

PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt / Egyptology

MEASUREMENT OF BUYING ROLES IN FAMILY DECISION-MAKING PROCESS FOR GOLD JEWELLERY USING CORRESPONDENCE ANALYSIS GIRISH S PATHY, HAREESH N RAMANATHAN, EASWARAN IYER

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Girish S Pathy, Hareesh N Ramanathan, Easwaran Iyer. Measurement Of Buying Roles In Family Decision-Making Process For Gold Jewellery Using Correspondence Analysis girish S Pathy, Hareesh N Ramanathan, Easwaran Iyer-- Palarch's Journal Of Archaeology Of Egypt/Egyptology 18(6), 126-146. ISSN 1567-214x

Keywords: Physical Gold, Buyer Behavior, Correspondence Analysis, Family Buying Roles, Culture, Buying Roles, Family Decision Making.

ABSTRACT

Gold is a unique and significant commodity in social life across the world. It offers multiple values and appeals to multiple stakeholders; hence the purchase decision is also likely to be peculiar. Despite this the number of studies on consumer behaviour of gold in the field of management is limited. The present paper attempts to identify the consumer roles that different family members take up in the purchase of gold. The five types of consumer roles are initiator, influencer, decider, buyer and user. The researcher conducted a questionnaire survey among 210 married females to identify the person or group that takes up the buying role during a gold purchase in the family. It uses correspondence analysis to map the roles with the members taking up the role. The study brought out that women are involved in each of the decision roles; furthermore, the economic roles as decision making and buying is more of a man matter during gold purchases.

Measurement of Buying Roles in Family Decision-making Process for Gold Jewellery Using Correspondence Analysis

INTRODUCTION

Family is a critical decision-making unit. Family being a small group of different individuals, they exercise an influence over the other when it comes to decision-making. Understanding this interplay is very critical for marketers (Martónez & Polo, 1999). Most studies in the area have focussed on a few product categories to conclude on the roles of family members. There can be changes in decision roles according to product types (Burns & Granbois, 1980).

The roles played by man and women changes according to different aspects of the product. The key aspects have been identified as the number of salient features attributed, product importance, social conspicuousness, complexity etc. (Granbois, 1978). The unique characteristics call for replicating the study in a product with peculiar attributes. Most of the studies to assess the family decision roles have used durables to assess the influence. The present study would attempt to study family roles while buying gold Jewellery, as gold is a complex product, with a lack of clarity on the fundamental question of who owns the gold. It also offers three broad sets of benefits, namely Utilitarian, Hedonic and Symbolic Value.

Gold is a unique and versatile commodity. It is significant in economic and social life across the world. The importance of gold is more significant in emerging countries, as the commodity is a preferred form of discretionary spending (Liu, 2016). Gold, a store of value, is by nature, a very liquid asset; it is risk-free, as the depreciation physically is insignificant. The fact that it does not earn interest does not hinder it from being used as an investment option. As the peculiar characteristics of this commodity far outshine the problem

With the usage of gold as jewellery, coins and bullions, it takes the form of a durable consumer good, adding another dimension to the value (Vaidyanathan, 1999). The third dimension of gold is its cultural relevance, particularly in emerging countries as India and China (Ertimur & Sandıkcı, 2005). For most emerging countries as India, gold is a critical commodity due to the sheer volume demanded. The underlying reasons would also vary across geographies, cultures and subcultures due to the peculiarity of the commodity (Liu, 2016); this, calls for proper research on all aspects of gold buyer behaviour. Most studies related to gold in social sciences is limited to the economic or financial dimension of gold (Terence & Geoffrey, 2005). Some researchers have looked at gold demand from a macroeconomic perspective (Kannan & Dhal, 2008), while a few other studies learned about particular aspects of gold demand (Napompech & Ueatrakunkamol, 2010).

There lies a critical research gap in aspects related to Consumer Behaviour towards gold, as the area is deficient in extensive and comprehensive. The most fundamental understanding of consumer behaviour is to comprehend the customer. When it comes to gold, there is ambiguity even regarding the gender that has the upper hand in buying and owning gold. Some studies state that gold is a female commodity (Graeber, 2001), some studies that portray gold as an asset meant to represent the family fortune and well-being (Falzon, 2003).

However, it is interesting to note that a few other studies in which the gold that women wears is represented as the wealth of her husband (Hardiman, 1996). The ambiguity in the works of literature regarding this aspect leads to the question of who dominates the purchase decision of gold. One of the most popular models to identify this is the one devised by Philip Kotler that splits the roles of family members in buying decision into five, viz, initiator, influencer, decider, buyer and user (Philip Kotler, 2016). The roles of family members changes according to the commodity and context, the role shifts from male-dominated to democratic to female-dominated according to situations and products.

Motivation for the Study

Family buying is classified into individual and group buying situations. Typically, in case of products of relatively lower value buying, families make individual decisions. While the more important the product, the buying shifts from individual to group decisions (Polya & Szucs, 2013). One among the elements that determine the role in a purchase decision is the amount of knowledge the individual has about the product (Steg, Perlaviciute, Werff, & Lurvink, 2012). However, purchases in a family context are not only influenced by individual factors, but also based on the influence of other members in the family unit (Batra & Ali, 2015). Gold is considered as an important commodity due to its nature and multiple value perspectives, hence falls into group buying decisions. Families in the case of significant buying decisions work as a buying center, with different family members taking up different roles of the buying process (Mowen, 1993).

