchers are unaware of the possible links between religion and consumption patterns.

2. The second reason is a perceived prejudice against "religion" within the research community; once being a "taboo" subject and too sensitive to be submitted for investigation (i.e. the potential for inadvertent offence and the legal protection afforded freedom of religion).

3. Finally, she claims that religion is everywhere in our life and therefore it may have been overlooked by researchers as an obvious variable for investigation in the field.

Religious beliefs influence the consumer choice of distributing income for alternative usages. Moreover, religion affects seasonal changes in consumer demand because of the religious occasions and celebrations. Lastly, religion and cultural values very often create demand for certain goods and services which may be called "religious goods". Guidance provided by Islam indicate how and what to trade, how to interact with others and what to consume. Eating and drinking are strictly followed according to the Islamic rules in the everyday life of the Muslim society. But these norms however vary between different religious faiths and degrees of observation. It is expected that Muslims follow every guidance of Allah and thus, this affects Muslim consumers in addition to their gender, occupation, education, and salary. Kotler (2000) mentioned the influence of religion in buying decisions but did not emphasize the degree to which religion could influence the decision of buying as it is a small portion of culture.

Religious traditions may directly influence various aspects of the choice behavior of its followers by the rules and taboos it imposes. Obvious examples are the importance of fasting and feasting for patterns of food purchases, beliefs in taboos against certain clothing styles and activities of women, practices of personal hygiene related to purchases of toiletries and cosmetics and influences on housing and entertainment patterns. Less obvious is the influence of religion on the consumption of goods and services that are not directly restricted by religious laws (Mokhlis, 2010).

Muslims constitute 20% of the world population and actively participate in the global economy as investors, suppliers, manufacturers, bankers, and traders. Muslim consumers represent one of the fastest growing consumer segments.

The World Bank Group (2006) identified Iran as the country with the world's second-largest population after Egypt. The 18<sup>th</sup> largest country in the world in terms of area at 1,648,195 km<sup>2</sup>, Iran has a population of around 75 million and is the 7<sup>th</sup> Muslim country in the world that 99.4% of its population are Muslims. Hence, the definition of an "Iranian" is a purely cultural one, namely one who is a Muslim, habitually speaks the Persian language, and follows Iranian customs.

Shekarbeugi and Saroukhani (2009) investigated the attitude to religion in Iran. They found that religious beliefs in Iranian families have been influenced by the degree of modernism. Results showed that religious beliefs in Iran have received least impact by modernism and this means families have kept their religious beliefs in every circumstance. In other words, though people accept and enter modernism in their life style, for resolving some problems, they seek refuge in religion. So it can be analyzed that Iranians develop a modern attitude and insert it to their lives besides the maintenance of their religious beliefs.

In general, findings from these studies provide evidence that religious values may substantially affect a variety of Iranians' personalities and behavior. Yet, despite the empirical links established between Iranian cultural values, religious beliefs and their psychological and behavioral aspects, studies on the understanding of the relation between Iranian family structures and their decision making styles are rare.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

Research for this paper was directed via new essays, surveys and published reports by governmental statistics and the Statistical Center of Iran (2007). The analysis conducted in this article used data from the mentioned gathered information to reveal how religion, as an external environmental element, shapes consumer decision making styles and how family structure can penetrate, reinforce and alter their shopping styles.

Thus, the methodology used in this article is a review of literature and gathering of resources related to research variables.

Also, this conceptual paper critically

examines decision making styles` instruments (by Sproles and Kendall, 1986) and analyzes the factors affecting them.

**Conceptual Model**

Consumer shopping styles were measured, studied, and analyzed for the last five decades using different dimensions, theoretical frameworks and approaches. Consumer behavior, like any other behavior, is affected by cultural, social, personal and psychological characteristics. Cultural factors are assumed to be dominant in influencing the intentions and behaviors of consumers. It is claimed in some of the literature that religion is the key cultural element that determines behavior and decisions to buy (Delener, 1994; Ezzo and Dibb, 2004; Cornwell et al., 2005).

It is suggested that religiosity should be included as a possible determinant of shopping orientations in consumer behavior models. Social beings` behaviors and attitudes are directly influenced by at least religion-rooted cultural aspects of their living environments, and so religion impact consumer behavior.

