

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT VS. PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT IN FAMILY CONSUMPTION: A MARKETING PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

This conceptual study explores the critical distinction between parental involvement and parental engagement within the context of family consumption. While both concepts are often used interchangeably, they represent fundamentally different forms of parental participation in children's consumer behavior. Parental involvement reflects a more passive, supervisory role in consumption-related decisions, whereas parental engagement emphasizes active collaboration, shared decision-making, and value co-creation between parents and children. Drawing on consumer behavior theories, the customer journey framework, and service-dominant logic, this study provides a comprehensive theoretical analysis supported by a narrative literature review. More than 40 peer-reviewed publications indexed in Scopus, Web of Science, and other reputable academic databases were synthesized to build a theory-driven conceptual framework. The proposed model illustrates how parental roles influence different stages of the customer journey, offering strategic insights for marketers targeting family-based consumers. By highlighting these distinctions, this paper contributes to the marketing literature by clarifying parental roles in shaping consumption decisions and proposing implications for segmentation, communication strategies, and engagement-based branding. The study particularly addresses the Indonesian context, where parental influence plays a unique role in household decision-making.

Keywords: parental involvement, parental engagement, family consumption, customer journey, consumer behavior

INTRODUCTION

This section contains the research background, objectives, contributions (research benefits from theoretical and practical), novelty should be explicitly written, research results and implications (Practical advice based on research results). Contains the background, research objectives and scope of discussion.

The landscape of family consumption has undergone a seismic shift, particularly with the pervasive influence of digital technologies and the rise of a consumer-centric ethos (Tinson & Nancarrow, 2005). Parents, who were once the undisputed arbiters of consumption choices within the family unit, now navigate a complex terrain where their roles are increasingly multifaceted and nuanced (Chavda et al., 2005). This transformation necessitates a critical examination of how parental influence manifests in contemporary consumption patterns, especially considering the evolving dynamics between parents and children in the decision-making process (Chavda et al., 2005). The digital age has ushered in an era where children possess unprecedented access to information, wielding considerable influence over family purchasing decisions, thereby compelling marketers to acknowledge and adapt to this shifting power dynamic (Shim et al., 2011). At the heart of this exploration lies a fundamental issue: the often conflated and indiscriminate use of the terms "parental involvement" and "parental engagement" in both academic literature and practical marketing strategies within the Indonesian context. This lack of conceptual clarity not only obfuscates the true nature of parental influence but also hinders the development of targeted and effective marketing interventions aimed at families. The blurring of lines between parental involvement and parental engagement warrants careful scrutiny, as it potentially undermines the

effectiveness of marketing strategies and limits the understanding of family consumer behavior (Bartoli, 2022). The primary objective of this article is to provide a clear and concise differentiation between parental involvement and parental engagement, elucidating their distinct conceptual underpinnings and practical implications within the realm of family consumption. By delineating the nuances of each construct, this study aims to provide a more refined understanding of how parents influence and are influenced by their children's consumption choices.

This paper seeks to contribute to the field of family consumer behavior by offering a novel perspective on the distinct roles parents play in shaping children's consumption patterns. Ultimately, it seeks to contribute to the broader field of marketing management, offering insights into how companies can more effectively engage with families by recognizing the varying degrees and types of parental influence. The study will explore the subtle yet significant differences between parental involvement, which often entails a more passive or supervisory role, and parental engagement, which signifies a more active and collaborative approach to consumption decisions. In the Indonesian context, where cultural norms and familial structures play a significant role in shaping consumer behavior, this distinction is particularly relevant. By highlighting these differences, the research aims to provide a more nuanced framework for understanding family consumption dynamics and developing targeted marketing strategies that resonate with diverse family structures and parenting styles.

The novelty of this paper lies in its conceptual differentiation between parental involvement and parental engagement within the context of family consumption, a distinction that remains underexplored in marketing literature. By bridging these constructs with consumer behavior theories and the customer journey framework, this study provides new insights into how parental roles influence child-centered purchasing decisions.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS

This section examines relevant theoretical frameworks and existing literature to establish a strong foundation for understanding the nuances between parental involvement and engagement.

