Chinese Husbands: A Path-Analytic Study of a Model of Family Buying Decisions

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Abstract

Researchers have been giving increased attention to the determinants of family decision making. The objective of this study is to investigate the interrelationships among the determinants of family decision making. This paper reports the results of a study in Hong Kong that focus on predictors of final decisions. From the husbands’ perspective, the investigation includes variables such as bases of power, purchase involvement, product decision, marital power and decision control.

Keywords: Chinese; Decision making; Family power structure; Husbands

1. Introduction

The literature on family consumption behavior reveals an interesting trend of moving away from concentrating purely on the social aspects. There has been an increasing number of studies of family buying behavior that emphasize the marketing and consumer behavior perspective. Most earlier studies were conducted as though individuals make decisions independent of other household members (Kasulis and Hughes, 1984). In fact, many decisions within the family are more complicated and made by both husbands and wives together or influenced by members in the family, including the children (Szybillo and Sosanie, 1977). The fact that many decisions within the family follow joint decision processes has been recognized for some time and has been reflected in a continued interest in the literature on family power structure that began in the 60s and 70s (Blood and Wolfe, 1965; Davis, 1970; Aldous, Hill, Strauss and Tollman, 1971; Feber, 1971; Sprey, 1972; Turk and Bell, 1972).

Since 1970, many studies have highlighted the importance of family buying behavior from the marketing and consumer perspectives. These studies criticized the oversimplified assumptions made by previous work on the structure of husband-wife roles in consumer decisions and the sufficiency of responses from one spouse (Davis, 1970). Safilios-Rothschild (1970) criticized such work for its naive conceptualizations, methodological inconsistencies, and lack of sensitivity to process.

As a result of these criticisms, there has come about an increase in research efforts to restructure thinking about husband and wife decision making. Studies made contributions in identifying the specific elements of a number of purchase decision processes, and measuring the structure of shared influence between husbands and wives for each of the elements (Davis, 1970; 1971; 1976). There were also attentions focused on husband and wife role structures as it varies across product types and decision categories (Davis, 1970; Hempel, 1974; Woodside, 1974).

With respect to the gaps in our present knowledge, minimal published research has investigated interrelationships among bases of power and variables leading to purchasing decisions. Thus, much additional empirical work is needed to clarify our understanding of the linkage between family power structures and purchasing decisions. Role differentiation between husband and wife in family purchase decisions in the Chinese culture has been perceived to be important for marketing strategy to be developed (Yau and Sin, 1991). In Yau and Sin’s study, working wives were found to have a different perception of family purchase decisions than were non-working wives. However, not much research has been carried out on the husbands’ perspective, i.e. how husbands react and respond to the changing family relationship and new power structure in terms of decision making.

Research has made comparisons of the perceived influence structures within household decision making units
of differing compositions and revealed that substantial variations in patterns of role dominance and response consensus (Filiatrault and Ritchie, 1980). Family decision theories have very strong relationships with the “Family Power” studies (Cromwell and Olson, 1975; Safilios-Rothschild, 1970; Turk and Bell, 1972; McDonald, 1980).

The present study attempts to investigate and explore these issues as well as the effects of marital power. More specifically, we examine the linkages between bases of power, marital power, and decision control from the husbands’ perspective. Faced with changing family power structures with more marital equality emerging as a result of the dual-income family setting, husbands might have a very different attitude towards power in decision making. Furthermore, the research extends prior empirical work through the inclusion of three additional variables: spousal empathy, self-involvement (purchase involvement) and evaluation of purchase decisions. Spousal empathy and self-involvement are included because of their expected links to the bases of power including marital power. Evaluation of purchase decisions is expected to have relationships with purchase involvement, decision control and bases of power.


2.1 Family Power

The concept of family power relates to the amount of purposeful influence that a husband or wife exerts over the decisions of his or her spouse (Kranichfeld, 1987). Kranichfeld further suggested the masculinization of family power. Women or wives were assumed to be relatively powerless both in society and within the home, because they generally had contributed fewer financial resources to the family and enjoyed less status outside of the home.

