



LOW-INCOME CONSUMER BEHAVIOR: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The objective of this literature review is to present the theoretical bases to describe, analyze, and interpret the factors associated with the behavior of low-income consumers.

Theoretical Framework: The literature review addresses the concepts of consumer behavior, the factors that influence this behavior, such as psychological, social and cultural factors, and finally the low-income consumer.

Method: A non-experimental design of bibliographic research allowed us to systematically review the constructs of consumer behavior, factors associated with consumption behavior, and low-income consumers. A total of 109 bibliographic references were consulted: 71 articles, 31 books, 5 research-results book chapters, and 2 reports.

Results and Discussion: The review found that this market segment is heterogeneous due to sociocultural differences in the contexts where they reside. For poverty to be more attractive to the business sector, it is necessary that the proposed solution be sustainable; therefore, it must be profitable. The participation of the State is also important, responsible for the inclusion of public policies that encourage companies to incorporate low-income people as micro-entrepreneurs in their business model; one proposal would be to establish dignified and flexible forms of contracting. It is recommended that business schools include within the content of their undergraduate and graduate programs consumer behavior focused on low-income people, who make up the majority of the market in developing countries, in order to raise awareness among future professionals of the importance of including this segment in marketing strategies.

Research Implications: The theoretical content found in the literature review will serve marketing managers to design strategies in the distribution and marketing processes that enable products to be introduced into the low-income consumer segment, as well as encouraging the scientific community from the business field to investigate this market segment.

Originality/Value: The bibliographic study contributes to the marketing literature with an innovative approach, by addressing the low-income consumer, an object of study that is often excluded in the business sector,

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considering that they do not have purchasing power, but that in emerging markets represents the majority of the population.

Keywords: Consumer Behavior, Low-income Consumer, Subsistence Markets, Psychosocial Factors, Cultural Factors, Social Factors.

COMPORTAMENTO DO CONSUMIDOR DE BAIXA RENDA: UMA REVISÃO DA LITERATURA

RESUMO

Objetivo: O objetivo desta revisão de literatura é apresentar as bases teóricas para descrever, analisar e interpretar os fatores associados ao comportamento dos consumidores de baixa renda.

Referencial Teórico: A revisão de literatura aborda os conceitos de comportamento do consumidor, os fatores que influenciam esse comportamento, como os psicológicos, sociais e culturais, e por fim o consumidor de baixa renda.

Método: Foi utilizado um desenho de pesquisa bibliográfica não experimental que possibilitou a revisão sistemática dos construtos comportamento do consumidor, fatores associados ao comportamento do consumidor e consumidores de baixa renda. Foram consultadas 109 referências bibliográficas: 7 artigos, 31 livros, 5 capítulos de livros, resultados de pesquisas e 2 relatórios.

Resultados e Discussão: A revisão constatou que este segmento de mercado é heterogêneo devido às diferenças socioculturais nos contextos onde residem. Para que a pobreza seja mais atrativa para o sector empresarial, é necessário que a solução proposta seja sustentável; portanto, deve ser lucrativo. Também é importante a participação do Estado, responsável pela inclusão de políticas públicas que incentivem as empresas a incorporar pessoas de baixa renda como microempreendedores em seu modelo de negócios; uma proposta seria estabelecer formas de contratação dignas e flexíveis; Recomenda-se que as escolas de negócios incluam no conteúdo de seus programas de graduação e pós-graduação o comportamento do consumidor voltado para pessoas de baixa renda, que constituem a maior parte do mercado nos países em desenvolvimento, a fim de conscientizar os futuros profissionais sobre a importância de incluir esse segmento nas estratégias de marketing.

Implicações da Pesquisa: O conteúdo teórico encontrado na revisão de literatura servirá aos gestores de marketing para desenharem estratégias nos processos de distribuição e marketing que possibilitem a introdução de produtos no segmento de consumo de baixa renda, bem como estimularão a comunidade científica da área empresarial a investigar esse mercado segmento.

Originalidade/Valor: O estudo bibliográfico contribui para a literatura de marketing com uma abordagem inovadora, ao abordar o consumidor de baixa renda, objeto de estudo muitas vezes excluído do setor empresarial, considerando que não possui poder de compra, mas que nos mercados emergentes representa a maioria da população.