Parental Involvement

Parental involvement, at its core, refers to the extent to which parents participate in their children's lives, encompassing various activities and decisions (Galindo & Sheldon, 2011). It often manifests as parents supporting their children within the educational context and beyond (Hibi & Assadi, 2021). However, research indicates that parental involvement is not a monolithic construct; it is multifaceted, encompassing diverse activities like attending school events, assisting with homework, and setting expectations for academic achievement (Xu, 2017). Parental involvement, according to some scholars, includes emotional input such as chatting with children and specific efforts made by parents for the healthy development of their children like buying books and telling stories to them (Wei, 2022). Within the context of consumer behavior, parental involvement can manifest in various ways, such as parents monitoring their children's media consumption, setting limits on screen time, or guiding their purchasing decisions to align with family values and budgetary constraints. Parental involvement has been identified as a critical factor in children's development and educational outcomes (Han & Hock, 2023). Parental involvement includes activities of raising kids with full support and care, providing them home environment that support their studies (Musengamana, 2023).

Supportive buying behavior, where parents provide resources and guidance to facilitate their children's consumption choices, is closely linked to parental involvement. This behavior may range from purchasing educational materials to providing access to extracurricular activities that enhance their children's skills and knowledge. Parents are the initial teachers for their children, from whom children learn from the very beginning of their lives, watching them very closely, and using what they learn from their parents in their daily lives (Shah et al., 2020). Parental involvement plays a key role in children's learning, and it is an inclusive term that involves a lot of different activities like taking

care of children at home, helping children with homework, discussion with teachers, taking part in school activities and participating in school governance (Shao et al., 2022). Parents who are actively involved in their children's lives tend to foster a supportive environment that promotes learning, exploration, and responsible decision-making.

Parental Engagement

Parental engagement transcends mere involvement, signifying a deeper, more reciprocal relationship between parents and children, characterized by shared experiences, mutual learning, and co-creation. Parental engagement should focus on what parents do to support learning of their children in school and what they do to improve their children's learning at home. At its core, parental engagement emphasizes the collaborative aspect of parenting, where parents actively seek to understand their children's perspectives, interests, and aspirations. This collaborative approach extends beyond simply providing resources or setting boundaries; it involves actively participating in the child's journey, fostering open communication, and empowering them to make informed choices. Parental engagement is enhanced when parents feel that the school values their contributions and when educators and parents engage in respectful, two-way communication. Within the realm of consumer behavior, parental engagement can manifest as parents and children jointly researching products, discussing their needs and preferences, and making purchasing decisions together.

The concept of co-creation is central to parental engagement, highlighting the collaborative process through which parents and children jointly shape consumption experiences. Co-creation involves actively involving consumers, in this case, children, in the design, development, and delivery of products or services, thereby enhancing their perceived value and relevance. Instead of just providing for their children's consumption, engaged parents work together with them to explore possibilities, weigh options, and make decisions that reflect both individual and family goals (Passey et al., 2010). Parental engagement in children's education is important because the children feel more confident and comfortable in their learning with their parents being involved (Hafiz & Farik, 2017).

Parental engagement is linked to long-term brand loyalty and the cultivation of enduring value within families (Hamidun et al., 2019). Brands that prioritize engagement strategies, such as creating interactive experiences, soliciting feedback from parents and children, and fostering a sense of community, are more likely to cultivate strong emotional connections with consumers and foster brand loyalty over time. By actively engaging parents and children in the brand experience, companies can create lasting impressions, build trust, and ultimately drive long-term value for both the brand and the consumer.

Family Consumer Behavior

The family stands as a fundamental unit of analysis in understanding consumer behavior, exerting a profound influence on individual preferences, purchasing decisions, and consumption patterns. The theoretical framework proposed by Belch and Willis offers valuable insights into the intricate dynamics of family decision-making processes, elucidating how different family members wield influence and contribute to shaping consumption choices. In their study, Belch and Willis describe stages of decision making process of consumer buying behavior as problem recognition, search for information, alternative evaluation and selection, and post purchase behavior. The family is the most important consuming unit in any society, where the habits of consumption and brand loyalties are developed (Jamil et al., 2017).

Children's influence on their parents' purchasing decisions has undergone a notable transformation in recent years, reflecting the shifting dynamics of family relationships and the growing prominence of youth culture. Children are becoming more involved in family decision making because of increasing education, media influence, and smaller family size (Hussain & Rashid, 2018). As children become more knowledgeable, digitally savvy, and brand-conscious, their opinions and preferences carry increasing weight within the family unit. Parents are looking for advice from

their children regarding many purchase decisions which has an impact on how business firms advertise their products.

Parental styles exert a significant influence on children's consumption patterns, shaping their attitudes, values, and behaviors related to purchasing and usage.