As there have been ongoing changes in women’s (and men’s) sex-role attitudes, a profound impact on the family power structure in decision making between husbands and wives can be observed. Couples with the more sex-role modern husbands tend to rely relatively more heavily on compromise and rational approaches and relatively less on confrontational and inflexible approaches in resolving conflicts (Kim and Lee, 1996). In other words, husbands’ attitudes towards the role of themselves and their wives could influence their decision attitudes. Therefore, in a modern family, more negotiation is likely to take place as the result of egalitarian roles of both husbands and wives.

In addition, culture is an important influence in family power distribution. Chinese males are traditionally dominant in both their social and family status. Ford, LaTour and Henthorne (1995) showed that the Chinese sample displayed (1) lower levels of egalitarianism, (2) more husband-dominated decisions, and (3) less joint decisions. Another study on a relatively westernized Chinese society, Hong Kong, found that the marital roles of Hong Kong Chinese couples are still gender-segregated and husbands often dominate major decision making (Choi and Lee, 1997). The patterns of influence in decision making among Chinese families are not the same as found in typical U.S. families. Many multinational companies regard China as a new market with plenty of potential and future opportunity. Therefore, understanding Chinese culture and decision making process is essential for marketing managers. Since the Chinese society is still, to some extent, patriarchal, males dominate many decisions including purchasing.

2.2 Marital Power

Under the concept of “family power”, “marital power” is a subset of the broader power system focusing on husband and wife power relations (McDonald, 1980). Marital power refers to one’s capacity to impose his or her will on the other spouse in various family decisions (Rank, 1982; Salifios-Rothschild, 1970). Traditionally, husbands have exercised greater control in marriage and family decisions because of the income and status of men as the family breadwinner. Different theories in the area of marital power were developed in exploring the criteria for marital power in the family. The resource theory suggests that each spouse’s decision making power varies directly with the amount and value of the resources that he or she provides to the marriage (Blood and Wolfe, 1965).

Higher educational attainment of women has changed the power structure in modern families across countries. Even for the Chinese couples, women’s demographic factors, such as the level of education and type of occupation, are related to the distribution of decision power between husbands and wives (So, 1999). Recently, growing research interests have been developed in the relationship between decision making power and equality between spouses (Rosenbluth, Steil and Whitcomb, 1998; Hatfield and Traupmann, 1981). Decision making between spouses was one of the most frequently cited criteria for evaluating equality in marriages (Rosenbluth, Steil and Whitcomb, 1998). Spouses’ relative say in decision making has been measured (Blood and Wolfe, 1965; Blumstein and Schwartz, 1983). Women typically have more say in child-care and daily domestic decisions, whereas men often have greater say regarding where the family will live and how finances are managed (Steil and Weltman, 1991).

3. The Hypothesized Model

As depicted in Figure 1, the model examined encompasses the following components: (1) Bases of Power, (2) Purchase Involvement, (3) Marital Power, (4) Evaluation of Product Decisions and (5) Decision Control. The first two components are independent variables of the model while the last three components are dependent variables.
The major dependent variable is product decision, which in turn is related to decision control. Purchase involvement consists of two variables: spousal empathy and self-involvement, serves as the mediating variable influencing decision control. Causality between components in the model is indicated by the arrows, which show the direction of postulated influence. The solid lines together with the arrows show hierarchically how determinants cause or influence other determinants.

The various components of the model are defined as the following:

**Bases of Power:** According to McDonald (1980) power, in terms of a family, is “the ability of an individual within a social relationship to carry out his or her will, even in the face of resistance by others.” Cromwell and Olson (1975) delineate power in three distinct domains: power bases that consist of the resources an individual possesses that can increase their ability to influence decisions; power processes that are concerned with the interaction of family members and finally power outcomes or the results of the process.

