

I Like Him Just Like My Wife! Empty Nest and Attachment to Car Consumption by the Elderly

Tonny Kerley de Alencar Rodrigues¹ & Lísia Maria Monteiro Ferreira²

Abstract

The interfaces of a product with a high symbolic value as an automobile, the presence of elements that constitute theoretical advances in objects of study of psychology is perceived, such as the theories of the full / empty nest and attachment. The research aims to understand the consumption of automobiles by the elderly through exchanges between generations with a focus on the aforementioned theories. Based on a qualitative approach, centered on the subjectivity of symbolic cultural meanings and supported by the family of theoretical perspectives that make up the CCT (Consumer and Culture Theory), in-depth interviews were conducted with elderly consumers (over 65 years old) and analyzed with the Spiggle's methodological proposal (1994). The main findings found that the attachment to the automobile is greater than to other goods or other family members who participate in intra-generational consumption exchanges. In addition, when the children leave the home - moving from the full nest to the empty nest - the car becomes overvalued with the transfer of emotional feelings of affection. Secondary elements are also discussed, such as the financial organization used by the group to consume the good, valuing comfort requirements linked to age and the car as a language.

Key Words: Car, Senior, Consumption, Empty nest.

Introduction

Consumption studies have become a research field for multiple researches that are not restricted to goods, addressing issues such as social reproduction and identity construction (Barbosa, and Campbell, 2006). In this sense, consumption is understood as cultural, as it involves the formation of meanings and sharing of individual preferences, so that it can come to produce and reproduce cultures and social relations, in addition to showing the individual's participation within society. Therefore, consumption is part of the individual's sense of life and gives meaning to material goods (Moulian, 1998).

A product that has a strong symbolic dimension and has its own consumption meanings is the automobile. In addition to a utilitarian commodity (Rodrigues, and Casotti, 2015), it can perform the function of social conquest, linked to the expansion of financial acquisition, acquiring status and insertion in society (Hirschman, 2003; Belk, 2004). However, cars convey meanings that are capable of permeating meaning through preferences of colors, models, brands and accessories (Grubb, and Hupp, 1968). In this context, they are products capable of causing emotions (Luce, 1998; Desmet, Hekkert, and Jacobs, 2000).

Thus, a group of consumers draws attention for their unique characteristics, the elderly. Generally, this group is associated with the social and prejudiced stigma of people in face of what old age represents, based on a discriminatory social understanding that, when the individual retires, he diminishes his contribution to society and shows himself to be weak, useless and dependent on the care of others (Néri, 2004).

However, since the 1990s, companies have had business practices that included these consumers in their internal strategic policies, whether due to legal obligations, such as changes in the environment through the placement of ramps and accessibility structures, or because they perceive the potential consumption of these individuals who normally have a stable income (Rocha, and Christensen, 2004).

Given this, the rise of the elderly and active participation makes it a group for investment.

¹ Ph. D. COPPEAD Graduate Business School - lrakt@ig.com.br, Professor at the UNIFSA – Centro Universitário Santo Agostinho

² lisi Monteiro2015@outlook.com, UNIFSA – Centro Universitário Santo Agostinho

With the new family configurations and the dynamic process, the family may undergo changes with the departure of the child from home, considered the “empty nest” phase, in which the parents can associate with suffering due to the loss of parental function, as the children will seek independence and autonomy (Sartoni, 2009). However, the family bond, in which it is related to the attachment figure with the parents, makes the children feel comfortable and with a secure base (Bowlby, 2015).

Based on this problem, this study sought to answer the following question: How do theories of psychology of the full / empty nest and attachment help in the understanding of the symbolic cultural and social consumption of the car by the elderly? Thus, this work aims to understand the symbolism of car consumption by the elderly from exchanges between generations through theories of the full / empty nest and attachment.

Previous studies have explored the consumption of automobiles in other groups of individuals: a) a research that sought to understand the meanings associated with the consumption of automobiles by black consumers of the emerging class (Rodrigues, and Carvalho, 2018); b) another that investigated the experience of purchasing the first car in the emerging class (Rodrigues, and Casotti, 2015); c) one that researched the meanings associated with the consumption of automobiles in the emerging middle class by homo-affective (Rodrigues, and Rodrigues, 2018); another who investigated the feelings of buying a car using forms of payment in installments (Franca, Casotti, and Faria, 2013). However, no study, so far, has sought to understand the symbolic meanings in the consumption of automobiles by the elderly.