Service-Dominant Logic and Customer Journey

Service-Dominant logic provides a compelling framework for understanding the evolving role of parents as co-creators of value within the context of family consumption, highlighting the shift from traditional product-centric approaches to more collaborative, experience-driven models. Service-Dominant logic emphasizes the importance of co-creation, where customers actively participate in shaping the value proposition and influencing the overall service experience. In the context of family consumption, parents actively collaborate with their children to define needs, explore options, and co-create consumption experiences that align with their individual and collective goals. Households are the consumers of most products, and many members of the household can make their decision to buy a product (Németh, 2019).

Involvement and engagement manifest differently across various stages of the customer journey, influencing how parents and children interact with brands, products, and services. The customer journey encompasses the entire spectrum of interactions a customer has with a brand, from initial awareness to post-purchase evaluation. Engaged parents take a more proactive and collaborative role, actively seeking to understand their children's needs and preferences and working together to co-create meaningful experiences (Kaur & Singla, 2018).

Within the realm of education, parental involvement may entail attending school events or assisting with homework, while parental engagement extends to actively collaborating with teachers to develop personalized learning plans that cater to the child's unique strengths and challenges. In the food industry, involvement might involve parents purchasing groceries and preparing meals, whereas engagement entails involving children in meal planning, cooking, and making informed choices about nutrition. In technology, involvement could mean parents buying gadgets and monitoring screen time, whereas engagement involves co-exploring educational apps, discussing online safety, and using technology as a tool for learning and connection. (Rao & Ramesh, 2020). These examples show the distinctions between parental involvement and parental engagement during the customer experience.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a conceptual literature review approach with the goal of clarifying, distinguishing, and expanding theoretical understanding of parental involvement and parental engagement in the context of family consumption. Unlike empirical studies, this research does not rely on field data but rather draws upon a synthesis of existing scholarly literature to construct an analytical framework that positions these two constructs within the broader discourse of consumer behavior and marketing strategy.

The design follows the tradition of narrative synthesis as described by Baumeister and Leary (1997), which allows for interpretive flexibility in integrating diverse conceptual perspectives from the fields of marketing, psychology, education, and family studies. This method is particularly useful in cases where existing definitions remain overlapping or inconsistent—an issue frequently encountered in the discourse surrounding parental roles in consumer decisions.

To ensure academic rigor, a structured literature search was conducted using reputable academic databases including Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and ScienceDirect. The search focused on works published between 2000 and 2023, with an emphasis on studies from 2020 to 2023 to reflect the most recent developments. Keywords such as “parental involvement”, “parental engagement”, “family consumption”, “customer journey”, and “service-dominant logic” were combined using Boolean operators to refine results and identify relevant theoretical contributions.

To guide the literature selection process, clear inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied, as presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1 – Review Screening Criteria		
Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Topic Relevance	Articles on family consumption, parenting roles, marketing theory	Studies unrelated to marketing or consumption
Publication Type	Peer-reviewed journals, conference papers, academic books	Opinion pieces, editorials, non-reviewed articles
Language	English and Indonesian	Other languages without translation
Quality	Indexed in Scopus, Web of Science, or Google Scholar	Not indexed, unverifiable sources

Source: modifications by the author (2025)

These criteria, as shown in Table 1, ensured the inclusion of credible and relevant sources. This structured screening process strengthens the rigor and focus of the conceptual analysis.

A total of 42 scholarly sources were selected based on these criteria. The selected articles were then categorized thematically using three guiding lenses: (1) conceptual definitions and boundaries of parental involvement and parental engagement; (2) theoretical foundations drawn from consumer behavior, marketing, and parenting literature; and (3) practical implications for the customer journey and value co-creation between parents and children.

The analysis followed a narrative synthesis process, consisting of several interpretive steps: First, each article was thoroughly read and annotated. Second, the core themes, patterns, and conceptual gaps were extracted. Third, terminological differences and convergences across disciplines were compared and contrasted. Finally, insights from these steps were synthesized to develop the conceptual model presented in Figure 2, which illustrates the differentiated roles of parents in shaping consumption decisions throughout the family customer journey.

Although the study does not present original empirical data, its academic contribution lies in the depth of theoretical synthesis and the construction of a model that can serve as a foundation for future research and marketing practice. The conceptual distinctions drawn here not only enhance understanding of parental influence in family purchasing behavior but also offer actionable insights for marketers seeking to segment and engage families more effectively

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Conceptual and Psychological Distinctions

Discerning the conceptual and psychological disparities between parental involvement and engagement is paramount for elucidating their distinct impacts on children's consumer behavior and brand perceptions. Parental involvement typically entails parents' participation in activities related to their children's lives, such as attending school events, supervising homework, or monitoring their online activities. Parental involvement is defined as having an awareness of and involvement in schoolwork, understanding of the interaction between parenting skills and student success in schooling, and a commitment to consistent communication with educators about student progress (Epstein, 1987). Engagement, on the other hand, signifies a deeper, more interactive connection where parents actively collaborate with their children, fostering open communication, shared decision-making, and mutual learning experiences.