The relevance of the commodity considered for the study is evident when observed at from a macro perspective. The gems and jewellery industry contributes to 7 Percent of Indian GDP, 15.71 percent of merchandise exports, the country also accounts for almost 30 percent of the global consumption of gold (ET Online, 2018). The family buying decision of consumer behavior is crucial for marketers, the real target for the marketer is not an individual but the buying unit as a whole (Dobhal, 1999). The lack of proper consumer behavior related studies worked as a key driver for the authors to explore into this fundamental aspect of buying behavior.

This paper, hence, aims to identify the role of men and women in the family buying decision of gold. Moreover, it attempts to identify if there exists any domination about purchasing decision by either gender. This will work as a key insight for the players in the gems and jewellery industry in the country.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Relevance of Gold

Gold is a commodity that has a strong association with the history of the world. There have been wars fought in world history in the quest for gold. The commodity has several distinctive characteristics as malleability, density and the shine that lasts forever, making it significant. Gold is a symbol of wealth,

beauty, power, immortality and divinity. Two-third of the total gold sold is in the form of jewellery. These characteristics make gold a significant commodity, not only from the perspective of anthropology but also consumer behaviour (Witte & Oosterbaan, 2013).

The peculiarity of gold is evident in the fact that economists and politicians have continuously spoken against buying gold, due to its impact on International trade, leading to Current Account Deficits often. Despite this, India, the country; that supplies very little gold, is amongst the largest importer of the commodity. The modern economy considers gold as a dead investment, and there are discussions of putting gold to work; the gold monetization scheme launched in India was a measure in this direction. Gold is one of those rarest products or service that results in a net outflow from India (Gandhi, 2013).

Significance of Gold Buying in India

Gold has always fascinated Indians; it remains one of the most imported commodities in the country; it has a unique role in India, a commodity with value having a life of its own (Appadurai, 1986). The reason for this is the cultural value associated with the commodity. India is famous for its diverse mix of culture, resulting in diversity in tastes and preferences; despite the differences, the love for gold is consistent across the country; the love for gold has continued to grow since ancient times. It is a universally accepted medium of exchange and store of value. People seek different values of gold, beginning from its cultural value to the adornment value as well as a store of wealth, a source of hedging and a product offering economic security (Shankar & Shukla, 2017)

Gold and land are the most preferred investment option for Indians, among which the possibility to invest in small amounts for small quantities of gold makes it a more comfortable choice. Indians are known for investing in small amounts of gold whenever the family gets an extra income. Most of the gold above ground is in the form of ornaments (Bailey, 1957). The primary role of gold is as a form of adornment and a symbol of status. It is considered a unique asset due to the cultural value, and the commodity is protected by the families holding them (Prasad, 2010). It is considered a precious metal in India, while the part it plays internationally is that of a standard. Gold in India stands for auspiciousness and symbolizes beauty and lustre.

India had faced a slow down during 2019; the slowdown was predominant in rural India, the rural consumption fell to its most petite point in the last seven years (Nielsen, 2019); this was also the time when there was a substantial increase in gold prices, due to these factors the demand for gold jewellery in India fell to 544.6 Tonnes, from 598 Tonnes during 2018. Gold demand fell by 9 per cent, however this was a relatively moderate dip; since industries as automobile and FMCG had taken a drastic hit during the same period. An even more important statistic is that gold jewellery demand in value was higher (\$ 22,75,288) than the previous year (\$ 2,20,66,811), as a result of the higher price (Gupta, 2020).

World Gold Council (WGC) explains this obsession based on the central role that the metal has in the country's culture. The commodity as per Indian culture is considered as a store of value; symbolizes wealth and status and forms an inevitable part of most rituals. The demand for gold is highest among the rural population in the country; they hold a deep affinity for the gold that they stock; as per WGC, the reason for this obsession is the portability of gold and the security it offers as an investment (World Gold Council, 2018). The epicentre of gold consumption in India is Kerala. Kerala, that lies in the Southern tip of the country is a small State accounting to 3 to 4 % of the country's population, however, the state continuously accounts for almost 7 – 8% of the total gold demand (Larmer, 2009). The data collection was restricted to respondents from Kerala as the State continues to be a significant contributor to gold demand in the country.

Gold Buyer Behaviour

There are only a few comprehensive papers in the area of gold. A paper that carried an extensive review of the researches in the area of gold, brought out that there is an excellent collection of papers in the broad field. However, it reported that the amount of studies in the area of consumer behaviour in gold is minimal (Xiangyun Gao, 2018), revealing the vast scope for research in this field.

Gold and marriages

Gold is seen as an essential commodity during all auspicious occasions and is inevitable during marriages. During one of the most common forms of marriages in India, the Hindu marriages, the father, as per beliefs, makes a gift of the virgin (i.e., gold bejewelled daughter) to the groom, to earn the maximum Punya or penance (Mehrotra, 2004). A Gift of gold symbolizes lifelong relationship in the context.