Palavras-chave: Comportamento do Consumidor, Consumidor de Baixa Renda, Mercados de Subsistência, Fatores Psicossociais, Fatores Culturais, Fatores Sociais

COMPORTAMIENTO DEL CONSUMIDOR DE BAJOS INGRESOS: UNA REVISIÓN A LA LITERATURA

RESUMEN

Objetivo: El objetivo de este manuscrito de revisión bibliográfica es exponer las bases teóricas que permiten describir, analizar e interpretar los factores asociados al comportamiento de consumidor de bajos ingresos.

Marco Teórico: En la revisión de la literatura se abordan los conceptos de comportamiento del consumidor, los factores que influyen en este comportamiento, como los son los psicológicos, sociales y culturales, y por último el consumidor de bajos ingresos.

Método: Se utilizó un diseño no experimental de investigación bibliográfica el cual permitió la revisión sistemática de los constructos comportamiento del consumidor, factores asociados al comportamiento de consumo



y consumidor de bajos ingresos. Se consultaron un total de 109 referentes bibliográficos: 71 artículos, 31 libros, 5 capítulos de libro resultados de investigación y 2 informes.

Resultados y Discusión: La revisión encontró que este segmento de mercado es heterogéneo debido a diferencias socioculturales de los contextos donde residen. Para que la pobreza sea más atractiva para el sector empresarial es necesario que la solución propuesta sea sostenible; por lo tanto, debe ser rentable. También es importante la participación del Estado, responsable de la inclusión de políticas públicas que alienten a las empresas a incorporar a las personas de bajos ingresos como micro-emprendedores en su modelo de negocio, una propuesta sería establecer formas dignas y flexibles de contratación. Se recomienda a las escuelas de negocios, incluir dentro del contenido de sus programas de pregrado y posgrado el comportamiento de consumidor enfocado a las personas de bajos ingresos, quienes conforman la mayoría del mercado en los países en desarrollo, con el fin de concientizar a los futuros profesionales de la importancia de incluir a este segmento dentro de las estrategias de marketing.

Implicaciones de la investigación: El contenido teórico encontrado en la revisión bibliográfica servirá de base para que los directores de marketing diseñen estrategias en los procesos de distribución y comercialización que permitan introducir los productos en el segmento de consumidores de bajos ingresos, así como alentar a la comunidad científica del área de negocios a investigar este segmento de mercado.

Originalidad/Valor: El estudio bibliográfico contribuye a la literatura del marketing con un enfoque innovador, al abordar al consumidor de bajos ingresos, objeto de estudio muchas veces excluido en el sector empresarial, al considerar que no tiene capacidad de compra, pero que en mercados emergentes representa la mayoría de la población.

Palabras clave: Comportamiento del Consumidor, Consumidor de Bajos Ingresos, Mercados de Subsistencia, Factores Psicosociales, Factores Culturales, Factores Sociales.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Taking marketing as a social process of mutually beneficial exchange (Olivos, 2013), understanding consumer behavior provides marketing managers with a real perspective that allows them to design strategies and policies that lead to the company's success in the market (Páramo, 2004).

Consumer behavior is the set of activities that people perform when selecting, buying, evaluating, and using goods and services to satisfy their desires and needs. These activities involve mental and emotional processes, as well as physical actions (Wilkie, 1994). Consumer behavior is much more than buying things; it also encompasses the study of how having or not having things affects people's lives and how the possession of a good or service influences their state of being (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2005; Solomon *et al.*, 2006).

The initial approach to consumer behavior started from a purely economic point of view. Consumption was defined as "the result of the maximization of the utility function, subject to certain budgetary restrictions, where the concept of utility per se does not constitute the focus



of interest" (Ortega & Rodríguez-Vargas, 2004, p. 122). From this perspective Lambin & Peeters (1981) conceive consumption in terms of its relationships with the purchase, acquisition, expenditure of money, obtaining, use and possession of goods and services. Antónides (1989) proposes that the concepts of utility and attitude demonstrate the preferences of the consumer, thus influencing their behavior and finally combining in the satisfaction of needs.

