THE INFLUENCE OF INVOLVEMENT WITH THE PRODUCT IN THE PURCHASE INTENTION AND THE USE OF DECISION STRATEGIES

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SUMMARY

This study aims to evaluate the relationship between the dimensions of involvement with the product, the degree of individual maximization and the intention of buying it. Beyond these aspects the study evaluated the relationship between purchase intent and decision strategies used by individuals. A study was conducted with 458 Web respondents and used the method of structural equations to obtain the results. It was found that the higher the degree of engagement (in four of the five dimensions studied), the greater the intention to purchase, and the higher the purchase intention, the smaller the use of decision strategies. As a result it was also found that even the higher the degree of maximization of the individual, the higher the use of decision strategies.

Keywords: *consumption, satisficiers, maximizers*

1. INTRODUCTION

Most of the twentieth century was marked by the existence of a consumer society. On the other hand, if there was this consumer society, according to Lipovetsky (2007), from the 1990s, a new society was imposed: the hyper consumption society.

As pointed out by Bauman (2007), the consumer society is based on the premise of satisfying human desires in a way that no past society could do or dream. The promise of satisfaction, however, will only remain just as seductive while the desire goes unfulfilled; and what's more important, while there is a suspicion that the desire was not full and completely satisfied. Establish easy targets, ensure ease of access to goods suitable to the targets, as well as the belief in the existence of objective limits to the 'legitimate' and "realistic" desires – this would be as the announced death of the consumer society, the consumer industry and Consumer Markets. The non-satisfaction of desires and the firm belief that every act which aims to satisfy them leaves much to be desired and can be improved, are the drivers of that society.

In the consumer society, the satisfaction does not remain permanent, caused by the depreciation of consumer products soon after they were presented to the universe of consumer desires. The alternative used in this society is to meet the needs in such a way that once served this wish, it creates new demands. The satisfaction of these needs aims to provide emotional experiences, welfare increases, health, communication, among others.

Being then the consumption a common practice of the present society, the problem of this study is related to questions such as: what is the relationship between involvement with the product and purchase intent? Which is the relationship between purchase intention and the use of decision strategies? Which is the relationship between the degree of maximization of the individual in relation to consumption and its intention to purchase and use the of decision strategies?

The theoretical framework of this study refers to the decision theory and its prospects to the intention of purchasing and the use of decision strategies.

2. DECISION THEORY

People's lives are bounded by decisions made consciously or not, generating good or bad results. In fact, decisions are crucial aspects to deal with the uncertainties and the daily challenges (HAMMOND; Keeney; Raiffa, 2004).

The classical theory of the decision-making process takes into account that individuals possess all the relevant information about the options available for their decision, knowing the consequences of each of these options, being sensitive to differences between options and fully rational in choosing an option (Sternberg, 2000). The choice, according to this theory, aims to maximize the economic result.

In 1738, the mathematician Bernoulli proposes another theory, Utility Theory, proclaiming that individuals seek actually maximize the utility that provides an item and not necessarily its economic value. He assumes that the economic value of an item is equal for everyone, but its usefulness depends on the particular circumstances of the individual. Thus, subjectivity was introduced to the theory of decision, but nevertheless, there is in this theory a large portion of attribution of rationality to individuals.

In the case of Utility Theory, it is necessary to conceptualize the figure of the rational agent that represents an individual who acts and makes decisions based on an ordination of preferences of the same. The rational agent performs the decision by making efficient use of information, using their knowledge of the environment that is acquired by past experience (which makes possible the modeling), restrictions (such as duties and obligations, laws) and the expectations of benefit / usefulness of shares and the chances of success.

The agents have knowledge of the cost / benefit relation of each of the options that are presented in each of the multiple criteria analyzed and thus after comparisons among the options, the choice would take place so as to maximize not the economic outcomes themselves, but the expected utility of these economic values (von Neumann, Morgenstern, 1944). The greater the number of alternatives, the greater the probability of a most useful alternative to the decision maker.

The Bernoulli's theory was forgotten and the concept of utility was rediscovered several times during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Furthermore when economists began using the utility in their analysis, by the nineteenth century, the use of the concept was restricted to the case without uncertainty, except brief passages in which uncertainty was generally handled in a formal way. The most influential rediscovery of utility was made in the late eighteenth century by Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832), under the aegis of his utilitarian philosophy. Utilitarianism was based on hedonism of the ancient Greeks: individuals act in order to seek the greatest possible happiness.