In addition, this study can help the automobile industry to understand how to reach this audience in its marketing strategies, in order to manufacture automobiles aimed at the elderly and, thus, meet the needs and difficulties of this section of the population. Thus, through the results presented in this research, it is possible to give visibility to this group of consumers still hidden from the organizations and to improve their accessibility, in order to provide greater quality of life and mobility, in order to contribute to the reduction of stigma that the elderly are associated with social uselessness.

The next section consists of the theoretical framework, which addresses the logic of consumption of material goods by the elderly, in addition to the consumption of automobiles. The following section details the method used in the research, explaining its characteristics as qualitative, applied, exploratory and with in-depth interviews. In the penultimate section, there are the main findings of the research that explore: a) Attachment: I like the car just like my wife; b) Full nest: the permanence of the young adult; c) Financial organization: I never liked this financing business; and d) At this age, comfort is one of the most striking requirements. Finally, the final considerations are presented.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Logics of consumption of material goods by the elderly

Consumption is a symbolic and cultural perspective that is originated through social relationships, which can be individual and collective. It occurs in a system of interactions that involves people, products and services (Rocha, and Barros, 2004). In addition, consumption plays a role in producing identity and sociability, by enabling the inclusion in a group that the subject wants to participate in and satisfy the needs of customers or their exclusion, when they do not share the norms that the group goes through.

From 1990 onwards, the elderly began to be a group of consumers on the rise. In view of this, in 2001, there were 6.3 million male heads of household and increased to 10.3 million in 2015, which resulted in an increase of 62.7%, whereas women increased from 3.8 million in 2001 to 8.6 million in 2015, an increase of 123.6% (Cavenaghi, 2018).

Thus, the market begins to carry out studies on this class to identify its patterns, distinct profiles and its specific and peculiar needs related to the demand of the elderly (Acevedo, 1998). Age is the result of social relations, above all of a symbolic value, and not only considered as a factor. With that, there would be no old age, but old age (Motta, 2006).

This is a phase that begins at the age of 65 and that performs several social functions, for example, that of finding balance between society itself, developing social roles. In contrast, the third age is characterized in a negative and stigmatized way, in which it reduces the characterization of the elderly to fragile individuals and associated with the situation of dependence (Néri, 2007).

On the other hand, according to data from Ibge (2020), the elderly person is a reference at home, being responsible for the family income and considered the head of the family. An example of this is that many elderly people help with the expenses of their grandchildren and children. They are included in the class of consumers

who make numerous payroll loans to purchase their consumer goods or pay off their debts and those of third parties.

According to the Inss (2019), of the credit operations carried out by the elderly, 36% were contracted in the age group from 60 to 69 years old and 24% of the operations were assumed by pensioners from 70 to 79 years old.

2.2 Car consumption

Car consumption, starting in the 1970s, started to have a joint decision between men and women. Previously, the power of choice was concentrated "in the hands" of men. After the insertion of women in the labor market and the emergence of activities that expand beyond the home context, there was a greater active participation of women in this process (Cunningham, and Green, 1974).

The automobile expresses a strong symbolic representation and an emotional commitment, that is, because it is a consumer dream, consumers get into debt to be able to buy their car and this can cause financial instability (Franca, Casotti, and Faria, 2013). Modern consumption is the product of historical relationships, which are represented by characteristics of social, economic and cultural change in the West and increase the development of consumption of material goods in the current scenario (Mccracken, 2006).

However, the automobile, which is seen as an individual purchasing power, changes the perspective when studying the meanings as a unit of analysis, related to the purchase within the family group. Added to this, also contribute to this change, the fact that these tools of values pass from parents to children, carrying with them dynamics of interaction, in which they mark family values and hierarchies (Suarez, Casotti, and Mattos, 2012).

Therefore, when estimating the number of cars that the consumer wants to purchase, it appears that this depends on the family income, on how many people assist in the billing of the home, on the availability of public transport and on maintenance costs (Train, 1986). Thus, companies can have their own competencies, to produce specific characteristics in relation to production and meet customer demand to attract their consumer Market.

