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**INFLUENCE OF CHILDREN IN FAMILY PURCHASE DECISIONS:**

**The development and use of an observational scale  
as a method of measuring influence**

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the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Marketing,  
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## ABSTRACT

Although the influence of children in the family decision making process has been accepted as a force which neither academics nor practitioners can ignore, the degree and nature of this influence has not been satisfactorily established. This hiatus in the body of marketing knowledge provides the topic for this thesis.

A conceptual model linking the variables that affect household purchase decisions was formulated by surveying the relevant literature. This model serves both as a pedagogical framework within which to discuss the literature, and as a guide to the formulation of a set of research hypotheses for the work reported here.

Eighty-nine observations of family interactions during a simulated decision situation were recorded in the families' homes, using a video camera. The videotapes were later content-analyzed by three independent judges. Self-report data about perceived influence structures were collected at the same time.

The development of the Observed Influence Scale (OIS) takes primacy here. The scale was tested for reliability and validity and the results using

the scale were compared to those generated by the self-report scales. The OIS was then applied to provide data, over three stages of the decision process, to test the series of hypotheses about family decision-making mentioned above.

Multivariate analysis of variance was performed for each family role player, using the three stages of the influence process as the dependent variables and Social class, Sex-role orientation (SRO), Wife's occupation, Involvement, Decision styles and Gender composition of the children as the independent variables.

Several patterns of behaviour emerged. Significant effects were found for all the variables tested, although not all the research hypotheses were supported in the expected manner. The effects upon influence of Social class, SRO and Wife's occupation are interactive, the other three variables stand alone. It was found, *inter alia*, that mothers and elder sons, and fathers and elder daughters work together to gain influence in the family decision. The implications of the research for consumer behaviour theory and practice are discussed.

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Undertaking a research project of this magnitude is a daunting and lonely task. Although I had to travel the road alone, it is not true to say that I had no help in writing the thesis. On the contrary, so many friends and colleagues have helped in so many little ways that it is inevitable that some will be omitted here (through space constraint, not lack of appreciation).

On the technical side, I have been fortunate to have two good supervisors, both of whom have been constructive and helpful even though Consumer Behaviour is not their primary area of expertise. Professor Rod Brodie, (Head of Department at the University of Auckland) is an experienced researcher and has given me both useful advice and an extraordinary amount of support around the workplace. Professor Don Scott (Southern Cross University, New South Wales) has offered a stream of specific advice about technical matters and the overall research methods used, as well as personal encouragement - thanks to both of you.

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meticulous inspection of an earlier draft, which resulted in a complete re-analysis of the tapes in order to identify better the stages the decision process, a different analysis approach being adopted, and consideration of a number of other issues which often required new thought, new analysis and new text. The thesis is far stronger than it might have been had not Professor Woodside had the courage to be so hard. Dr Roger Marshall (Nanyang Technological University, Singapore) is a friend and ex-colleague of long standing, who has shown genuine interest in every aspect of the thesis development and execution right from the start - this has made a lonely process a great deal easier to cope with.

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