To clarify the core conceptual distinctions between parental involvement and parental engagement, the following table offers a side-by-side comparison across key dimensions. This

framework is synthesized from existing literature and aims to provide a practical and theoretical reference for future research in consumer behavior, marketing strategy, and family decision-making.

Table 2 - Key Differences between Parental Involvement and Parental Engagement

Aspect	Parental Involvement	Parental Engagement
Definition	Supportive participation in children's consumption decisions	Active collaboration in children's decision-making
Interaction Style	Supervisory and directive	Reflective and dialogic
Main Focus	Fulfilling needs and managing choices	Understanding values and building shared decisions
Parent-Child Dynamic	Top-down influence	Mutual exchange and shared perspectives
Goal Orientation	Short-term needs and practical solutions	Long-term impact and co-created value
Typical Behaviors	- Buying what the child asks for - Monitoring budget and use	- Discussing product options - Making choices together
Customer Journey Role	Support in early stages like problem recognition and option filtering	Involved throughout from awareness to post-purchase evaluation
Brand Relationship	Passive exposure and trend-following	Emotional involvement and brand meaning-making
Impact on Children	Habitual choices and functional preferences	Brand loyalty, deeper understanding of value
Marketing Relevance	Targets transactional and functional benefits	Supports long-term engagement and relationship-based branding
Strategic Implication	Emphasizes convenience and features in messaging	Emphasizes experience, storytelling, and emotional connection

Source: adapted from Baumeister and Leary (1997), with modifications by the author (2025)

The divergence between parental involvement and engagement (Table 2) significantly influences children's perceptions of value associated with brands and products. Parental involvement, characterized by its more passive and supervisory nature, may lead children to perceive value primarily in terms of tangible benefits, such as product features, price, or convenience. In contrast, parental engagement, with its emphasis on collaboration and shared experiences, cultivates a deeper sense of value that encompasses emotional, social, and experiential dimensions.

Parental involvement and engagement play pivotal roles in shaping brand learning among children, influencing their brand knowledge, attitudes, and loyalty. Brand learning refers to the process by which consumers acquire information about brands, develop brand associations, and form preferences for specific brands over time. Parental involvement primarily facilitates brand learning through exposure, where children observe their parents' brand choices and consumption behaviors, gradually assimilating brand-related information.

Managerial Implications

Segmenting consumers based on parental involvement styles enables marketers to tailor their strategies to resonate with specific parental attitudes and preferences, optimizing marketing effectiveness. Parental involvement styles can be segmented along a continuum, ranging from

uninvolved parents who have limited interest in their children's consumption decisions to highly engaged parents who actively collaborate with their children in the decision-making process. This segmentation allows for the creation of targeted messaging and product offerings.

Marketing practices benefit from an understanding of how parenting styles shape value perceptions and decision-making processes within families. Each parental role presents different behavioral tendencies in how brand messages are received and interpreted. The following framework provides a strategic orientation that aligns communication styles with the characteristics of uninvolved, involved, and engaged parents.