3. Method

This research was carried out from a qualitative approach, with a focus on deepening the understanding of the subjectivity of the participants regarding their meanings and symbolisms of consumption (Belk, 2009). The study used the interpretive research paradigm and was supported by the family of theoretical perspectives that form the CCT (Consumer and Culture Theory), proposed by Arnould and Thompson (2005). Still, the researchers sought to explore a field of studies under construction when interacting consumption, automobiles and the elderly, in order to find evidence different from that present in other groups of consumers.

From this, in-depth interviews were conducted with nine elderly consumers, individuals over 65 years old. (Papalia, 2013), who own at least one car. In this sense, a snowball-type non-probabilistic choice was made (Biernacki, and Waldorf, 1981) for the selection of participants, in which the researchers initially chose one of the elderly and, then, this indicated the next individual to be interviewed. The number of consumers selected was given by the saturation criterion (Glaser, 1965; Guest, Bunce, and Johnson, 2006), that is, the moment the information started to be repeated, the search for new interviewees ceased.

Each interview lasted an average of more than one hour in which the family dimensions of this consumer's life, his lifestyle and daily life, consumption of products / services in general, consumption of automobiles, as well as the interrelationships between those dimensions. In addition, to ensure the diversity of the participants and to have greater heterogeneity in the speeches, we sought to understand individuals of different ages, professions, cars, car purchase situation and financing method. The table below represents the profile of the interviewees.

Table 1 - Profile of the interviewees

Name	Age	Profession	Car	Situation of the car at purchase	Cash or financed purchase
João	94	Retiree	D-10	New	In cash
Carlos	72	Retiree	For you	New	Funded
clear	66	Retired	Onyx	New	Funded
Leonardo	71	Farmer	Classic	New	In cash
Tiago	84	Merchant	Palio Weekend	New	Funded
Julio	70	Public Employee	Hillux	New	In cash

Lara	71	Teacher	Onyx Activ	New	Funded
Brunette	66	Doctor	Peugeot 2008	New	Funded
Valerio	65	Retiree	Prism	New	Funded

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

For the analysis of the interviewees' statements, Spiggle's (1994) methodological proposal was adopted in the interpretation of qualitative information on consumption. Thus, the researchers sought to find: a) converging and diverging points between aspects of car consumption by the elderly; b) preparing a consolidated summary of this information; c) formulation of codes to connect the symbolic and subjective dimensions found in the interviews; and d) generation of standards among the codes for the formulation of the analysis categories.

The research was carried out in accordance with the guidelines and regulatory standards for research involving human beings of Resolution No. 466/12 of the National Health Council, which considers respect for human dignity, protection of research participants, development and ethical engagement. This Resolution incorporates, from the perspective of the individual and the collectives, the four basic references of bioethics: autonomy, non-maleficence, beneficence and justice, among others, and aims to ensure the rights and duties that concern the scientific community, the research subjects and the State.

Main Research Findings

3.1 Attachment: I like the car like my wife

Attachment arises from childhood, when the individual begins to have experiences of affection for his family members or caregivers. Subsequently, this interferes in adolescence, in how he will behave in the face of different situations, whether in loving relationships, with friends, in the scope of work or attachment to objects, transmitted from cultural aspects (Crowell, and Treboux, 1995). In the infantile phase, the child sees the parents as companions and this bond can last throughout adult life, however, some objects are considered as belonging to the person's daily life, as a companion.

Primary attachment figures can be modified throughout life and replaced by other people or objects (Main, 1999), however some individuals do not become attached to material goods, either for religious reasons or because they transfer the attachment to other people, for example, children, grandchildren, siblings or partners. Some respondents cling to their cars and convey a feeling of companionship.

I like everything about her, she's a 88-year-old companion here and I like everything about her. (João, 94 years old, retired).

Yes, I already have an attachment for him, I bought him many years ago, so I like him a lot, so there is never any problem (Thiago, 84 years old, trader).

This attachment helps to value objects and material goods, as the person develops special care and affection. In this context, one of the interviewees reported that he owned 6 cars, and each of them would have a purpose, one for going to the site, another for long trips and others for use within the city. In addition, each car had a perfume, which would distinguish the cars, as they symbolize attachment, in which he considers and compares with his home.