However, this approach has been criticized by marketing managers, because it does not consider the existence of a decision-making process made up of several stages or phases (Mollá *et al.*, 2014), nor does it take into account socialization processes by excluding group references, social reproduction, and social inequalities (Samuel-Lajeunesse *et al.*, 2014). From this, cognitive-affective and ecological-environmental elements are integrated into the study of consumer behavior, in addition to the above, more recent research includes social, situational, and emotional factors that affect consumer decision-making in the analysis (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2005; Nwankwo, 2000).

The conference held in December 2004, led by the World Resources Institute, entitled "Eradicating poverty through profits: Doing business for the poor", recognized the private sector as a new actor to alleviate poverty (Kuriyan *et al.*, 2012) and marks a milestone to change the traditional approach of compassion towards the poor, towards a market approach where they are taken into account as active agents within a consumer market, with needs, demands, desires and limited purchasing capacity that can be solved with innovation (Hart, 2005; Prahalad & Hammond, 2002).

This motivates companies to change the perspective of people with low purchasing power, since the desire to consume does not depend on income (Belk *et al.*, 2003); however, these consumers have not been of high priority as target markets, which is reflected in the low investment of marketing professionals and companies in market research (Boyce, 2000; Curtis, 2000; Hamilton & Catterall, 2005; Winnett & Thomas, 2003).

At the same time, there is a lack of interest of the scientific community on consumer behavior theories in contexts other than developed countries, which makes it difficult to apply them in subsistence markets (Adkins & Ozanne, 2005; Chikweche & Fletcher, 2010; Hill & Stephens, 1997; Mitchell & Bates, 1998; Watkins & Liu, 1996), although there are few studies like those of De Soto (2000), Nwanko (2000), Mahajan & Banga (2006), Contreras *et al.* (2016), Viswanathan (2007) in regions with subsistence markets such as Latin America, Africa, and Asia.

Therefore, this literature review presents the factors associated with consumption



behavior focusing on low-income consumers that contributes to the theoretical basis for future studies in developing countries on this subject.



2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

Martin & Morich (2011) argue that any action a consumer takes in response to a product or service, even inaction, amounts to behavior. Behaviors typically occur within a context and in response to internal or external signals: buy or not buy; buy the usual brand or try something new; store or wait for the product to be on sale the next time.

Consumer behavior is the set of activities that people perform when selecting, buying, evaluating, and using goods and services to satisfy their desires and needs. These activities involve mental and emotional processes, as well as physical actions (Farooq & Maqbool, 2024; Wilkie, 1994). It is much more than buying things; it also encompasses the study of how having or not having things affects people's lives and how the possession of a good or service influences people's state of being (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2005; Solomon *et al.*, 2006).

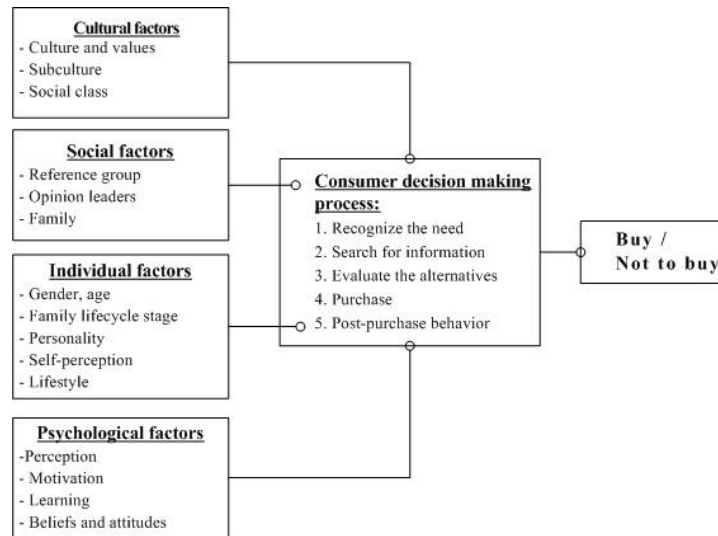
The survival and growth of companies depend on the knowledge that marketing managers have of consumer behavior throughout the purchase cycle (Mollá *et al.*, 2014; Holbrook, 1995), which, due to its complexity, has been approached from different perspectives—economic, psychological, and sociological (Rovetta *et al.*, 2023).