Simon (1957) proposed the theory of bounded rationality, showing that a decision maker can not get access to all the possibilities of action. This is due to the physical impossibility of having access to all information and even to process them, even only because there is a high cost about the process.

Firstly, the concept represents the idea that the Decision Maker was faced with the need to improve various, sometimes conflicting, objectives. Secondly, rather than assuming a fixed set of alternatives, among which the decision maker has chosen, there is a process for the generation of alternatives. Third, he argued that individuals had difficulty in providing original solutions to problems. Finally, instead of assuming the maximization of a utility function, Simon (1957) included a satisficing strategy. This strategy, he said, makes that frequently decision makers accept a first satisfactory decision instead of maximize the results with their decision, optimizing resources they have in decision making process. Individuals could then be categorized as satisficers and maximizers.

One would expect, then, that maximizers, as proposed by Schwartz (2004), had the following behaviors:

1. More engagement in comparisons between products, both before and after making buying decisions;
2. take longer than satisficers to decide on a purchase;
3. spend more time than satisficers comparing their purchasing decisions with the decisions of others;
4. be more likely to experience regret after a purchase;
5. be more likely to spend time thinking about hypothetical alternatives to the purchases made;

Sagi and Friedland (2007) indicated that the increase in the number of alternatives is positively correlated to the amount of regret caused not only by the most attractive option is not chosen, but by the positive attributes aggregated concerning all the options not chosen. There is a direct link between the tendency to maximization and repentance (Schwartz et al., 2002).

IYENGAR, Wells and Schwartz (2006) proclaimed that maximizers, in general, obtain better results than the satisficers but nevertheless they indicate lower rates of satisfaction with their choice. In addition to this fact, maximizers are more pessimistic, with more stress and tired during the choice process, while satisficers have lower cognitive dissonance (CHOWDHURRY; Ratneshwar; MOHANTY, 2009). This is due to the fact that in decisions involving multiple items or attributes, there is a doubt from maximizers if they were able to optimize the choice. Thus, maximizers are more motivated to examine the alternatives (CHOWDHURRY; Ratneshwar; MOHANTY, 2009).

3. INVOLVEMENT WITH THE PRODUCT

The studies on involvement were originated in social psychology, more specifically in the theory of social judgment, considering how individuals judge the messages they receive. Such an approach has been used to explain attitudes and changes in attitudes of individuals. In this context, the notion of "ego involvement" refers to the importance of social issues in the life of an individual. In order to have an involvement of the ego is necessary that this issue is so important to the point that the subject indentifies himself to it, that is, bring it as part of his identity. Therefore, a person called "ego involved" with a question, is a person strongly committed and identified with this issue (SHERIF and SARGENT, 1947).

Applying this concept to consumer behavior, in his seminal study Krugman (1967) used the concept of engagement to differentiate people who carefully analyzed the advertising from those who did not engage in this activity intensively. Over time, many researchers were interested in studying how people get engaged with an object. And despite the general recognition that this is an important issue in understanding consumer behavior, there is no consensus about the concept of this theoretical construct.

As pointed out by Rothchild (1979), consumers differ in their decision-making processes, the amount of information used in addition to the way they process the information they have. Also companies define their strategies and direct their marketing communications according to the level and type of involvement of its consumers. As Michaelidou and Dibb (2008) pointed out, the variable involvement can be used to segment consumers in low medium and high involvement groups, and therefore be guided by different promotional strategies.

Kapferer and Laurent (1985) consider that the involvement is a complex variable that can not be understood by means of just one factor. These authors suggest five factors or background for engagement: (1) the perceived importance of the product; (2) the perceived risk associated with the purchase of the product; (3) the possibility of risk; (4) the symbolic value attributed by the consumer to the product, its purchase or consumption; and (5) the hedonic value of the product, its emotional appeal and its ability to provide pleasure and affection.

The authors Jain and Srinivasan (1990) developed a scale to measure the involvement called New Profile (NIP-New Involvement Profile). This scale has fifteen items, three for each of the five dimensions: relevance, pleasure, symbolic value, importance of risk and probability of risk.