This study is specifically concerned with the concept of power bases. While many bases of power have been identified (French and Raven, 1959) for the purpose of this study, the sources identified by McDonald (1980) will be adopted as follows:

1. **Normative Resources** - which refer to the cultural and sub-cultural definition of who has the authority;
2. **Affective Resources** - which refer to the level of commitment and the degree of dependence of the other person;
3. **Personal Resources** - which refer to personality, physical appearance and role competence;
4. **Cognitive Resources** - which refer to the influence the perception of power has on the individual and others;
5. **Economic Resources** - which refer to the influence a person, who has contributed more financial resources to the family, will enjoy more power and status in decision making.

In addition to McDonald’s four resources, the influence of economic resources is considered in this study (Safilios-Rothschild, 1970; Schaniger and Buss, 1986; Ramu, 1987). In Kim and Lee’s study (1996), income and...
other demographic variables were found to be influential on couples’ conflict resolution during the process of decision making. In particular, wives of the wife-driven couples contributed the largest proportion to the joint income among the other groups.

The details of other terminologies used in this study are as follows:

**Marital Power:** This refers to a subset of family power, and is the “relative ability of the two marriage partners to influence the behavior of each other” (Rollins and Bahr, 1976).

**Purchase Involvement:** These refer to the time and effort expended on the decision making process by an individual and his/her spouse (Burns, 1976). There are two types of purchase involvement. The first one is self-involvement, which is the involvement made by a husband in making purchase sub decisions. The second one is husband empathy, which is the importance in purchase sub-decisions to a husband that his spouse’s preferences be reflected in the final decision.

**Evaluation of Product Decisions:** This is a form of marital power, which is defined as “the relative ability of the two marriage partners to influence the behavior of each other” (Rollins and Bahr, 1976). In this paper, the evaluation of product decisions refers to the degree of importance of family buying decisions to a husband.

**Decision Control:** In the literature on family decision making, decision control refers to who controls each stage of the decision making process (McDonald, 1980). However, in this model, we will focus on the control held by husbands in making final purchase decisions.

The present study represents an attempt to contribute to the growing body of research on family decision behavior with the emphasis placed on the Asian culture and the role of husbands. As one of a few research efforts on this side of the world investigating the relationships between bases of power and family decision making process, the article seeks results to test the following hypotheses:

**H1:** There is a positive relationship between affective resources and spousal empathy.

When a husband perceives himself having a high level of emotion or commitment towards his wife, he often attempts to influence the images that his wife forms of him. In the interaction with his wife, he will tend to maintain an image favored by his wife. This will lead him to believe in the importance of having his wife’s preferences be reflected in the final purchase sub-decisions.

**H2:** There is a negative relationship between normative resources and decision control.

The roles of husbands and wives appear to be greatly affected by traditional values (Bonfield et al., 1984). McDonald (1980) concluded that normative context may serve largely as a “sufficient condition” for the emergence of particular patterns of power and decision making in families. Spiegel (1960) revealed that traditional sex-roles relieve us from the burden of decision making since husbands and wives know their part so well that they make decisions automatically according to their roles. He also indicated that husbands’ occupation goals are pursued before their wives’ while wives are expected to be the primary caretaker of their children and make decisions (Spiegel, 1960). Therefore, his argument leads us to believe that a husband with more normative resources will make less purchase decisions in the family. In Chinese Societies, we expect a negative relationship between normative resources and decision control.

**H3:** There is a positive relationship between economic resources and purchase involvement.

Blood and Wolf’s (1965) “resource theory” assumes that a spouse’s familial behavior is greatly influenced and, to a great degree, regulated by his/her relative resources, that is, education, occupation, income and to a lesser extent social participation. Burr (1973) predicted a relationship between economic resources, including education, occupation and income, and marital decision making. Later the relationship between power and resources was found to be curvilinear, with the normative structure influencing the shape and direction of the relationship. Data from a study in Greece (Safilios-Rothschild, 1967) indicated that working wives think that they have more say in decision making than do non-working wives. According to the findings of Blood and Wolfe (1965), earnings are more sensitive than occupation as an indicator of the husband’s power. The higher the income earned by the husband, the more powerful he will be. It is expected that a husband with greater normative resources will tend to be involved more in decisions making as compared to those with fewer resources.