To make a purchase decision, the consumer goes through the following stages: a) Pre-purchase, in which the consumer detects needs and problems, seeks information, perceives the commercial offer, visits the stores, evaluates and selects alternatives; b) Purchase, in which the consumer selects an establishment, defines the conditions of the exchange and is subject to a strong influence of situational variables that come, fundamentally, from the store; c) Post-purchase, which takes place when the products are used; it leads, in turn, to the appearance of feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. This buying process is influenced by cultural, social, individual and psychological factors (See Figure 1) that affect all steps (Lamb *et al.*, 2011).



Figure 1

Factors associated with consumption behavior



Source: Adapted from Lamb et al. (2011)

2.2 PERSPECTIVES RELATED TO CONSUMER GOODS AND MARKETING STRATEGIES

The results of the Echo Global CSR Study (2013) reveal that 94% of consumers believe that companies should go beyond economic performance and play an important role in improving social and environmental well-being. In relation to this, supporting a social cause has gained strength as a strategy to promote the achievement of marketing objectives, which generate cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses from consumers that will depend on the degree of familiarity, importance, and geographical scope of the cause. Aspects such as the size of the donation, the clarity of the message, the predominance or emphasis given to the cause in the message, or the duration of the campaign and the number of resources invested —without neglecting the corporate image and credibility— become important (Melero & Montaner, 2016).

In relation to the above, García *et al.* (2017) conclude that implementing corporate social responsibility initiatives reinforces the consumer's attitude towards the company positively through better evaluations of the company and its products, which directly affects their consumption behavior.

Another scenario worth addressing corresponds to online shopping, in this regard, Küster *et al.* (2016) propose how browsing experiences positively and significantly affect attitude towards the web and influence purchase intention. This way, consumers should feel



satisfied with their website experiences as a way to achieve positive attitudes towards the website and a positive predisposition to buying online.

As Buerke *et al.* (2016) state, consumer awareness is a central concept for any company trying to notice the growing trend of Corporate Social Responsibility, companies must look for ways to align the motives for personal well-being with the motives for sustainable product choices, especially to reach a wider market.

2.3 PSYCHOLOGIC FACTORS

In the results of their study Ortega & Rodríguez-Vargas (2004) propose five elements related to consumer behavior: product quality, purchase planning, product price, responsible use of credit, and impulsive use of credit; however, both authors conclude that consumer behavior is "too complex to be condensed solely into reflexivity versus impulsivity and suggest an approach to measuring consumption behavior as a process" (p132).

In this regard, Quintanilla *et al.* (2005) proposes, in the face of this consumer complexity, the need for a psychosociological approach through new techniques that allow us to understand difficult-to-study aspects related to consumption behavior, giving as an example the compulsive behavior and the frustration, violence, and family imbalances that it entails (Hamilton *et al.*, 2019; Rodríguez-Vargas, 2005).

To establish a psychological perspective that explains consumer behavior, several authors have made important contributions to explain economic behavior in a more complete way, such is the case of the studies made by Menger (1871); Tarde (1935); Katona (1951); Albou (1978); Lea *et al.* (1991); Raju (1995); Páramo (1999); Bravo *et al.* (2002); Quintanilla *et al.*, (2005) (See Table 1).

Table 1

Timeline of the Psychoeconomic Perspective of Consumer Behavior

Theory	Author	Proposal
Austrian Psychological School	Menger (1871)	It raises the marginal utility of a product based on the satisfaction it produces and introduces the subjective theory of value.
Theory of the Causation of Economic Behaviors	Tarde (1935)	From the point of view of all economic behavior, including consumption, it is the product of what is believed and what is desired, the latter being a key component to the extent that it determines the sense of utility, and the price people are willing to pay.