Women and Gold

Indian culture identifies a close association between gold and women. This association is exclusive as every woman desire and possess some quantity of gold in the form of ornaments. Hence the role of gold is broadly two-fold in India; on the one side, it personifies beauty, while on the other, it is also considered as a source of economic security for them in times of need. In India, a woman personifies goddess Laxmi and hence the birth of a women child, particularly the first girl child, is greeted as a welcome to goddess Laxmi, and gifts of gold during this occasion by near and dear is a norm (Mehrotra, 2004). Literature point to the unsatiating desire of women for beautification as the key reason behind this craving they hold towards gold. The desire for beauty and gold's role in this has its origin from Indian culture, as there are symbolic associations between women, gold and beauty (Mehrotra, 2004).

Women, gold and God are tightly knit together; the view of God in gold is considered most auspicious; gold holds a vital role in the form of ornaments (draping) during auspicious occasions, women wear jewellery during auspicious occasions. At the same time, there is the practice of decorating deities with gold ornaments during significant days (Apffel Marglin, 1999).

The sumptuous personal decoration by women in India signifies material as well as social well-being. It is a necessary form of wealth, and hence gold is considered women's most valuable asset. Displaying jewellery is a norm in India, particularly for married women, and breaking bangles is a custom followed by widows as a symbol of her unfortunate fate. The Woman prefers to invest in gold as much as a man's preference to invest in land (Jacobson & Wadley, 1992). The logic behind this is that in a patriarchal setup, women are by tradition marginalized in terms of inheritance, production activity and other land-related affairs; their logic is to invest in something that is socially accepted (Aggarwal, 1994).

A discussion on women's role in gold in the middle east points to the role in the purchase of gold. It was identified that though in the middle east, most parts of the markets see more male visits, the case was different in the gold market. The women's presence was significant, often found in small groups, and often accompanied by male members. They also tended to engage enthusiastically in the buying process (Moors, 2013). Similarly, ownership and usage (adornment) of gold was a women's concern.

Gold plays a vital role in functions like marriage; the gold worn symbolizes the persuasive strength through the display of the asset of self; here, gold is seen as a visible property of the adorer (Munn, 1992). The statement that jewellery displays are to "Inspire in others acts of compliance, homage or recognition directed towards the person engaging in display" (Graeber, 2001) strengthens the view. Another dimension to this is that gold works as a clue about the family's fortunes than as a representation of the individual (Falzon, 2003), and the gold that women wear often represents the wealth of her husband (Hardiman, 1996).

These works of literature bring out the differences in gender dynamics concerning gold. The association of gold with tradition and culture adds strength to the views above. Different cultures and traditions associate different beliefs with gold, making it even more complicated to understand for a marketer. While looking into the women's involvement in the supply side of gold, the nearest evidence has been brought out in research conducted among artisanal and small scaling mining in Mount Kainidi in Papua New Guinea. This area holds a large community of Anga Small Scale Miners, the area with a 50% women population traditionally beliefs that mining is a man's job. The group even believes that women's presence in mines, particularly during menstruation, can be dangerous and is likely to pollute the gold (Moretti, 2006).

These connotations make it complicated for marketers to understand the customers and build the right strategy. It is crucial to identify these differences

across cultures and subcultures as cultural diversity can contribute to differences in beliefs and practices. One of the most critical understandings that a marketer needs about buyer behaviour is the roles played by each member during the purchase decision making. The reviews that will follow will attempt to uncover the progress made in this field over the years to identify the suitable model to measure the family decision roles while buying gold.

Family Decision-making Process

Early studies attempting to measure the role of family decision making in consumer behaviour dates back to the 1970s. Family buying was looked at as a holistic decision until the paper revealed the individual roles played by each member, specifically the wife and husband (Davis & Bricmont, 1974). This revelation brought a significant transformation in the field of Consumer Behavior. It brought out that the roles of individual members within a family matter when it comes to roles taken up during the purchase decision process. The maps that plotted the different roles played by wife and husband during the purchase of different products was the key output of the study. It brought out that there are significant differences according to category. This led to an explosion of studies in the area for the next decade and more. Moving forward, later in 1976, a research summed up the significant findings of the studies that had appeared in the area in the few years. There was a categorisation identified based on the products and roles played.

It brought out a critical summary based on all the studies reviewed. The first point was that the roles played by family members vary widely by product category. The second finding was that the roles within a product category changes based on specific purchase decisions and stages of the decisions. The third point of variability that they brought out was that the roles also change between families or family characteristics (Davis H. L., 1976). This understanding establishes the highly dynamic character and the need for numerous studies to identify the changes. The buying roles will be different according to product categories; it is also influenced by the nature or character of the family.

Further studies in the following decades explained that the roles of family members change over time. One such study identified the changing roles of family members. With more females bringing in incomes, taking a share of breadwinning for home, the roles began to shift. The reason for the shift is two. The first one is women's lack of time. The second one was that women often bring in part of the income or, at times, whole of the income (Ahlburg & De Vita, 1992). Hence to summarize, the traditional family assigned roles are no more what it is, the roles are shifting, and so is the influence of each in the purchase decisions.