**H4:** There is a positive relationship between cognitive resources and marital power.

Cognitive resources (Bacharach and Lawler, 1976) refer to the influence the perception of power has on the individual and others. Gillespie (1971) has posited a feminist theory of power that emphasizes women are structurally blocked by social, legal, and psychological barriers from potential power-based resources and, thus, from gaining as much power as their husbands. In this study, it is also expected that husbands have more marital power when they perceive themselves to be powerful.

**H5:** There is a negative relationship between personal resources and evaluation of product decisions.

It is expected that personality, physical appearance, and role competence are related to the evaluation of product decision. In a modern and democratic society, the
balance of power between men and women has been changing. When husbands with more democratic ideas, their wives usually have more freedom, and gain more competence (Blood and Wolfe, 1965). Therefore, it is expected that the more personal resources husbands have, the more decision making power will be left to their wives.

H6: There is a positive relationship between self-involvement and evaluation of product decisions.

It is expected that there is a direct link between self-involvement and evaluation of product decisions. Husbands who are more involved with decision making are expected to place more emphasis on evaluation of product decisions. These husbands usually consider the family decision making process as very important and at the same time spend a great deal of time and effort on making decisions.

H7: There is a positive relationship between the evaluation of product decisions and spousal empathy.

Szinovacz (1984) showed that husbands allocated much less time for family work than did wives as they are less likely to take part in various household and child-care activities. Although there is an increasing number of working women, wives have been found continuously to carry the major burden of family work (Arndt et al., 1980; Robinson, 1980). This probably leads wives to be more involved in spending and therefore making decisions. Hence, husbands who have a high evaluation of product decisions, i.e. husbands are in more important position of family buying decision, will expect their wives to get involved in making decisions as a part of their household activities, instead of involving themselves personally. These husbands tend to trust the decisions of their wives and believe that their wives’ preference should be reflected in the decisions. Therefore, it is expected that there is also a direct link between spousal empathy and the evaluation of product decisions.

H8: There is a negative relationship between evaluation of product decisions and marital power.

It is believed that the greater the marital power of the husband, the less likely it is he would consider family product decisions as important to him. Referring to the logic of the last hypothesis, husbands are expected to be less participative in family decisions when they have more power at home, and their wives in turn will take up the decision-making responsibility.

H9: There is a positive relationship between self-involvement and spousal empathy. The higher the self-involvement, the higher will be the spousal empathy.

In this paper, we separate the purchase involvement made by the husband from the involvement made by his wife. To distinguish between the two, we call the former “self-involvement” and the latter “spousal empathy”.

Since a couple is living together under the same roof, it is likely that they are influencing each other in the way they are involved in purchase decisions.

H10: There is a positive relationship between cognitive resources and spousal empathy.

It is expected in this study that perceptions of power resources influence the degree of importance to husbands that his spouse’s preferences are accounted for in the final product choice. Husbands may perceive they to have power over their wives and, therefore, become more considerate towards family decision-making, and this is reflected in the spousal empathy.

H11: There is a positive relationship between self-involvement and marital power.

Marital power is measured by asking respondents to rate on a scale ranging from “wife has all the say” to “husband has all the say”. In fact, various levels of marital power would have various impacts on decision control. For example, high marital power of a spouse would lead to his/her making the purchasing decision by him/herself, whereas low marital power would result in his/her spouse making the purchasing decision. It is logical that a joint decision would most likely be made when a medium level marital power of a spouse is measured. It is therefore expected that husbands who have more self-involvement in purchase decision have higher marital power.

H12: Decision control varies by the level of marital power.

The greater the marital power of a spouse, the more likely he/she makes the final purchase decision; the lower the marital power, the more likely that his/her spouse makes the final purchase decision.

Burns (1976) and Burns and Granbois (1977) have indicated that self-involvement has a positive relationship on joint decision making (which pertains to decision control in this paper).