The relevance concerns the importance and significance of the product to its consumer (ZAICHKOWSLY, 1985). Pleasure concerns the hedonic value of the product, its emotional appeal and its ability to generate pleasure and affection (KAPFERER; LAURENT, 1985; HOLLBROCK, 1988). Symbolic value is related to what the product represents and symbolizes for consumers (Bauer, 1960). Risk importance refers to the risk perception associated with the purchase of the product, more specifically the negative consequences that a bad purchase can generate. (BAUER, 1960, KAPFERER; LAURENT, 1985). Risk probability, as the name suggests, refers to the probability of making a "wrong" choice in buying a particular product (BAUER, 1960).

3. METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

From the theoretical framework it was proposed a reference model of analysis that is in Figure 1. A structured questionnaire for data collection was built. This questionnaire mixes scales already validated in other studies and scales built for this study. Scales used for each construct used measures ranging from 0 to 10, 0 being complete disagreement and 10 full agreement with the statement.

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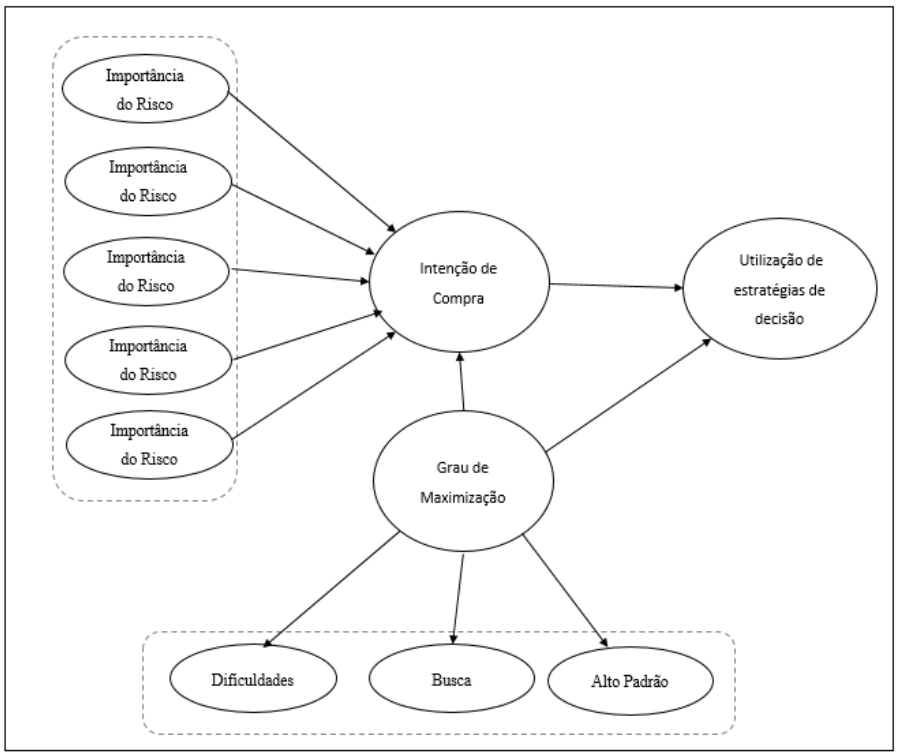

Figure 1: Theoretical model evaluated by the study
Source: Prepared by author

To assess the construct involvement with the product, we used the scale NIP (New Involvement Profile) proposed by Jain and Srinivasan (1990), which is thought to be the most comprehensive and most suitable scale to the objectives of this study, corroborating the thought of Fonseca and Rossi (1998) who argue that in addition to enabling the measurement of engagement for different product categories, the scale of Jain & Srinivasan (1990) absorbs all sizes and ways in which the engagement is formed.

To evaluate the maximization degree of individuals, it was used a scale proposed by Schwartz et al (2002). In such a range, the lower end (lower scores) of the items are concerned to the satisficiers and the extreme superior to the maximizers. It is noteworthy that such a scale has three dimensions: volume of search / search for alternatives, difficulty choice and requirement level.

To evaluate the purchase intent, it was used the scale proposed by Putrevu (1994). To evaluate decision strategies was created a scale containing the following items:

- I would seek more information to make a more assertive decision
- I would decrease the number of alternatives to be considered
- I would seek the help of someone to take my decision
- I would prefer to wait and make the decision later
- I would have difficulty to choose between the options

Data collection took place over the Web through a questionnaire using the LimeSurvey software and a Programming was done to allow it to be presented to each respondent in a random scenario among 12 situations. This procedure aimed to randomize the profile of the respondents for each scenario and allows greater variability in the measured constructs. It was sent a link to a diverse mailing containing individuals from different socioeconomic classes, age groups, gender and education. The questionnaire was kept in the air from the day 20 December 2013 to 5 January 2014.