What you like, you have attachment right [...]. You buy something you don't have any attachment to, what good is it to buy it better to walk with others, so when you buy an object you have to take care of it (Júlio, 70 years old, civil servant).

Therefore, older people have a more complex network of affection than children and adolescents (Crittenden, 2003) and some individuals become attached because they like an object. These relationships are shaped by the networks of caregivers, that is, some parents pass on to their children the attachment, zeal and preferences of brands for automobiles. Thus, when the next generation goes to buy their cars, even though the father does not have an opinion on the model, this has already been internalized by the children, who buy according to the brand that the family usually uses. Therefore, they consider the automobile not only an object that can be replaced at any time, but an asset that has symbolic value in care.

No, I don't like to say models, I like to say the good brand (Júlio, 70 years old, civil servant).

Thus, the car can represent an object that provides pleasure or in some cases displeasure, due to the problems they present in the car, such as dissatisfaction with their choice, whether due to the model or accessories that do not bring them contentment. Every affective state can also bring unpleasant pleasure - displeasure or pleasant - (Piéron, 1978), it can be a person in which they build a feeling and affection for a car, which brings a symbolism and an attachment, and the individual feels pleasure when using the your vehicle for many years and are still satisfied with the choice.

In that sense, when one of the interviewees was asked if she had an attachment, she said no.

However, the practices do not match her answer, as she says that every weekend, she hires a person to wash her car at her house and when she arrives from the coast trip, she takes it to the post to perform the full wash, due to the salt air, therefore, it is clear that she takes special care of her car.

For me it is a material good [...] I am not attached to material goods (Bruna, 66 years old, anesthetist).

[...] I'm not attached to material goods, if I need to change it tomorrow, I'll go to the store and change it for another one, for another model, I'm not the type that just want this model, I only want it if it's that color (Bruna, 66 years, anesthesiologist).

In contrast, another interviewee reports that she has no attachment to the car and during the interview her statements are consistent with her conduct, as she does not show any special care for the car, since she changes it every 3 years and reports that it is important to get around and not depend on other people.

Attachment not. I am zealous, but not attached (Clara, 66 years old, retired).

Throughout life, the theme of love was one of the most discussed, among them love of neighbor, in which it is also responsible for human survival, but some people love their cars and transfer to them a special affection as if it belonged to their environment. and consider a family member, which would be the variations of love that arise during their life (Bowlby, 2002).

Boy I like him just like my wife, for me it's good, it's a 2007 car, a car with air conditioning, hydraulic steering, electric lock glass (Carlos, 72 years old, retired).

This personification happens because they internalize these objects, create a special bond for their cars and now, in addition to being very material, they are endeared and humanized. Still, there are differences in the representation of the automobile for men and women, as men can be more emotionally involved compared to women (Belk, 2004).

They play with cars from an early age and are taught to be careful and create an affectionate feeling for toys and when they grow up they transfer attachment and care to their car, however women are restricted from playing with strollers, as they are considered "boys' play", so they see this car as a means of transportation and decrease the likelihood of acquiring a significant attachment.

3.2 Full nest: the permanence of the young adult

The empty nest happens with the departure of the first child until the departure of the last (Carter, and Mcgoldrick, 1995), however in some families the inverse phenomenon named full nest occurs, in which the children remain with their parents. Thus, with the increase in the number of unemployment, young people are increasingly leaving home late, Brazil had a 9.6% reduction in the quarter ended in June in the number of employed people and the unemployment rate increased to 13.3% and private sector workers with a formal contract lost 2.9 million people (Ibge, 2020).

[...] Now there are only 8 that I lost one, five live here, but they are always around (João, 94 years old, retired).

Once in a while while I still help, it's not always always (Bruna, 66 years old, anesthetist).

The concept of family has changed throughout history, before the family compared to the aspect of lineage, begins to adapt itself to the bourgeois model of father, mother and children, with this, they now have a smaller family, smaller numbers of children. Parents usually pass the car to their children and adapting the family dynamics. In addition, one of the interviewees reports that she passed her car to her children, because sometimes they could not change cars, or in the case of the first purchase that she was unable to acquire and even though they did not live with her, but she still helped them financially.