4. Methodology

4.1 Data Collection

The population in this study is defined as Chinese households in Hong Kong containing a married couple. Focus group interviews were carried out to help check the relationships in the model. Two focus group interviews were conducted, one of husbands and one of wives. Data were then collected by means of a questionnaire administered simultaneously to husband/wife dyads selected by interviewers for their accessibility. Due to difficulties in conducting door to door surveys in Hong Kong, the survey was conducted on a convenience sampling method with emphasis on the snowballing technique. The language used was a Cantonese, a local Chinese dialect.

There were 100 males included in our sample. Personal interviews were conducted in a home setting with a
relaxed environment. Each husband was interviewed in the absence of his wife, making collaboration between the spouse impossible. Completion of each questionnaire required about 30 to 45 minutes.

The questionnaire consisted of four sections. The first section was composed of the inventories of power bases and purchase involvement. The second section contained two scales to measure marital power and the evaluation of product decisions respectively. In the third section, respondents were asked to nominate the major influence (husband, wife or joint) in the final purchase stage of the decision making process. The fourth section of the questionnaire collected of socio-demographic information. A convenience sample of 10 couples was used to pretest the questionnaire.

Since we have used a convenience sample, it is perhaps useful to describe it in terms of several demographic characteristics. The households range in age from 18 up to sixties, with 36 percent in their forties and 20 percent in their fifties. According to the HKSAR Census and Statistic Department (1991) for married males, 89% of the age 40 to 49, 85% for 50 and above and only 40% of the age 39 and below were married. This indicated that a large percentage of young people are staying unmarried in the age of 39 and below.

Furthermore, the sample consists of twenty percent of families which had no children, fifty-two percent which had one to two children, and around twenty percent which had three and more children. The respondents are fairly well-educated, 82% had completed secondary school education and above. Among them, 27% had a degree or post graduation qualification. Only 6% said they had been married more than once. Most of them have been married for some time, 93.5% married for more than one year, 72.5% married for more than five years, 60% married for more than 15 years, and 48% married for more than twenty years. Finally, the level of income is also rather high, 77.9% of our sample has monthly household income HK$ 12,000 and above while the Hong Kong statistics showed 41% of the general population is in this bracket. In general, when compare with the overall Hong Kong population, our sample tends to be more mature in age and longer year of marriage and wealthier in terms of income.

4.2 Measurement of Variables

In this study, based on the literature on family and marriage (Venkatesh, 1980; Schaniger and Buss, 1986; Hendrick, 1988; Schaefer and Keith, 1984; Ramu, 1987; Lawley, McPhail and Yau, 1992) and the results of focus group interviews, an inventory of 34 items describing the bases of power was developed. These items were modified to suit the Hong Kong sample. In the survey, respondents were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement on each item using a five-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”. The construct validity of the subscale was assessed using factor analysis. After several runs, only 18 items remained. The results of the rotations showed that the best factor structure contains five factors (Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Loading</th>
<th>Item-to-Total Correlation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Factor 1. Affective Resources</td>
<td>08. I respect my spouse’s judgement.</td>
<td>.756</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20. The approval of my spouse means a lot to me.</td>
<td>.730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>09. I get good advice from my spouse.</td>
<td>.664</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19. I am highly loyal to my spouse.</td>
<td>.633</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. I consider my spouse an ideal spouse.</td>
<td>.555</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21. My spouse expects my co-operation.</td>
<td>.517</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Factor 2. Personal Resources</td>
<td>15. I always have difficulties in making purchase decisions on my own.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>28. My spouse respects my judgement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>06. My spouse is capable of fulfilling his/her duties efficiently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Factor 3. Normative Resources</td>
<td>18. A wife should be the major homemaker in a marriage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>17. The husband should be the main breadwinner in a marriage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16. A wife should be the major care giver for children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Factor 4. Economic Resources</td>
<td>25. My spouse generally decides how surplus money will be disposed of.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>24. I am the main income earner in my family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>29. My spouse uses coercion when a decision needs to be made.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Factor 5. Cognitive Resources</td>
<td>22. I put a great deal of time and effort into making our relationship work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>23. I do not have much confidence in making purchase decisions on my own.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>27. When we disagree I tend to give in more often than my spouse.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. The Scale of Bases of Power
Internal consistency of each factor (base of power) was tested using item-to-total correlation. For each factor, correlation coefficients were greater than 0.5 and significant at the level of 0.05, indicating that all factors were internally valid. The coefficients were 0.760, 0.584, 0.751, 0.516 and 0.500 for “Affective Resources”, “Personal Resources”, “Normative Resources”, “Economic Resources” and “Cognitive Resources”. Thus, all bases of power exhibited well over the 0.50 reliability level suggested by Nunnally (1978) as a minimum score for acceptable reliability in basic research.