The roles of females in family decisions were studied extensively in research that tested three hypotheses; the first hypothesis tested the possibility of variability in family members influence between product categories and the stage of decision making. It proposed to identify if females have better roles in

the traditionally male-oriented product decisions. The second hypothesis looked at the variability of family decision roles concerning specific decision areas within product categories. Finally, the different stages of the decision making process and variability of family decision making. The study brought out that Overall, women have gained more influence in most of the areas of decision making. The study brought out that there has been a shift in the pattern due to the changing roles. There have been specific areas as automobile, wherein overall, women have a more significant role, and in the case of services as vacation, females entirely dominated all the stages. Whereas there were some interesting findings, Television, for instance, is entirely dominated by Males. The study brings out some key inferences; it says that to change in employment pattern and culture, the role played by family members also changes, to be more precise the women have a more significant role in family decision making as a result of the changes in employment pattern and also cultural differences (Belch & Willis, 2002).

Though all these studies were around western countries, there are many facts which have gotten universal applicability; one, of the factors is the impact of individual's roles in family decisions, the second being the changes in roles that happens over time as a result of changes in culture, the third is the variability of the roles between product categories. This variability forms the base of the present study. A marketer needs to understand the roles played by members in family decision making. This understanding is critical for devising each element of the marketing mix.

To sum up, the purchase decisions vary from dominated by males to consensual buying and females dominated; this change according to culture, employment pattern and product category.

Types of Roles

Decision making related to How, what, when and how much to buy products is a complicated process. It involves a variety of roles and actors. The two types of roles that family members exhibit during the purchase are Instrumental roles and Expressive roles. Instrumental, also known as functional/economic roles, includes financial and performance roles, expressive roles relate to supporting other family members in decision making (Lindquist & Sirgy, 2003).

Individual Roles in Family Purchases

During the purchase, there are five roles that the different family members take up. Each role would be taken up by a person or a group of them in a family. The roles include the following,

Initiator – Person who thinks about the product, and he/she also gathers the needed information for the decision.

Influencer – The person whose opinions is of value, which can influence the purchase decision

Decider – This is the person with the financial authority who decides how to spend for the product.

Buyer – This is the person who would be the purchasing agent, who goes to the store and buys it.

User – The person who does the actual consumption or usage (Blackwell, Miniard, Engel, & Rahman, 2006).

A framework to identify the roles of husband and wives across cultures explains that when a husband dominates or shares all the five decision roles it is husband dominant. When wife dominates or shares all five decisions, it is wife dominant. If at least three of the five decisions are joint with balanced dominance, it is Syncretic. A decision is autonomic when not more than two of the five decisions are joint, but dominance is balanced (Hempel, 1974).

Based on the past studies in the area of gold, the researchers believe that women dominate most of the decision-making roles in the gold buying behaviour, based on which we propose the hypothesis formally,

H1 – Men dominates the decision making in all the roles in gold buying.

METHOD

Participants and Procedure

Kerala is the epicentre of gold consumption in India; the Per capita expenditure of rural Kerala on gold is Rs. 208.55; in urban Kerala, the same is Rs. 189.95, it is far ahead of all other States (Ghosal, 2019). Hence the respondents were chosen only from Kerala. Gold plays a critical role in marriages and works as a signifier of marital status in India (Mehrotra, 2004); an inevitable part of marriages in Indian society is the gifting of gold. It is deeply ingrained in the culture that almost half of the total annual gold demand is from marriages (World Gold Council, 2018).

With its role in marriages, the perception of women towards gold can be affected when she passes through the rituals of marriage. Hence it was decided to choose married women as the respondents. The questionnaire was administered among 210 married women residing in Ernakulam District of Kerala State identified through a snowballing method. The first few samples have been conveniently chosen from among known people who fall into the sample profile. References have been sought from each, and thus, the sample required for the study was gathered.

The researcher administered a closed-ended questionnaire that listed the five roles of family decision making. The respondents picked the person or group that takes up each of the roles during a gold purchase in the family. Women are chosen as respondents as studies in the fields of marketing, sociology, and anthropology have often been seeking information regarding the gender roles in purchase decisions from the female members of the family. Women responding regarding buying roles, more than being a convenient method,

have also been found useful (Davis H. , 1971). There are other shreds of evidence that the wife or the women in the family is gaining more importance in all decision areas in recent years (Belch & Willis, 2002).

A questionnaire has been used for the data collection - the questionnaire listed each of the roles and the descriptions for each mentioned in columns. The row heads included different members of the family who takes up the role. The respondents have been asked to associate each role with the person who is involved in the decisions. They were free to associate each decision roles with any person or group of people involved. The results thus obtained are presented in the correspondence table (Table 1), the correspondence table serves as an input for the correspondence analysis.