The results reveal that the religion of Islam has great influence on the purchase decision of Muslim consumers by impacting time, place, amount, and the quality of shopping. This influence has formed a new decision making model for Muslim consumers.

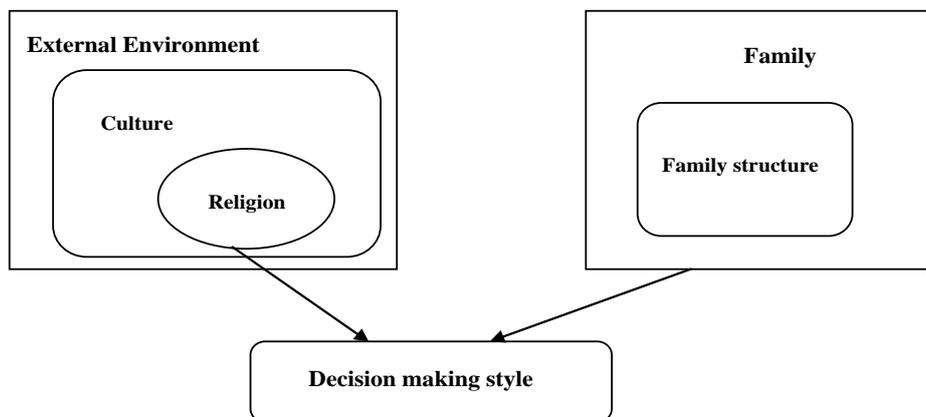
In Islam, religion is not a culture but a way of life that could form a set of behavior that is termed as “Islamic” (Alam et al., 2011). So,

religious factors can indirectly affect consumer decision-making styles via the influence of culture and norms.

Studies of husband-wife influences have been carried out with the aim of (1) selecting the proper respondent in consumer research surveys, (2) determining the content of advertising messages, (3) selecting advertising media, (4) guiding product designers to include features that appeal to those who are most influential in the purchase decision, and (5) assisting in the location choice of retail outlets. Although these reasons are legitimate, they represent only a small part of the justification for studying family-member involvement in consumer decisions (Davis, 1976).

The authors argue that family structure is a key factor in determining the decision making style used by Iranian spouses because in a traditional family, the husband decides for most important things and for the least important ones, the wife is responsible. Whereas in a modern family men and women collaborate for deciding. In the former case, women have limited authority and budget, so these factors can affect their decision making style. But in the latter case, women and men have equal authority and both participate in major issues. So, family structure, position of men and women in family and their power of deciding can impact their decision making style.

Based on the above literature, the conceptual model is proposed which is comprised of the mentioned elements (figure1).



**Figure1: Relations of D-M-S, family structure and religion**

## **CONCLUSION**

The results provide useful insights into family members' decision making styles and offer several important implications in marketing and future research.

Studies indicate that family purchase decision-making is a culture-specific phenomenon. Hence, the spousal roles, attitudes, and behaviors in different countries and regions should be carefully examined. The challenging task which requires enormous effort is to identify the unique family purchase decision-making processes inherent in different religion markets.

Evidenced by studies, it is advisable for international marketers to develop specific marketing strategies (e.g. product, price, promotion, and distribution) that best match buyer behavior and family decision-making situations (i.e. husband-dominated; wife-dominated; joint; autonomic) which are likely to be encountered in markets overseas.

Thus examining decision-making styles within the family can be very crucial for researchers in the Muslim market. Moreover, Muslims have specific rules and ceremonies, such as praying in mosques, eating only Halal food and wearing specific dresses. These must be included in the criteria for this segment. Prior researches have indicated that modernism can't inhibit religion beliefs. Overall, despite the numerous problems families faced, they exerted religious ceremonies and held on to their beliefs in Iran.

From a managerial perspective, international marketers should pay attention to who may have greater power in decision making styles in families. This can help them design better products or marketing plans in order to communicate with potential customers more effectively. Product designs, advertising, promotions, and even salespeople should be more attentive to the key family member.