Model of the economic analysis of economic behavior	Katona, (1951)	It incorporates psychological variables into classical economic analysis as a measure between economic stimuli and behavioral responses that are reflected in the actions of purchase, investment, saving, and use of goods and services.
The ternary model and forecast graph	Albou (1978)	Economic behavior must be analyzed from the reality of the social context in which it takes place, highlighting the conative, affective, and cognitive components that relate to each other through motivation, beliefs, and technique.
The dual causation paradigm	Lea <i>et al.</i> (1991)	Economic behavior cannot be analyzed in isolation from context as it is a social fact that at the same time influences the behavior of the individual.
A-B-C-D Paradigm (Access-Buying behavior-Consumption characteristics-Disposal)	Raju (1995)	The buying behavior stage involves multiple aspects that affect decision making within a culture: perceptions, attitudes, consumer responses, among others. The cultural orientation and the distribution of social class are decisive for consumption patterns.
Symbolic - cultural model of consumer behavior	Páramo (1999)	It is possible to understand consumer behavior from the articulation between cultural aspects that feed symbols related to personal aspects such as self-concept and self-image, both real and desired by the consumer, since the act of consuming occurs in response to the sustained and idealized relationship with society.
Consumer psychoeconomic model	Bravo <i>et al.</i> (2002)	To understand the psychological processes related to economic behavior, it is necessary to expand the studies on social comparison, and its determining role in the subjectivity of individual's behavior.

In this same line of analysis, Velandia & Rozo (2009) propose the bidirectional relationship between individual factors and the social structure in which it is immersed, and which influences the decision-making process. They conclude that consumer behavior is determined by factors of a diverse and complex nature: Motivational, social and emotional (Botero, *et al.*, 2005; Gardner, 1985; Sandoval, 2006), understanding social aspects from variables such as culture (Páramo, 2004); ethnocentrism (Luque-Martínez *et al.*, 2000), perceived power (Rucker & Galinsky, 2009; Rucker & Galinsky, 2008) and female stereotypes (Velandia & Rodríguez, 2009).

To comprehend consumer behavior from a psychological perspective, it is necessary to consider, on the one hand, the characteristics and personality traits; and on the other, the basic psychological processes such as learning, motivation, perception (López-Zafra, 2010; Poiesz, 1989). Likewise, attitudinal aspects as determinants of behavior and decision-making (Colmenares & Saavedra, 2007), motivational factors translated into the behavior required to meet needs, the pursuit of pleasure and the wish to reduce the distance between the real and the desired (Riveros *et al.*, 2008; Yue *et al.*, 2020; Zapata *et al.*, 2007), and cognitive processes related to the evaluation of the usefulness of the consumed object or service and the satisfaction or exceeding of expectations (Ruiz & Palací, 2011)



2.4 CULTURAL FACTORS

Personal cultural values, as antecedents of brand preference, should be considered when positioning brands in emerging markets. Specific personal cultural values can be emphasized to influence consumer preference for global brands. Specifically, brand managers can use consumer's cultural values of self-improvement in their positioning strategies, which in turn would increase preference for global brands (Kishore *et al.*, 2023; Dalmoro *et al.*, 2015).

From the perspective of Urbiola & Cazares (2015), the concept of culture covers a wide range of material and immaterial goods: ancestral knowledge, beliefs, artistic manifestations such as literature, music, performing, and visual arts without neglecting how the current processes of globalization have led to conceiving a unique identity as real, trying to eliminate the broad aspects of regional multiculturalism as proposed by Rousseau (2014). It has reached the point of redefining the sense of self, of belonging and identity based on participation in global transnational communities of consumers (Ali & Anwar, 2021; García- Canclini, 1995).

Cultural changes, linked to the very process of globalization, the rise of communications, and technological advances have made markets increasingly complex and less transparent for consumers. Products and brands have become more homogeneous in consumer perception, despite differences from a technical point of view. In this regard, there is greater information on the products resulting from the availability of new means of commercial communication and government regulation and intervention; in the decision-making process against consumption, cognitive and affective, psychosocial and intangible factors related to symbolic associations and previous consumption experiences and their influence on the attitude towards buying goods or services have become increasingly strong.