The scenarios were created from real deals available in e-commerce sites, with prices omitted to avoid them to be used summarily used as the sole decision criteria.

It should be noted that the choice of working with an online questionnaire was made because the questionnaire be better understood in a self-filling process, since the respondent would need time to evaluate the products with its

features. The presence of an interviewer could inhibit a respondent who experienced greater degree of confusion. Another relevant aspect is that as the options presented are original from the internet, using the same means be more consistent with a more realistic situation scenario.

4. PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

The total sample consisted of 458 respondents, and about the same number of men and women (48.9% and 51.1% respectively). The education level showed varied with a greater tendency to focus on higher levels of education (49.5% have incomplete or more education). With regard to family income, 24.3% have incomes above R $ 8,295.00.

Products were presented randomly to respondents, ie, for each respondent a scenario with two products was offered. This allowed a spread of the sample among the 12 options provided, with a number of responders per scenario from 27 to. 48

To evaluate the proposed model based on variables defined for each construct, it was used the technique of structural equation modeling. As proposed by Hair et al (2005), this technique is an extension of several multivariate techniques and allows to represent unobserved concepts and to estimate multiple and interrelated dependence relationships and their use. An initial evaluation study of missing data and outliers is required for use of such a technique.

As the questionnaire was completed via the Web, the respondent was able to complete the survey only if all answers were filled, with no missing data as well. For identification of univariate outliers, it was done the standardization of variables and then it would be evaluated cases with scores greater than 3.28 for that variable. The standardization is to express the variables in terms of standard deviation units. The operation consists in subtracting the mean and dividing by the standard deviation, so that they have zero mean and variance equal to one. However, no variable values above the threshold were detected, then indicating the non-existence of univariate outliers.

Since the variables of the constructs were treated in a multivariate way, we sought to evaluate the existence of multivariate outliers by the distance D2 of Mahalanobis (KLINE, 1998). Under the assumption of multivariate normality, the value D2 has a chi-squared distribution with K (number of variables) degrees of freedom (Mingoti, 2005). This makes it possible to classify multivariate outliers if the probability associated with the chi-square distribution is less than 0.1% (Tabachnick; FIDEL, 2001). 24 cases with probability of occurrence of D2 lower to 0.1% were found. However, according to Hair et al (2005), the observations should be removed only if there is demonstrable evidence that they are truly out of the ordinary and that are not representative of any comments in the population. None of the cases could truly be identifiable as multivariate outliers and were kept that way. After such assessments, we proceeded to the adjust the structural equation model.

The first phase of adjustment of the structural equations model constitutes the evaluation of the measurement model. The first rated criterion was the reliability of internal consistency. Chin (1998) indicates that it shall be evaluated mainly according to the reliability and that this value should be greater than 0.7. Churchill (1979), mentioned by Henseler (2009) recommends eliminating measurement model indicators if your load is less than 0.4 and its removal greatly increase the composite reliability. The items withdrawal procedure was performed and the reliability values comprised by construct vary from 0.770 to 0.936.

The constructs that presented less extracted variance were the ones of hard decision (0.460) followed by the search for alternatives (0.476). The remaining constructs have extracted variance ranging from 0.503 to 0.830. It was admitted convergent validity for each of these constructs as it was attested via exploratory factor analysis the one-dimensionality of the same, in addition to being at the level proposed by Fornell and Larcker (1981). In addition to this fact, Bollen (1989) suggests a level of 0.4, then validating all constructs.

The significance of the coefficients was evidenced by a bootstrap test with the same number of cases in the sample. In this stage, the relationship between the size of the involvement dimension named importance of risk did not result as significative, as well as the relationship between the degree of maximization and purchase intention. Removed the non-significant ways, it obtained as final result the model shown in Figure 2.