Role	Person Involved										Active Margin
	Mother	Mother & Father	Mother & Daughter	Mother & Son in law	Father	Father and daughter	Father & son in law	Daughter	Daughter & son in law	Son in Law	
Initiator	63	3	29	2	19	2	2	78	3	0	201
Influencer	37	8	22	6	27	7	6	56	13	11	193
Decider	12	18	5	2	26	2	37	22	46	25	195
Buyer	16	14	4	1	21	0	8	23	113	40	240
User	10	1	117	0	0	0	0	74	1	12	215
Active Margin	138	44	177	11	93	11	53	253	176	88	1044

Source: The Author

The numbers derived were consolidated and used for developing a map using correspondence analysis. The correspondence analysis technique brings out a graphical display of the rows and columns of a contingency table. It helps to plot a visualization of the relationships among the variable responses in a low-dimensional space. A representation in this format brings out a more

comprehensive picture of the relationships among pairs. A pairwise analysis otherwise would be less useful to bring out the same result (Heiser, 2001).

Analysis

The input, as in the correspondence table, have been used to generate the correspondence map. The statistical significance of the correspondence map has been presented in the summary table (Table 2).

Table 2: Summary Table								
Dimen sion	Singular Value	Inert ia	Chi- Square	Sig .	Proportion of Inertia		Confidence Singular Value	
						Cumul ative	Standar d Deviati on	Corre lation
					Acc ount ed for			2
1	0.699	0.48 9			0.62 6	0.626	0.019	0.269
2	0.43	0.18 5			0.23 8	0.864	0.028	
3	0.294	0.08 7			0.11 1	0.975		
4	0.139	0.01 9			0.02 5	1		
Total		0.78	814.15 4	.00 0 ^a	1	1		

Source: The Author

A Significance value of .000 (less than .05) proves that the association is statistically valid. Another critical factor to be considered is inertia; the, maximum number of dimensions is 4, it is crucial, to identify the optimum dimensions. In the present case, there are seven rows and ten columns; the, average dimension must account for 100 divided by the number of rows minus 1% in terms of total inertia for the rows. The same would be applied to the columns as well. Any dimension that accounts for more than the sum of these two is significant.

Rows = $(100 / 7-1) = 16.66$

Columns = $(100 / 10-1) = 11.12$

Rows + Columns = $11.12 + 16.66 = 27.77$

The dimensions that contribute more than the calculated inertia can be considered significant. Here the first dimension accounts for 62.6%, and the second dimension for another 23.8%. The cumulative contribution covers more than 86.4%, which makes it significant.

The small value of standard deviation (.019 and .028) for dimension one and two indicates that the results of the correspondence analysis will be consistent across different sample sets of the population. The slight correlation value establishes a difference between the two dimensions (Malhotra & Dash, 2015).

Correspondence Matrices

The graphs of correspondence analysis explain the proximity visually. The figure titled Row points for the role (Figure 1) represents the positioning of each of the role in a two-dimensional matrix. The proximity of each role can offer valuable insights into either dimension of the map.

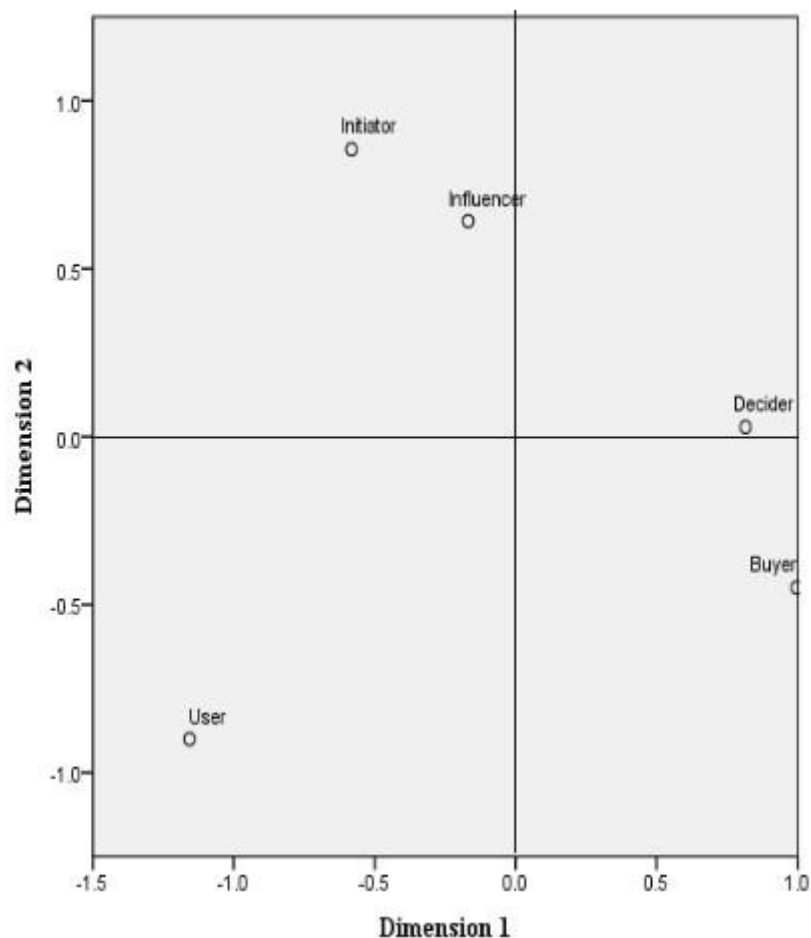


Figure 1 – Row Points for Family Roles

Source: The Author

A pattern is visible in the plot (Figure 1). The roles, initiator and influencer are lying in the same quadrant. While, decider and buyer are lying in closest proximity despite being in different quadrants. The following element user is away from all other roles. Influencer and initiator are expressive roles, while decider and buyers are functional or economic roles. In contrast, the role; user is lying in a low-low quadrant belonging to neither of the groups mentioned above. Hence the first dimension represents functional or economic roles, and dimension two represents expressive roles of family members.