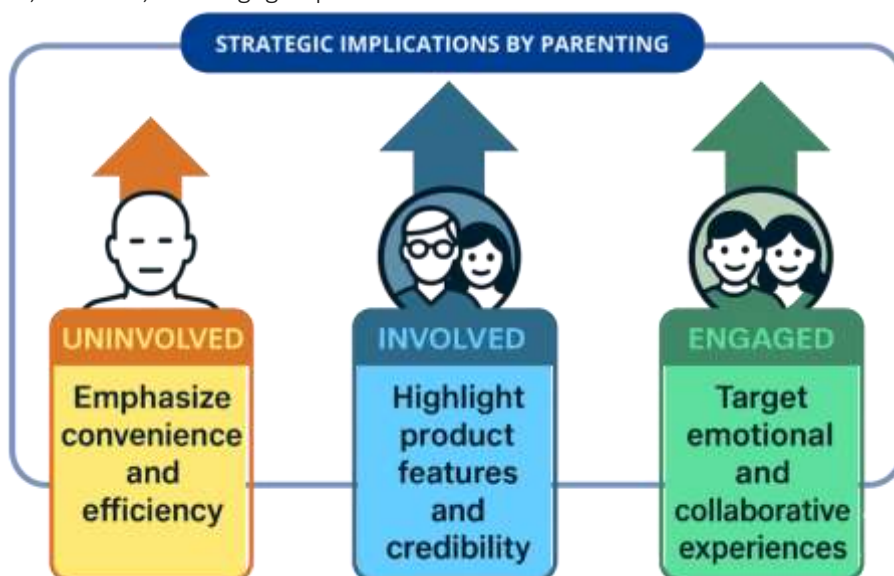


Figure 1 - Strategic Implications by Parenting

Source: adapted by the authors (2025), based on thematic synthesis of literature on consumer behavior, parenting, and strategic communication

Figure 1 illustrates how parenting styles correspond to different marketing approaches, where each type: uninvolved, involved, and engaged, requires distinct messaging strategies, ranging from convenience-driven appeals to emotionally collaborative experiences. Rather than applying uniform tactics, marketers should align their communication with the parenting role at play: simplifying offers for uninvolved parents, emphasizing credibility for those involved, and crafting emotional narratives for engaged parents. This strategic alignment enables more meaningful audience segmentation and fosters stronger, longer-term consumer-brand relationships.

In Indonesia, parental involvement is often limited to administrative decisions, such as school registration, without deeper engagement in exploring children's preferences. Marketing strategies in sectors like education or child-focused products still emphasize institutional features over shared values or experience. Recognizing this pattern can help marketers align their messages with local parenting styles.

Crafting tailored communication and content strategies for each parental involvement type is essential for maximizing engagement and influencing consumer behavior. For uninvolved parents, marketing messages should emphasize convenience, affordability, and time-saving benefits, highlighting how the product or service can simplify their lives and reduce their involvement in the consumption process. For highly engaged parents, communication strategies should focus on fostering collaboration, shared experiences, and mutual learning, positioning the brand as a facilitator of meaningful family interactions.

The effective utilization of social media, testimonials, and brand education initiatives can significantly enhance parental engagement and build brand trust. Social media platforms provide

avenues for brands to connect with parents, share informative content, and foster a sense of community around their products or services (Bhattacharya, 2023).

Proposed Conceptual Model

Visualizing parental involvement within a child's customer journey offers a strategic framework for marketers to identify key touchpoints and tailor engagement strategies accordingly. A customer journey map visually represents the stages a customer goes through when interacting with a brand, from initial awareness to post-purchase evaluation.

To concretize the theoretical distinctions between parental involvement and parental engagement in the family consumer journey, the following conceptual model has been developed. This model illustrates how these two constructs manifest differently across various stages of the customer journey, from need recognition to evaluation and selection. It aims to provide marketers with a clearer understanding of parental roles as both influencers and co-creators of consumption experiences.

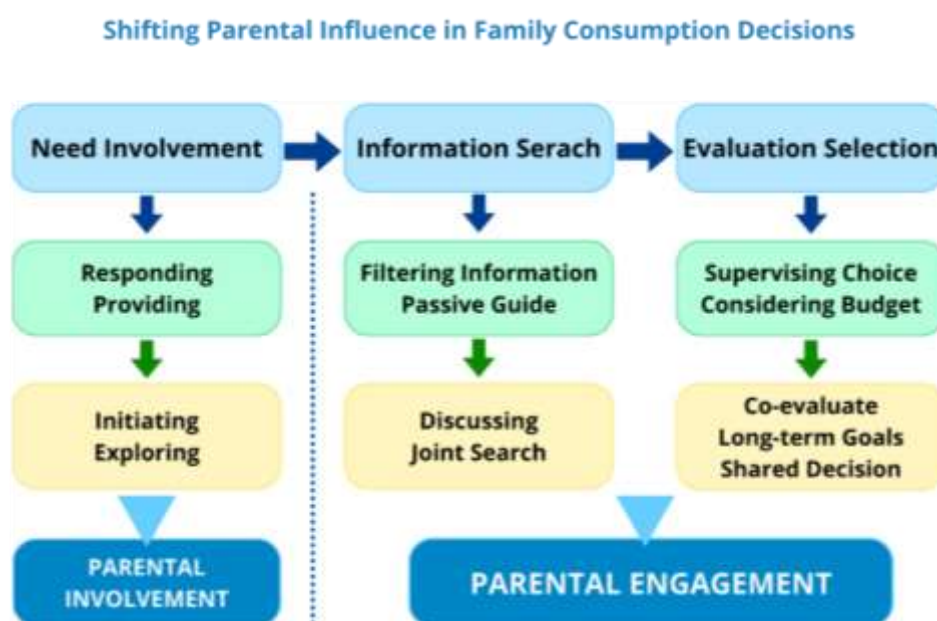


Figure 2 - Parental Roles in the Family Customer Journey

Source: Developed by the authors based on synthesis of consumer behavior and parental engagement (2025)