The measure for the evaluation of product decisions was adopted from Cromwell and Olson (1975). It consists of 22 items about product decisions.

The scale of purchase involvements developed by Burns (1976) was adopted in this study. This scale consists of five purchase decisions. Respondents were first asked to indicate how important they thought it was that their spouse’s preferences were reflected in the final choice of the purchasing decision process. This forms the “spousal empathy” variable. Respondents were then asked to indicate how important they thought it was that their own preferences were reflected in the final choice. This forms the “self involvement” variable.

Decision control is the final decision stage and the influence that will affect the final decision. Yau and Sin (1991) have investigated the family decision making process and the perceived decision influence in the Chinese culture. They used twenty household purchasing decisions and asked respondents to indicate the major influence in three different stages: (1) problem recognition stage, (2) information search stage, and (3) final decision stage. In their findings, husbands perceived their influence to be greater, especially on the more important and higher-priced items, such as furniture selection, vacation and children’s study programs. Chinese husbands still perceived themselves as the head of the family and the source of income and authority, so they tended to believe that they have greater involvement in family purchase decisions.

4.3 The Causal Model

The model suggested by the hypotheses is a causal model in which bases of power predict purchase involvement and decision control. Purchase involvement is hypothesized as impacting upon decision control. Product decision is posited as influencing purchase involvement and decision control. Also, self-involvement is hypothesized to have an impact on spousal empathy, which in turn affects decision control. Marital power is expected to have relations with self-involvement and decision control (Figure 1).

Given that causal relationships are being hypothesized, path analysis was used to test the model. Path analysis can be utilized to examine the effects of a set of variables taken as causes on a set of variables taken as effects when the relationships are recursive (Pedhazur and Schmelkin, 1991).

5. Results and Discussion

The pairwise correlations are shown in Table 2, and the results of the path analysis are presented in Table 3 and Figure 2.

As indicated in Table 3, the model has an Chi-square value of 2.76 with 23 degrees of freedom. Thus, the model fits the data well. The adjusted goodness of fit index appears to be relatively large and the root mean square residual relatively small, indicating that the fit is adequate.

The objective of the research is to understand and explain the phenomenon of family buying decisions from the husband’s perspective. In this study, a model was developed with the intention to integrate power bases, purchase involvement, product decisions, decision control and marital power.

5.1 Decision Control Model

The results indicate that decision control is related to marital power positively while related to normative resources negatively. The finding supported both H2 and H12. This reflected a situation that those husbands who enjoyed strong marital power through economic resources have more authority in family decision, while husbands who have high normative resources, i.e. they believe in husband’s role is a breadwinner while wife’s role is home maker, will leave the family decision to their wives.

For those husbands who have more power in the family decision, i.e. score high in “husband have all the say” tend to make the final purchase decisions. This is the only direct and positive influence in final decisions. In the Chinese culture context, unlike in western societies (Lawley, McPhail and Yau, 1992) marital power is viewed as an important variable in the final decisions. Chinese husbands who think of themselves as possessing more marital power have a higher possibility to make final purchase decisions in the family. Possession of power in the family is perceived to be very important to husbands.