Along the same lines of analysis, Paramo (2004) states that "the phenomenon of consumption deserves to be considered from the perspective of culture and its prevailing cultural patterns to detect the intrinsic motivations with which current consumer cultures have been built around consumers and their particular demands" (224). Maheswaran & Shavitt (2000) highlight the importance of investigating the cognitive processes that mediate cultural influences on consumer behavior as a way of establishing the distinctive character of other cultures.

From a complex perspective, decision-making linked to consumption behavior —given in terms of attitudes, purchase intention, and consumption preferences— are influenced by numerous and diverse sociocultural factors: ethnocentrism, stereotypes, influence, status and sexism, gender identity and representation (Velandía & Rozo 2009); what is desired and



symbolized, and the representation that each individual gives to what is consumed from previously constructed social references (Paramo, 2004); values, beliefs and paradigms, (Olivos, 2013); also the learning processes linked to real situational restrictions (Sandoval, Caicedo & López, 2008) can influence people's consumption decisions.

Berger and Luckmann (1968) highlight the importance of socialization processes in the creation of consumption habits that will later be symbolically associated to validate the position of the individual within their social group. Likewise, other authors highlight the importance of social representation constructed from "knowledge, beliefs, opinions that emerge from group interaction about socially significant objects" (Knapp & Suárez, 2003, p. 154).

According to Song *et al.* (2017) the meaning of a product depends on the cultural elements it contains (i.e., the content of the message or product), the cultural background that influences consumer information processing and decision-making (i.e., the cultural background of the recipient of the message), and cultural and economic differences in different countries. These elements must be considered to have effective communication with bilingual and bicultural resources; the language and culture of the target market must be understood (Anderson & He, 2015).

2.5 SOCIAL FACTORS

Social factors influence the purchase decision through reference groups such as the family, the most important social institution for many consumers, with a strong influence on values, attitudes, self-concept, and purchasing behavior (Lindenberg, 2002; Padrón & Barreto, 2011). Family members have different roles in the purchase process; for instance, the initiator, who suggest or propose the purchase; the influencer, a person whose opinion is valued; the decision maker, who decides to buy or not to buy; and the buyer, the one who exchanges money for the product (Romani & Grappi, 2014).

Lin's (1982) social media resource theory shows what they are, how they can be accessed, and how they can be mobilized; when they are accessible and mobilized by network members in specific ways, they can help individuals improve their social status (Lin, 1999). There is also the theory of social capital of Bourdieu (1985), Coleman (1988), Portes (1998) that allows us to understand the instrumental value of social networks considered as capital that can contribute to better economic results (Melnyk *et al.*, 2022; *Herreros*, 2004).



2.6 THE LOW-INCOME CONSUMER

Low-income consumers are defined as individuals who do not have financial resources to obtain the goods and services necessary for an adequate and socially acceptable standard of living (Darley & Johnson, 1985); it prevents them from access to trade and qualifies them as unwanted, abnormal, non-consumers or defective consumers (Agnew *et al.*, 2020; Bauman, 1998).

As of today, the basic premise was that the subsistence market consumer focused only on low cost and basic functionality, without recognizing that they demand, like the middle and upper classes, high-quality products and services that can solve their problems and improve their quality of life (Martin & Hill, 2011; Sridharan & Viswanathan, 2008; Subrahmanyam & Gómez-Arias, 2008; Sánchez & Schmid, 2013; Viswanathan *et al.*, 2010).

Being a consumer is knowing one's needs and satisfying them (Slater, 1997); therefore, the low-income consumer is an entity that has always existed. Like those of middle and upper classes, they have preferences and needs (Mazzarella, 2003). However, they require companies to overcome the barriers of ignorance of this market segment (Craig & Douglas, 2011; Rodríguez & Sabría, 2008), at the same time they overcome barriers to trade, such as corruption, inadequate infrastructure, volatile exchange rates, excessive bureaucracy and illiteracy (Chikweche *et al.*, 2012; Ersado, 2006; Loayza *et al.*, 2007; Maranz, 2001)

Budgeting is not the only constraint on the consumption of essential and non-essential goods by low-income consumers; consumption is more limited by the difficulty of accessing affordable quality products and by the lack of credit (Brusky & Fortuna, 2002; Nichter *et al.*, 2002; Ponchio & Aranha, 2008).

