Adolescents as Consumer Gatekeepers: Digital Influence, Family Purchases and Parent–Child Perception Gaps

Adolescents increasingly act as gatekeepers in family purchasing decisions, yet little is known about which commercial communication sources are associated with this prescriptive role and whether parents understand these dynamics accurately. This study adopts a dyadic design based on matched surveys with 1,088 adolescents aged 12–17 and one of their parents in Spain. Adolescents reported their reliance on advertising, influencer content, social media recommendations, expert reviews, user reviews, and peer opinions, as well as their involvement in family purchase decisions. Parallel regression models showed that influencer communication, traditional advertising exposure, and expert reviews were positively associated with adolescents' prescriptive role, while peer influence showed no significant effect. Paired-sample comparisons revealed small differences in perceived influence levels, and intradyadic correlations indicated moderate agreement regarding adolescents' overall participation in family purchases. However, parents tended to attribute greater importance to general social media influence and less to informational sources such as reviews. These findings highlight perceptual gaps in families' understanding of advertising influence and underscore the need to rethink parental mediation and advertising literacy strategies in digitally mediated consumption environments.

Adolescent Consumers; Influencer Marketing; Family Decision-Making; Parent–Adolescent Dyads; Consumer Socialization.