On the other hand, normative resources were found to have a negative relationship with decision control. This implies that the more traditional husbands are in their attitudes towards their role in the family, the less likely that they are the final decision-makers. These husbands with strong normative resources do not regard decision making in the family is important to them, nor does it reflect their position and power in the family. The traditional husbands in Chinese societies usually consider family purchase decisions are the responsibilities of their spouse. Although they have the actual authority in making decisions, their wives often make the actual decisions. This reflects that
Table 2. Correlation Coefficients among Variables Covariance Matrix to be Analyzed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Decision Control</th>
<th>Self Involvement</th>
<th>Spousal Empathy</th>
<th>Marital Power</th>
<th>Decision Control</th>
<th>Affective Resources</th>
<th>Personal Resources</th>
<th>Normative Resources</th>
<th>Economic Resources</th>
<th>Cognitive Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Product Decisions</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Involvement</td>
<td>.553</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spousal Empathy</td>
<td>.430</td>
<td>.418</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Power</td>
<td>-.112</td>
<td>.173</td>
<td>-.106</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision Control</td>
<td>-.029</td>
<td>-.004</td>
<td>-.084</td>
<td>.154</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective Resources</td>
<td>-.137</td>
<td>-.021</td>
<td>.177</td>
<td>.048</td>
<td>.026</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Resources</td>
<td>-.175</td>
<td>-.114</td>
<td>-.037</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.015</td>
<td>.539</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normative Resources</td>
<td>.074</td>
<td>.136</td>
<td>.153</td>
<td>-.124</td>
<td>-.113</td>
<td>-.182</td>
<td>.108</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Resources</td>
<td>-.005</td>
<td>.162</td>
<td>.146</td>
<td>-.017</td>
<td>-.172</td>
<td>-.072</td>
<td>-.109</td>
<td>.348</td>
<td>1.000</td>
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<tr>
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<td>.093</td>
<td>.191</td>
<td>-.139</td>
<td>-.080</td>
<td>-.059</td>
<td>-.146</td>
<td>.082</td>
<td>.297</td>
<td>1.000</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Results of Hypothesized Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion Variable</th>
<th>Predictor Variable</th>
<th>Hypothesized Direction</th>
<th>Path Coefficients Model</th>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decision Control</td>
<td>Normative Resources</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.134</td>
<td>H2</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Marital Resources</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0.170</td>
<td>H12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self Involvement</td>
<td>Economic Resources</td>
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<td>0.164</td>
<td>H6</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spousal Empathy</td>
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<td>0.229</td>
<td>H9</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marital Power</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0.351</td>
<td>H11</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spousal Empathy</td>
<td>Affective Resources</td>
<td>+</td>
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<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Product Resources</td>
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<td>0.326</td>
<td>H7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Product Decision</td>
<td>Personal Resources</td>
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<td>-0.175</td>
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<td>0.552</td>
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<td>Accepted</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Marital Power</td>
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<td>-0.295</td>
<td>H8</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marital Power</td>
<td>Cognitive Resources</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-0.153</td>
<td>H4</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total R-Square: 0.198
X-Square (23): 24.76
(D.F.) (23)
P Value: 0.363
Adjusted goodness of fit index: 0.944
Root Mean Square Residual: 0.042
the traditional Chinese husbands who have the perceived authority but not the actual authority in family decisions.

5.2 Marital Power Model

The model (Figure 2) indicated that marital power is negatively related to cognitive resources and evaluation of product decision while positively related to self-involvement and final decisions. Therefore, H4 cannot be supported.

Regarding the negative relationship between cognitive resources and marital power, those husbands who are aware of their own power are so confident about their existing power that they usually rely on their spouses to make family decisions.

The negative link with evaluation of product decisions can be explained by understanding husbands who have the power in the family do not necessarily consider evaluation of product decisions as important to them. Although a husband has the right to make decision, he may delegate it to his wife. It might be a symbol of authority to husbands in the Chinese society that husbands are responsible for the living while wives are responsible for making household decisions. As Wolf (1972) and Giant (1982) have shown, in traditional societies where extended family and lineage systems are dominant, women maintain strategies to exercise power informally and influence the outcome of critical domestic decisions. In Chinese societies, cultural beliefs that males and females have natural propensities that make them competent in segregated spheres of activity have not completely disappeared. Although there is already a trend in Hong Kong that husbands are taking up tasks like cooking, cleaning and other housework, many couples still believe in gender-based division of labor.