Position of the Person Involved in Decision-making

The map (Figure 2) brings out the positioning of family members during the gold buying decision.

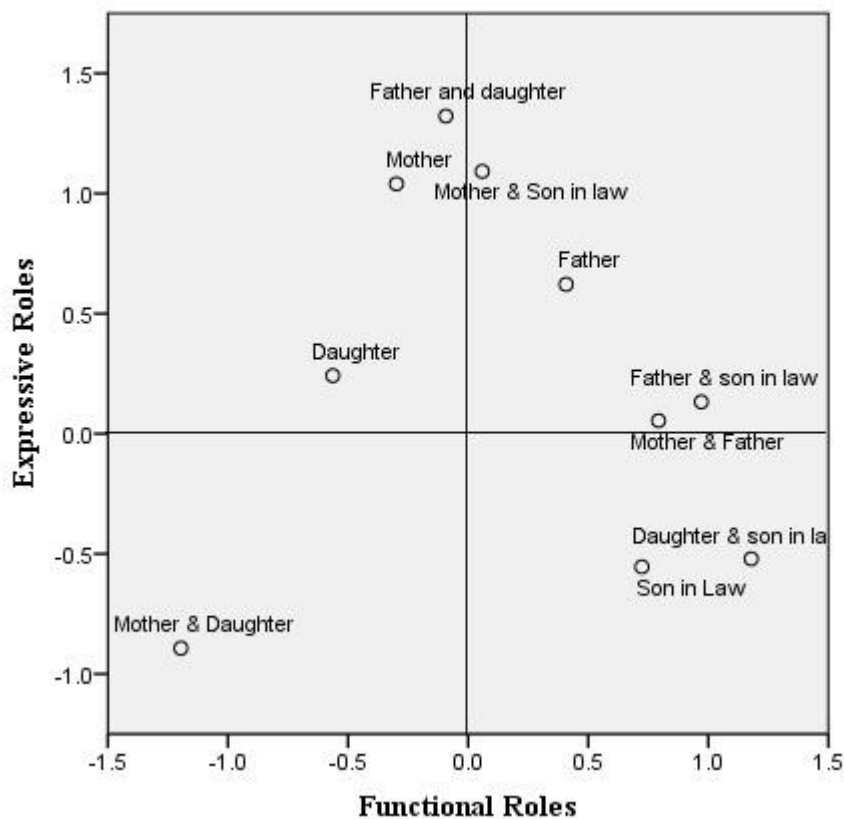


Figure 2 – Family Members Involved in the Purchase Decision

Source: The Author

It can be observed from the plot (Figure: - 2) that male members dominate the functional roles, while expressive roles are dominated by females. Overall, women have a role in almost all quadrants. Interpreting the combined plot would bring in more clarity to this. Studies have revealed that the primary expressive roles are mostly shared, with almost equal participation of members of both genders. At the same time, the functional roles as deciding, buying have been identified as male dominated roles (Verma & Kapoor, 2003).

Table 3: Plot Details Table for Customer Roles						
Role	Mas s	Score in Dimension		Inertia	Contribution	
		1	2		Of point to Inertia Dimension	of Of dimension to Inertia of Point

					1	2	1	2	Total
Initiator	0.193	-0.582	0.855	0.118	0.093	0.327	0.386	0.512	0.898
Influencer	0.185	-0.168	0.642	0.049	0.007	0.177	0.075	0.673	0.748
Decider	0.187	0.816	0.028	0.138	0.178	0	0.627	0	0.628
Buyer	0.23	0.997	-0.449	0.209	0.327	0.108	0.765	0.096	0.861
User	0.206	-1.157	-0.9	0.266	0.394	0.388	0.726	0.27	0.996
Active Total	1			0.78	1	1			

Source: The Author

The table (Table 3) reveals that roles as the initiator and influencer are loaded more towards Dimension 2, whereas the roles as decider and buyer fall on Dimension 1 of the map. Both roles that fall on Dimension 2 are expressive, while those loads towards dimension one is an economic role. The role, user, is placed away from others, as it does not fall into an expressive or economic role. This outcome strengthens the logic of profiling Dimension one as functional and two as expressive roles.

Combined Plot – Roles and Person

To gather more clarity on the proximity, a combined chart (Figure: 3) plotting both roles and people on the same map has been presented.

