

BİR TÜKETİCİ OLARAK ÇOCUĞUN SOSYALİZASYONU SÜRECİNE AİLESİNİN ETKİLERİ EFFECTS OF THE FAMILY ON THE PROCESS OF CHILD SOCIALIZATION AS A CONSUMER

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Özet

Tüketim alışkanlıkları önce aile içinde kazanılır. Çocuğun gelecekteki tüketim davranışlarını, ana-babasının tüketim konusundaki davranışları belirler. Yani, çocuğun tüketici olarak toplumsallaşması aile içinde olur. Çocukta tüketici bilincinin oluşmasında, aile dışında, kitle iletişim araçları ve yaşıt gruplarının da etkisi olmaktadır. Özellikle televizyon, çocuklar tarafından en çok kullanılan kitle iletişim aracı olduğundan, onlar için, ürün ve hizmetler konusunda önemli bir bilgi kaynağıdır. Ancak ana-babalar, çocuklar ile yaşıt grupları ve kitle iletişim araçları arasında dolaylı rol oynayarak onların satın alma konusundaki tercihlerini ve tüketici bilincini etkilemektedir.

Consumer socialization is a process in which the youth develop their knowledge, skills and behaviour in consumption (Moschis and Churchill, 1978). Experience of consumption acquired during childhood and adolescence may affect consumer behaviour types in adulthood (Ward and Wackman, 1971).

The content of consumer learning is divided into two categories as directly relevant and indirectly relevant. The directly relevant aspects of consumer behaviour are valid for purchasing and using the product. In other words, the individual has to learn various skills like purchasing, comparing similar brands and budgeting with his/her current income. Knowledge and attitudes about stores, products, brands, salespeople and advertising media constitute examples of directly relevant consumer learning content. Indirectly relevant consumer learning includes the learning of the subjects that motivate purchasing and use behaviour. That is, it is to establish a relation between the knowledge, behaviour and values which lead the individuals to demand certain goods and services and to different evaluations of products and brands (Hawkins, Best and Coney, 1989)

Consumer habits, styles and models are acquired within the family at first. The consumer behaviour of the parents determines the future consumer behaviour of the child. That is to say, primary consumer socialization of the individual takes place in the family (Tokgöz, 1984). Therefore, the family is an important socialization agent for the child in acquiring its consumer skills. The first studies on this subject have revealed that the youth learn basic knowledge about

consumption from their parents. Recent research findings support this idea (Moschis and Churchill, 1978).

It is natural that the family has pervasive and important effects on the life of a child. Since the parents control the expenses of their children in general, they may effect the selection of the goods and services that the children want to buy and their socialization as consumers (Robertson, Zielinski and Ward, 1984).

Direct and Indirect Effects of the Family on Children's Consumer Learning

The effects of family communication which have an important role in shaping consumer learning among children may be direct and indirect. This may act on consumer learning by mediating the effects of other information sources like mass media and peer groups.

Direct Effects

The direct effects of family communication on the consumer behaviour of the individual include the formation of behaviour, norms and models of beliefs related to the acquisition of basic knowledge on consumption (Moschis, 1985). Family members affect consumer socialization directly by direct instrumental training and modelling. Direct instrumental training takes place by illuminating certain subjects through the support of parents, siblings or through discussion. For instance, parents may try directly to teach which food should be consumed at certain times by holding a clear discussion on nutrition. Or they may impose rules by restricting the consumption of certain foods and encouraging others (Hawkins et al., 1989).

In “modelling”, which is the most common direct effect, the child learns the consumption behaviours that are convenient or inconvenient to him/her by observing the other family members. Modelling takes place with the endeavour of the child and without direct instruction from the role model and may be unconscious to a greater or lesser degree. Modelling is a very important method for the child to learn the skills, knowledge and which are convenient for him/her (Hawkins et al., 1989) because, children acquire knowledge on consumption by observing the behaviour of their parents and imitating them (Solomon, 1994). They observe their parents evaluating the products by using certain criteria and use these criteria when they chose products within their own scope of interest like toys and clothes (Soyeon, Synder and Gehrt, 1995).

The consumer skills of the child may develop by observing the consumer behaviours of the parents and through a purposive consumer training executed by the parents. Research on this subject by Ward, Wackman and Wartella (1977) determines five methods used by mothers to teach consumer skills to their children: 1) Preventing certain activities, 2) Talking about consumer activities, 3) Discussing consumer decisions with children, 4) Acting as an example, 5) Permitting the child to learn from his/her own experiences. The result of the research has shown that the majority of mothers do not mostly use the teaching method and that there are considerable differences among mothers on this subject.

Another piece of research has put forward that parents try to teach consumer skills to the adolescent and that consumer skills are learnt from parents at different ages and through different learning processes (Moschis and Churchill, 1978).

The traditional view on this subject is that the effects of parents on purchasing reduces gradually as children reach adolescence and that children are instead affected by their peer groups (Assael, 1987). The adolescence period is considered to be characterised by the development of expectations of purchasing and consumer roles. During this period, adolescents need to be independent from their parents and thus spend most of their time with their peer outside their families. This affects the frequency of communication with their parents and peers. So it is inevitable that the age factor affects this frequency in a negative way. However, though the frequency of communication with parents seems to change in this period, it is seen that parents are still the main agents for purchasing decisions (Moschis, 1987). Research on this subject has proved that adolescent children are still affected by their parents and trust them (Assael, 1987).