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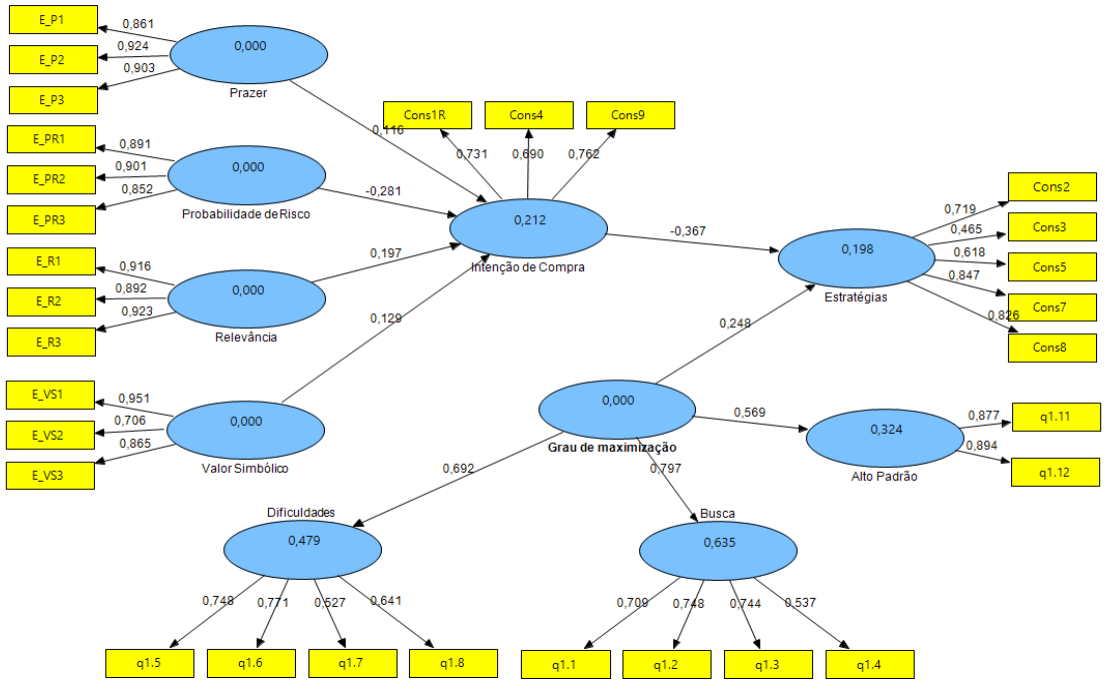

Figure 2: Final model estimated
Source: Research Data

5. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

Figure 2 shows the estimated coefficients and the R2 of the endogenous variables. It is noteworthy that the construct of the individual degree of maximization was estimated as a latent variable of second order The results found in the final adjusted model (Figure 2Figure 2) indicate that 21.2% of the variability in purchase intent can be explained by the remaining factors of the involvement with the product. The relationship of the dimension of probability of risk with the intention of buying is negative, ie, the higher the perception of the importance of negative consequences associated with the probability of the consumer to make the wrong purchase, the lower its intention to purchase. It is noteworthy that this dimension is also the one with the highest factorial load in magnitude (0.281), contributing more to the explanation of the purchase intent variability.

The purchase intent in turn has a negative relationship with the utilization of decision strategies, ie the higher the purchase intention, the lower the use of support strategies.

Also noteworthy is that there is a positive relationship between the degree of maximization of the individual and the use of decision strategies. This means that the more the individual tends to be a maximizer, plus it makes use of decision support strategies. Jointly with the intention of purchase, about 19.8% of the variability of the use of decision strategies is explained. Also relevant is the indication of no previous significant relationship between the degree of maximization of the individual and his intention to purchase the product.

Non-standardized scores were obtained from constructs operationalized in the study. The degree of maximization of individuals had a mean of 5.3 and standard deviation of 1.62, the intention of buying an average of 5.5 and standard deviation of 2.28 and the use of decision strategies an average of 5.6 and standard deviation of 2.32. Through the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was observed that these three outcome variables have normal distribution.

With such result, more than 50% of individuals in the sampling can be considered as maximizers (on a scale from 0 to 10 they have a score higher to5).

6. CONCLUSION

Having more than 50% of individuals classified as maximizers and also that the greater the degree of maximization, the greater the use of decision support strategies, it is latent that companies need to act in order to achieve such individuals when they seek sources of information, support in others and even seek to understand the attributes that facilitate them to take a decision.

The study, despite taking into consideration various products and to present them at random, did not happen in a real purchasing environment. The simulation may cause errors especially at the individual maximization level and in his level of use of decision support strategies. In this sense, it is suggested for the deepening of the thema the execution of an experiment in real purchasing situation.

As there was a low percentage of explanation of the variability of intent to purchase and the use of strategies (21.2% and 19.8% respectively), it is suggested to include new independent variables that can increase this checked explanation power.

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