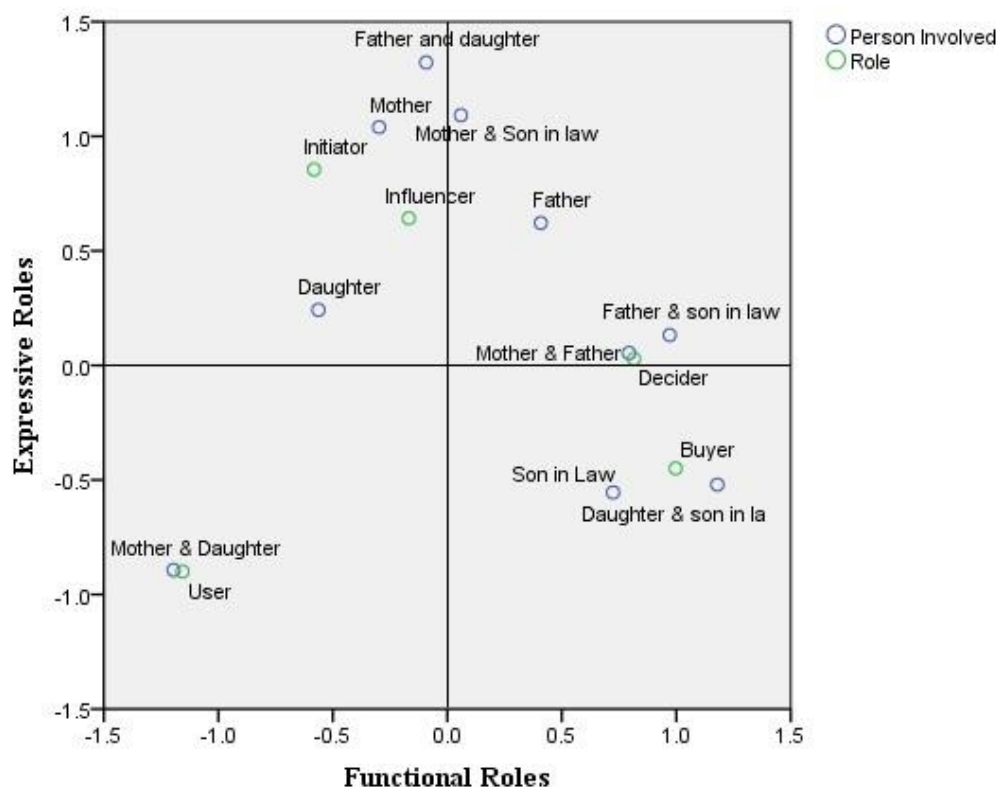


Figure 3 – Roles and Members Combined Correspondence Plot

Source: The Author

The plot (Figure: 3) reveals that the roles of initiator and influencer are placed on the higher scale in dimension two. The roles buyer and the user are falling together high on dimension one. In contrast, user role lies away from others, falling low on both, which means that there are broadly three roles; Expressive, functional and consumption.

DISCUSSION

Initiator – The most crucial initiator when it comes to gold buying in Kerala families is the mother or rather than the senior lady in the family, as the mother has been plotted close to the initiator’s role in the map. The next closest proximity is that of the mother and son-in-law, son-in-law has a vital role in the purchase of gold, and the study identifies that he has a decisive say in influencing gold buying. The next group of people who initiate is the father and daughter, while they are positioned slightly away from the role. Hence it can be summed up that the largest influencer in a family in gold buying decision is the mother. This find is obvious; one of the fundamental values that gold offers are adornment or hedonic value. Initiation being an expressive role, it is natural that women have a more considerable say. Here a significant inference is that the senior female members of the family has a more significant influence.

Influencer – Another expressive role. Daughter, father, mother and son in law are in almost equal proximities from the role influencer. Hence it can be

summed up that all the family members take up the role of an influencer when it comes to purchasing physical gold. The involvement of all members in the family in influencing the decision may be due to the peculiar character of gold; gold, is one of those rarest commodities that offer Symbolic, Hedonic as well as Utilitarian benefits (Pathy & Ramanathan, 2018).

Decider – This involves financial decision and hence more of a functional role. The group that is lying near the decider role is the mother and father. The next in proximity is the father and son-in-law; this, is probably due to the utilitarian value associated with investing in gold. The male member has been more involved in financial decisions, this outcome can be justified as gold is also seen from the perspective of investment, offering a utilitarian value (Qualls, 1987).

Buyer – For the role of buyer, son-in-law and daughter are positioned nearby. However, there are recent findings that there is a change in this aspect of the purchase of gold jewellery; it, has been reported that though this role is dominated by men, women are observed of being increasingly involved in the purchase of jewellery for self, from 2016-2017 the total number of women who bought gold have increased by 14% (Bergstein, 2017).

Finally, in the case of users of physical gold, it is observed that it is solely mother and daughter, that is the female members of the family.

As per the women members of the family, there is evident domination of women members as mother and daughter in initiating the decision and influencing gold buying. Going by the framework mentioned earlier for explaining the buying decision, the framework explained that when a member dominates or shares all five roles, then the decision can be called as dominated by that member (Hempel, 1974). Though the context is different, the logic fits the present study. The present study reveals that when it comes to buying gold, women members of the family (Mother or daughters) are dominating or sharing decisions in all the five roles.