As shown in the Figure 2, parental involvement tends to be more reactive and supervisory, focusing on providing resources and managing risks throughout the decision-making process. Meanwhile, parental engagement represents a more participatory and dialogical role, characterized by joint exploration, shared evaluations, and long-term value co-creation with children. This differentiation offers marketers a strategic lens to tailor content, messaging, and product experiences according to the dominant parental role present in a household. Ultimately, it supports the design of more meaningful brand interactions that resonate across various parenting styles and family dynamics.

Recommending marketing strategies grounded in engagement principles enables brands to cultivate stronger connections with parents and children, fostering loyalty and advocacy. Task-based initiatives can be more effective in driving customer engagement, but the effects depend on the platform (Blut et al., 2023). Engagement marketing focuses on creating meaningful interactions with customers, building relationships, and delivering personalized experiences that resonate with their needs and aspirations (Setyawati & Anindita, 2022).

Customer engagement encompasses brand actions, other actors, customer brand experience, shopping behaviors, brand consumption, and brand-dialogue behaviors (Masłowska et al., 2015). The model posits that interactions between these elements are non-linear and reactive, reflecting the interconnected character of today's marketing environment (Masłowska et al., 2015). Consumer engagement can be enhanced through experiences created by companies, fostering meaningful and sustainable interactions between consumers and the company, which in turn drives consumer interaction, participation, and purchase intention (Kumar et al., 2023). Consumer engagement on social media strengthens the emotional relationship between customers and the brand, leading to greater customer expenditure, increased brand purchases, and enhanced brand advocacy (Ardiyansyah & Febrianti, 2022). Engaged customers are more likely to advocate for the brand, further amplifying its reach and influence (Vinerean, 2016). Brands can proactively increase consumer engagement through social media by employing strategies that foster communication, interaction, and consumer value, and by grouping consumers in virtual brand communities (Cuevas-Molano et al., 2021) (Dessart et al., 2015). It is important to consider consumer views in conjunction with marketing managers' understanding of consumer engagement to get a full picture (Dessart et al., 2015).

The customer journey has garnered increasing attention, particularly in contemporary marketing where digital and social media have reshaped consumer behavior (Towers & Towers, 2021).

CONCLUSION

The study's conceptual findings highlight the nuanced differences between parental involvement and engagement, providing valuable insights for academics and practitioners in marketing and consumer behavior. Parental involvement and engagement are distinct constructs with varying implications for family consumption dynamics and marketing strategies.

Implications for Academic and Practical Purposes

Academically, this article contributes to the theoretical understanding of parental influence in consumer behavior, offering a refined framework for analyzing family consumption dynamics. Practically, it provides marketers with actionable insights to develop targeted strategies that resonate with different parental styles, enhancing engagement and fostering brand loyalty.

In the Indonesian setting, the lack of distinction between involvement and engagement often weakens marketing communication. This study provides a conceptual foundation to address this gap and supports more culturally attuned family marketing approaches.

This paper's novelty is in linking parental roles to the customer journey framework, highlighting their distinct impacts on family consumption and offering new implications for marketing strategies targeting parents. Theoretically, it clarifies two often-confused constructs in consumer behavior. Practically, it offers marketers a framework to better segment and engage family consumers based on parenting styles.

Limitations of the Article

Addressing the limitations of the article is crucial for guiding future research and refining the understanding of parental involvement and engagement in consumer behavior. Future studies could also explore the role of cultural and socioeconomic factors in shaping parental involvement and engagement styles, further enriching the understanding of family consumption dynamics. Future research should aim at comparing consumer engagement on different social media and across brand categories, as this study takes a holistic approach and does not focus on any particular category of brands or social media (Dessart et al., 2015).

A key point is the necessity of considering consumer attitudes when examining consumer engagement, integrating consumer perspectives with marketing managers' insights for a holistic understanding (Martínek, 2021) (Liu et al., 2021). Acknowledging the constraints of the research scope is vital to ensure a balanced interpretation of the findings.

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