Exchange restrictions such as high prices, low-quality products, and inefficiency in the assortment of basic necessity products like those in the food category imposed on low-income consumers by distributors (Alwitt & Donley, 1996; Chung & Myers, 1999; Hill, 2002), in addition to the lack of capital equipment like cars to be transported or storage spaces, limits low-income consumers from taking advantage of the range of offers available in large supermarkets (Mendel, 2005; Williams, 1977). According to Prahalad and Hammond (2002), low-income consumers must pay between 5 and 25 times more value than the rich, because the disinterest of multinational corporations to serve them has generated the creation of local monopolies and intermediaries (Pralhad and Hammond, 2002).

The lack of access to food products or the poor quality of those available for this market segment produces poor eating habits and inadequate intake of nutrients that affect physical



health (Kempson, 1996). Daly & Leonard (2002) found that in 75% of low-income households, at least one of the members had poor health; likewise, feelings of impotence can be reflected in psychological problems (Andreasen, 1975).

For example, in a study carried out in the region of Zimbabwe, by Chikweche & Fletcher (2010), interviewees stated that they must use the bar of washing soap as a bath soap, although it does not adapt to the sensitivity of the skin; cooking oil produced from by-products animal slaughtering waste for export, in exchange for vegetable oil; as well as consuming pieces of soy, instead of meat, thus compromising the protein content for adequate nutrition.

Research has shown that low price, functionality, and affordability cannot be the only drivers of a purchase for the poor; other intangible factors such as social, cultural, and psychological factors can drive low-income consumer behavior. Therefore, the social viability of market strategies to reach low-income groups must be analyzed (Dakduk *et al.*, 2020; Kuriyan *et al.*, 2012), and social networks should be studied in an interdisciplinary manner (Lewis & Takahashi, 2005). This is because individual consumer behavior has been influenced by participation in social networks that help shape their psychological composition to conform to the expectations and norms of the groups (Chakravarti, 2006; Espinoza, 1999; Viswanathan *et al.*, 2010).

One of the most used and recognized forms of social networks in subsistence contexts is the self-help group: a voluntary small group structure for mutual help and the achievement of a common goal (Katz & Bender, 1976). Low-income people have formed these groups to engage in productive activities; to achieve empowerment, equal rights within the group, self-selection of leadership, free expression of thoughts, relative independence from external rules, and an internal system of checks and balances (Jacobs & Goodman, 1989).

Low-income consumers seek advice from neighbors and people on the street, learn to gather information, evaluate and purchase products through what are normally face-to-face interactions; transactions are seamless, and consumers constantly seek supply personalization to accommodate their needs, sellers adjust the quantities provided in response to the agreed price (Brown & Reingen, 1987; Páramo *et al.*, 2011; Viswanathan, 2007). In this type of context, it generates a promotion of both the skills of the buyer and the seller (Viswanathan *et al.*, 2008a; Viswanathan *et al.*, 2008b), thus overcoming some of the socio-cognitive challenges because through consumer-consumer and consumer-seller interactions, subsistence consumers observe and learn market skills like negotiation, counting, and evaluation of generic products. At the same time, sellers learn and respond depending on the needs of customers (Arunachalam *et al.*, 2020; Páramo *et al.*, 2011; Viswanathan *et al.*, 2010).



Family and kinship networks formed by family, friends, and neighbors have been identified as the main source of information about products, as well as a determining factor in purchase or non-purchase (Chikweche & Fletcher, 2010); some findings have shown that consumers purchase products from sellers with whom they have non-commercial social ties (Dimaggio & Louch, 1998; Páramo & Ramírez, 2010).

Another important social variable in the decision-making by low-income consumers is the role of the family (Brown, 1979; Hawkins *et al.*, 2004), whose composition and role is different from those in developed countries with a father-centered nuclear family. In subsistence markets, the concept is extended family, made up of the nuclear family and other relatives (Bracking & Sachikonye, 2006).

The role of children as part of the family is also an important influence on consumer decision-making, but it is likely to be different in subsistence markets where they are unlikely to have as much influence on product and brand choice as in developed markets (Kim & Lee, 1997).