Though there are no recent studies specifically about gold that attempts to find out the family roles, there are studies that attempted to identify the roles in other categories of commodities. Studies have brought out that women tend to play a more dominant role in buying durables, particularly for personal purposes (Juyal & Singh, 2009); this, adds weight to the argument that gold is a commodity that is more personal for females. In the case of industries, there are four key categories of industries, viz: food, fitness, beauty, and apparel, in the purchase decision of which women play a dominant role (Silverstein & Sayre, 2009). One contrasting view was regarding the attribute of the commodity purchased; it, is reported that females tend to dominate the purchase decisions of commodities, which can affect their own appearance, the appearance of their children and homes; these, refer to products with hedonic benefits.

Gold jewellery offers hedonic values, and hence the finding that the decision making dominated by females is in line with the same. However, the same

study reports that men tend to dominate the decision making when it comes to financial investment-related decisions; with, gold offering investment benefits, men also have to have an essential role in buying. This might be why men are identified as involved in the functional roles (Mastin, Coe, Hamilton, & Tarr, 2004).

Another key takeaway is that women members, other than being sole users, are entirely dominating influencer and initiator decisions, both of which are expressive roles. At the same time, male family members dominate the decision making and buying roles that are economic/functional. However, female members also play a part here. This mix of roles has been attributed to the multiple values that gold offers; like, utilitarian, hedonic and symbolic values (Liu, 2016), making it a vital commodity of the family.

Practical Implications

The study has considerable practical implications. First, the study suggests that buying behaviour towards gold is different from all other forms of commodities. This difference calls for detailed studies in all aspects of buyer behaviour in gold. This can help the marketers to improve the offering.

Secondly, the study's findings can be helpful, for gold marketers in deciding on the marketing communication strategy. This finding is critical to marketers; some studies delineate these differences in beliefs and buying methods based on brain structure. For example, it reports that women considered the character of the spokesperson than men do. In contrast, men considered price as more important, men and women perceive marketing communications or advertisements differently; for instance, in the case of advertisements of light-hearted snack foods, the author reports that men responded to slapstick humour while women ignored those (Pradeep, 2010).

As a whole, the overall communication needs to target women in terms of design and other physical properties of gold; again, selecting the right spokesperson is critical. However, men's role is essential, particularly when it comes to communication, related to pricing, returns, quality of gold in terms of hallmarking and the likes. In this case since men are giving importance to pricing, it is critical to properly communicate about this during the buying stage. Similarly, due to the mother's involvement in the family, communications related to tradition and customs are also vital.

Hence it will be ideal to change the communication method according to the stage of customer response hierarchy targeted. The Marketing communication tool targeted at the early stages of the buying process as attention and interest have to be designed to appeal to the women. While those that are meant to convince the customer in the decision making or purchasing phase can be targeted at men, focussing on the investment qualities of physical gold. Such material can include the in-store POP materials and sales person, communicating factors as making charges, repurchase policy, purity test, hallmarking etc.

Limitations And Future Research Directions

This study has a few limitations. The first one is that the respondents are limited to female family members; male members might probably have had a difference of opinions in at least a few aspects. Though the fact remains that this method has been proven in the past. The study is limited to Kerala, and the results cannot be generalized, though the researchers believe that gold being a culture good, is prone to influences from socio-cultural factors. Hence the studies have to be taken up at a micro level, or at least in clusters based on socio-cultural similarities.

The study is limited to the most basic aspect of consumer behaviour, hence offers ample scope for further research. Studies on other aspects of consumer behaviour also needs to be done in Kerala. The model can be replicated in other parts of the country and in between States. The exact needs to extend beyond the boundary of the country into other gold obsessed countries in the world. The area is less researched and critical; there is a rising need for consumer behaviour related studies into all aspects of gold across regions.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, while the male members of the family dominate the critical roles of decision making and buying. One of the most critical findings of the study was that female members have roles in each of the five functions. Hence it can be concluded that one cannot keep away women from gold and gold purchase decision; gold jewellery is a female property in India; this is often the only immovable property that women inherit. The observation stands by the argument that women take up a key role in buying gold (Moors, 2013). The most substantial part of women's wealth is spent on making new ornaments replacing the older ones for themselves and their daughters (Mehrotra, 2004). Most of the gold purchase is in the form of jewellery, however, the purpose, unlike a normal accessory, is the financial value that gold offers followed by ease of purchase, with factors as self-expression and prestige being irrelevant factors (World Gold Council, 2019) The findings of the present study strengthen the established, closely-knit relationship between women and gold in our society.

The adornment of jewellery for women in India gives both symbolic and hedonic benefits (Doranne, 1977). On the one side, it symbolizes several cultural connotations with women in India; it, is considered women's most valuable asset. This connotation holds true from the hedonic perspective of the commodity as well, which is gold's ability to enhance the beauty of the bejewelled. This hedonic property of gold means that the role that women have in buying the commodity will be enormous. Gold as an investment is the third angle. Among the roles mentioned, men share economic roles; this might be due to the investment property of gold.

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