5.3 Self Involvement Model

Apart from the two negative links, marital power is positively related to self-involvement. At the same time, economic resources, evaluation of product decisions and spousal empathy are useful predictors of self-involvement. H3, H6, H9 and H11 can then be supported. Husbands with higher levels of economic resources as a power base tend to perceive themselves to be more involved in the purchasing evaluation process. These husbands also believe themselves to be more powerful in their marriage relationship. As the breadwinner of the family, it will be natural that husbands like to be seen as the influencing person in the level of involvement.

The positive relationship between self-involvement and spousal empathy shows that those husbands who are more involved in the decision process tend to rate their

![Figure 2. Parameter Estimation](image_url)
spouses’ preferences high in the final choice. There is a strong relationship between evaluation of product decisions and self-involvement. It is reasonable to find that a husband who views that product decisions are important to him tends to perceive more of his preferences are reflected in the final choice.

In general, self-involvement is viewed as important to the husband respondents in this study. It is a central focus in the model that husbands prefer to be seen as involved in decision making even though they might have already delegated the responsibility to their spouses.

5.4 Spousal Empathy

The results prove that spousal empathy has a positive relationship with affective resources, cognitive resources, self-involvement and evaluation of product decisions. Therefore, the findings supported H1, H7, H9 and H10. As far as the relation with affective resources is concerned, husbands who have emotional affection towards their wives and are dependent on their wives tend to respect and rely on the judgment of their spouses on final decisions.

Spousal empathy and evaluation of product decisions are also positively linked. Although empathetic husbands have high respect for their spouses’ preferences and judgments, they consider the decisions to be important to themselves. This indicates that there is a trend of joint decision making in Hong Kong.

Cognitive resource as a power base is a useful predictor of spousal empathy. The relationship indicates that the more a husband perceives himself to have power in the marriage, the more likely it is that he respects his spouse’s opinions in the final decisions.

5.5 Evaluation of Product Decisions

Findings in the study confirm that when a husband who is confident with his own physical appearance and personality would think product decision is less important to him. At the same time, the greater the power that the husband possessed in a marriage, the less likely that he perceived family product decisions are important to him. This supports H5 and H8.

6. Conclusion

The model of bases of power described in this study provides a framework of linkages between the various power bases, sub-decision variables and the family decision process. Unlike Western societies, Chinese husbands tend to have more purchasing decision power especially when they have more economic resources. These husbands considered themselves to be the source of income for the family and in return expect to get involve in much decisions. However, it is interesting to discover that those husbands who have strong normative resources do not see that family decision control is the husband’s role. This indicates that the traditional Chinese husbands are confident enough to let their wives have the decision power over household purchase. In general, the results enhance further understandings of the family decision process. Some marketing implications can be drawn such as the direction of promotional strategy and the identification of target audience. The components of the study which are new to family decision making provide support for the investigation of new variables, such as spousal empathy, self involvement, evaluation of product decisions and marital power. Marital power was found to be influential in this study, which reflects a unique situation of the Chinese society when compared to western societies. Future research should continue to explore the linkages developed in this study and to develop a model of greater predictive power, probably by incorporating marital satisfaction and children influence.

This study provides an exploratory framework for further studies in the field. This study has been confined to two parent families only. The influences of other family members such as children have not been taken into consideration. May be in the future research, children should be considered as an additional variable in the family decision making model especially in the Chinese consumer market. The data were collected on a convenience sampling method, which might not be representative of Hong Kong. It is suggested to use a larger sample in a follow up study to be more representative, and also comparative studies can be conducted to have a better picture of Chinese culture in different Chinese societies. Since marketers are interested in the market expansion into China, Chinese markets such as PRC and Taiwan are worth studying in the future, so that generalizations can be drawn about Chinese husbands and their attitudes towards family purchase decisions.

References


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of Marriage and the Family, 34, 215-23.