According to research on the effect of family on adolescent consumer behaviours, purchasing behaviours of the adolescent vary according to the type of product and to gender. Adolescents seem to act independently when purchasing products related to their recreational activities but seem to be dependent on adult family members when purchasing expensive and socially risky products. Females act more independently from their families than males only when they purchase goods healthcare items, shirts and jeans. Males, on the other hand, act more independently from their families only when they purchase sports equipment. It is claimed that this situation arises from the fact that female adolescents want to resemble their peers more and that they act more independently when they purchase goods of health-care items and clothing (Moschis, Moore and Stephens, 1977).

The adolescent-family relation in purchasing behaviour varies in accordance with age and socio-economic level also. It has been observed that younger consumers in low socio-economic groups have more freedom of purchasing than older adolescents. In families with high and middle income levels, the purchasing freedom of the adolescent does not increase considerably depending on age (Moschis et al., 1977).

On the other hand, it is assumed that there is a positive relation between family communication on consumption and the frequency with which children act in accordance with desired consumer behaviours (Moschis et al., 1978). Research by Moore and Moschis (1981) on how various family communication models affect the acquisition of certain consumer skills has revealed that adolescents from pluralistic families may be more well-informed and act as socially desirable consumers.

It is supposed that number of siblings is also important in children’s socialization processes. An increase in the number of siblings may increase the interaction on consumption among the siblings but it may restrict the level of the parents interaction with each child (Soyeon et al., 1995).

The order of birth is also very important in children’s acquisition of consumer skills. When compared to later children, first-borns acquire better consumer skills since they acquire consumer skills earlier and interact with their parents on consumption decisions and receive more money education (Soyeon et al., 1995)

Small children demand from their parents, and mostly from their mothers, the products that they want to be purchased for them. The efforts of the children to

affect their parents' purchasing decreases as they get older, and parents accept the demands more easily as their children grow. Older children seem to be more selective about their demands and more successful in persuading their parents (Robertson et al., 1984).

The effect of parents on children's understanding of the money concept (for instance, money education, giving an allowance) is one of the most important aspects of the children's learning process in becoming consumers (Soyeon et al., 1995).

Marshall and Magruder (1960) have put forward the following suggestions about the practices of the parents related to money education:

- If children are supplied with comprehensive experience in money use they have more knowledge of money than those that are inexperienced.
- If money is given to children for spending, they have more knowledge of money.
- If children save money, they have more knowledge of money use.
- If parents manage their money rationally, experience their children's with money increases.

Indirect Effects

Indirect effects of family communication on consumer behaviour include the learning of patterns of interaction with other sources of consumer information, which may in turn affect consumer learning. That is, family communication may affect consumer learning by mediating the effects of other sources of consumer learning like mass media and peer groups (Moschis, 1985).

Consumer socialization is observed mostly in families although advertising is also an important means by which children learn consumption-related behaviour and attitudes (Hawkins et al., 1989). Since television is a means of advertisement and addresses children advertisements have an important effect in terms of consumer socialization. Since children watch television more than they use other means of mass media television is an important source of information about products and services (Robertson et al., 1984)

Television may have persuasive effects on the tendencies of children toward certain products and brands (Assael, 1987). However, parents determine the level of effect that television has on their children, as they do for peer groups and salespeople (Solomon, 1994). The demand for purchasing that arises inside children after watching television advertisements is managed by parents. Therefore, the effect of parents is instrumental in the socialization process of children and in forming the values related to watching television (Robertson, 1979).

Advertisements cause conflicts by encouraging the children to demand products that their families do not want them to have or that they can not buy. But these types of conflicts are natural and may initiate useful learning experiences for the children. The parents alter belief in the attributes of and in the believability of advertising in general (Hawkins et al., 1989). The restrictions imposed by parents and the demands of children for the products they see on television are crucial for the children's socialization process, because watching television causes the acquisition of unwanted consumer tendencies as well as many desired consumer behaviours. Parents may teach their children to become more conscious consumers by paying attention to what they watch on television and to their purchasing demands (Soyeon et al., 1995).

Ward and Wackman (1972) have found in their research that the more parents restrict their children not to watch television the less they have to field purchasing demands from the children. Another piece of television viewing research on the subject reveals that parents restrict older children's viewing less and older children have purchasing demands for the products they see on television. The reason for this is that they are more disciplined about watching television than smaller children and that they do not want to have everything they see. Besides, older children are able to distinguish the advertised product from the product that is really needed (Soyeon et al., 1995)

Moschis and Churchill (1979) have carried out research on the consumer behaviours of the adolescent and determined that the adolescents are more resistant to the deceiving aspects of advertisements, understand the marketing strategies related with the prices of the products and, in general, become more conscious consumers as they get older.

As a result, the role of the family in the socialization of children on purchasing and consumption may be summarised as follows:

- Parents teach their children the price-quality relation that includes experiences in ways of purchasing products of good quality and in money usage.
- The interaction on consumption between parents and children determines the tendency of children to exercise comparative shopping behaviour and to buy during discount sales.
- Parent-child interactions about consumption affect children's consumption practices and brand preferences.
- Parent's communication on consumption affects their children's skills of distinguishing reality from exaggerated advertisements (Assael, 1987).

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