Also, communication efforts must be tailored to suit the preferences of target markets. For instance, marketers may consider sending advertising messages to married women, instead of couples or men (husbands) alone; transferring messages in promotional campaigns may include spokeswomen, instead of using only spokesmen, to attract the more affluent and educated married female consumers (Xia et al., 2006).

Moreover, some other social environmental variables should exert influences on family purchase decisions. For instance, government policies such as the tendency to employ men with the goal of decreasing the unemployment rate and job or education limitations for women have encouraged husbands to be actively involved in many family chores, including shopping. All these factors could have an impact on spousal attitudes towards family purchase decision-making.

Additional attempts should be made to provide consistent evidence for different religions, until we establish an understanding of the variation in consumer behavior according to different religions and cultures. Further research across other cultures is certainly warranted to understand "religion" as a research topic in marketing that was thought to be sensitive but which may be potentially important as an explanatory construct in predicting consumer behavior and also decision making style.

All the issues expressed in this article have supported the assumption that religion has great influence on purchase decisions of Muslim consumers and this generates different decision making styles among them.

For entrepreneurs whose countries are populated mostly by Muslims, or who intend to penetrate into Muslim countries with their businesses should consider the factors of religion and family in the development of products and in marketing activities. This includes developing a new marketing mix as its elements are some of the main concerns of Muslim consumers today. Hence, these are important factors that should be seriously studied by researchers and marketers for recognizing Muslim behavior.

In Iran, eastern culture and Islamic religious beliefs dominate families, so wives and husbands have different decision-making styles. Now, after social changes emerged, some families are traditional, while others are modern. Based on these categories, traditional and modern families have different decision-making styles and these differences may show themselves in product type, time or place of purchase, money spent or family decision maker.

Consequently, in families with husband-dominated, wife-dominated or egalitarianism styles, the wife and husband have divergent decision-making styles. On the other hand,

family structure as a social-structural variable can influence the decision-making styles of family members and relate to their purchase behavior.

In conclusion, prior studies provide convincing evidence that consumers' decision-making styles vary by countries. Meanwhile, none of these studies have focused on the effect of family structure and religion on consumer decision-making styles. In Iran Hanzae and Aghasibeig (2008) demonstrated that male and female consumers differ in their decision-making style.

So it is believed that male and female consumers in Iran may also have certain distinctive characteristics in terms of their decision orientation towards shopping.

What becomes clear from this study is that the most important factors in changing decision making styles among Iranian families is the relative roles of men and women in families and also their religion.

Involvement was not examined in this study, but could be an important factor in family purchase decision-making process. Shopping is commonly considered as a way of socialization. In such a case, both husbands and wives tend to have high involvement in shopping. To enrich our knowledge of spousal influences on family purchase decision-making process, we believe that future research needs to be geared towards the exploration of these important issues.

In addition, low/high involvement products were not considered in this paper. But this factor has important relations not only with decision making style but also with family structures. Purchasing low/high involvement products may require different decision making styles; for buying a refrigerator some factors are important which are not considered when you want to buy an ice-cream or a shampoo.

Also, low/high involvement products are related to family structure. According to sociologist and the information obtained through their interviews, in some families, decision makings were delegated to women for purchasing low involvement products and the reason is that men are quite busy with their work and not that attitudes have changed in the family. In these families, men may exert considerable influence in specific household decision making situations; when products are expensive,

strategic or important. Hence, buying low/high involvement products can be related to family structure and has not been considered in this study. So to deepen our understanding of spousal influence on Decision Making Style, we need more research in these issues.

Traditional role specialization has been shown to influence relative dominance with respect to product attributes. Within the family, men have traditionally been task-oriented leaders, while women have led in social and emotional behavior. Therefore, in purchasing decisions husbands tend to concern themselves with relatively important and functional product attributes (e.g., price) while the wife concentrates on relatively minor, aesthetic product attributes (e.g., color; Davis; 1970).

Also, sanctions on Iran have had many economical, industrial, and also sociological impacts. For example the lack of international brands and companies result in a decrease in competition between companies and an increase in monopolies. It brings about a decline in product quality and pulls prices up. Therefore, this environment factor can change decision making styles of Iranians, though this change may be temporary.

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