Regarding promotion and branding strategies, low-income consumers prefer direct marketing activities such as in-store sampling; this is due to limited access to information media e.g., newspapers, the internet, radio, and television (Chikweche & Fletcher, 2010). Furthermore, the difficulty of access to education means that on average one in ten low-income consumers cannot read, posing a challenge for marketing strategists to design tactics to convey product information to consumers and generate loyalty (Contreras *et al.*, 2016); other restrictions are the lack of confidence to make good decisions (Hill, 2002) and the ignorance of consumer rights (Thorelli, 1981). These factors discourage them from planning purchases, reviewing prices, changing stores to get a better deal, or evaluating product quality by reading or searching for information before purchasing (Viswanathan *et al.*, 2008a; Viswanathan *et al.*, 2008b).

3 METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted under a non-experimental design of bibliographic research supported by systematic review; as a scientific procedure, it enables the investigation, collection, organization, analysis, and interpretation of information based on bibliographic sources related to the object of interest by applying the following research and analysis techniques.



3.1 ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The keywords used for the search were culture, low-income consumer, consumer behavior, psychological factors, social factors. Taking as inclusion criteria: 1. Original studies; 2. Published in scientific journals indexed in one of the bibliographic indices that guarantee the scientific quality of editorial policy; 3. Its objectives include the analysis of the topic of interest; 4. At least 30% of the manuscripts or books were published during the period 2010–2016. Studies with a partial vision that did not include the study variables, case reports, editorials/comments/expert opinions, theses or dissertations have been excluded.

3.2 SOURCES OF INFORMATION

It was necessary to create a database of journals that have the same history of existence, taking 2010 as a starting point, to make an exact comparison and then evaluate their respective behaviors and results. A total of 105 bibliographic references were consulted: 67 articles, 31 books, 5 research-results book chapters, and 2 reports.

3.3 SEARCH AND SELECTION OF STUDIES

We made a systematic review of the scientific publications that met the eligibility criteria based on the International Scientific Indexing – ISI: Web of Knowledge (Science Citation Index ISI), Social Citation Index (SSCI) or Scimago Journal & Country Rank (Scopus); and in the Social Science Citation Index, SCIELO, CSIC, Dialnet databases.

3.4 RESULTS ANALYSIS TECHNIQUE

A bibliometric study was conducted to obtain relevant information that would allow us to know the research activity focused on the variables highlighted in this article. During the preparation of this study, it was important to express and define the limits of the process and have a transparent view of the case; then, the visual representation of the processes and techniques implemented in this work was obtained.



4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Finally, the theoretical content found in the literature review will serve as a basis for marketing managers to design strategies in the distribution and marketing processes that allow products to be introduced into the low-income consumer segment, as well as encouraging the scientific community in the business field to investigate this market segment.

It was also found that this market segment is heterogeneous due to socio-cultural differences in the contexts where they reside. There, income is not the sole variable of interest because social, psychological, and cultural factors have a high influence on consumption behavior, as evidenced by the results of research carried out in developing countries.

The strategy used by multinational companies in emerging countries has been to replicate business models from their country of origin, thus producing a clear strategic inconsistency considering that the objective is to seek millions of new customers, while their business models are poorly adapted to these markets, thus resulting in only the smallest part of the population being assisted (middle and upper class).

5 CONCLUSION

For poverty to be more attractive to the business sector, the proposed solution needs to be sustainable, i.e., it needs to be cost-effective. Hence, it is proposed that people with low incomes become active and informed consumers. This leads to think about inclusive capitalism becoming an ideal scenario for co-creation, in which solutions are created jointly by all stakeholders. This will improve the relationship of trust between private business and low-income consumers, who have seen the company as organizations that have excluded them from the goods and services trade. The participation of the State is also important because it is responsible for the inclusion of public policies that encourage companies to incorporate low-income people as micro-entrepreneurs in their business model, one option would be to establish dignified and flexible forms of hiring.

It is recommended that business schools include consumer behavior focused on low-income people—who make up the majority of the market in developing countries—in the content of their undergraduate and graduate programs to raise awareness among future professionals of the importance of including this segment within marketing strategies.



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