Some I finance, for example I buy a new car, then I move on to that son of mine who can't afford it, who can't change his car (Clara, 66 years old, retired).

In need, when you are looking for me, I am always here ready to help (Tiago, 84 years old, merchant).

A study carried out by Andrade and De Vos (2002) shows that 20% of women lived in their children's homes and 37.3% had children residing in their homes, that is, the elderly are usually made up of an elderly family, where they are the head of the family, unlike families with elderly people where they live with their families, in this way the elderly can financially help their children, for example, to buy the car so that they do not depend exclusively on their parents and achieve their autonomy.

The beginning of the 21st century was marked by a traditional family, in which there were several generations living together in daily life, maintaining contact with the support network and family members so that

grandmothers had a more direct relationship with their granddaughters, and this interferes so that they help financially, for example, basic or superfluous utensils (Leme, and Silva, 2002).

[...] I help financially and help my granddaughter, who is the first daughter of the 43-year-old, I help financially (Lara, 71 years old, teacher)

Always, only when you need it (Valério, 65 years old, retired).

In the course of life, various beliefs are formed in relation to the family, how man should behave, and for some there is an idea that work is a necessary sacrifice in order to support the family (Sarti, 1996), as a result of which the parents they still feel that they are 'obliged' to support their children, such as the belief in giving their son an automobile at the age of 18.

[...] I have to help, they live in Teresina, I have my house there in Teresina, me and Mrs. Juditi who pay for water, electricity, garbage, IPTU, everything is us, food goes from the countryside to there (Carlos, 72 years old, retired).

3.3 Financial organization: I never liked this financing business

The quality of life of the elderly increases over the years and this favors that, after retirement, they continue to work (Neri, 2004). In this context, the elderly gather their money in order to be able to buy their objects and be able to support themselves without the aid of carrying out payroll deductions. However, old age, still it is full of stigmas, they are considered inferior, excluded from groups and they associate poverty with the elderly.

The study by Rodrigues and Casotti (2015) shows a divergence from previous studies, in which the group of consumers investigated joined the bank's financing and consortia, or sold a previous car to be able to buy in to buy their car zero. However, with the interviews in this study, it can be seen that the elderly have a favorable financial income, compared to some groups of adults, for example, the case of interviewees who buy their cars in cash, do not resort to financing, nor to consortia or that they finance in few installments.

[...] I bought the car in cash, the boy I had bought who was financed (Leonardo, 71 years old, farmer).

No, I never liked this financing business, sorry to tell you, I am like this, I work, work, save my money, and go and buy in cash. I don't buy financing business, bank financing I don't want, my salary is not enough to do many things, consortium business I won't go (Carlos, 72 years old, retired).

The elderly have an increasing increase in the family budget, they are responsible for the family's income, (Goldani, 2002), in some families they are the bases of the family income, and the children and grandchildren depend on the individual of the third person to maintain themselves and to manage themselves. to sustain. Some children leave home, go to the job market, however due to the competition, long years of qualification and the insecurity of the current market scenario, some children decide to return to their parents' homes, but now bringing their children.

No, I usually buy it financed 24 months (Lara, 71 years old, teacher).

I bought it new, normally we give an entry and finance the rest, it is usually financed, I never bought any car in cash. Seeing the previous one I give a part of the entrance and the next one that I buy and finance the rest normally in three is the time that I normally stay as a car (Clara, 66 years old, retired).

Sometimes I buy the cash, sometimes I buy financed (Júlio, 70 years old, civil servant).

It was half, half was in cash and half was financed (Tiago, 84 years old, merchant).

In this sense, being in old age is not related to a negative life, linked to poverty, but a lifestyle in which he is responsible for walking his path and linked to positive perspectives. Thus, the elderly are able to seek new adaptations so that they can maintain themselves and buy their objects, for example, their car in sight.

Table 2- Differences between the purchase of the car financed or in cash

FUNDED	IN CASH
Access to a dream	Reflection of the work to get a car
Instrument of passage, financing according to time.	Bank as villain
Sell the other and give an entry ...	Salary cannot be compromised

3.4 At this age, comfort is one of the most striking requirements

The elderly have difficulties in the support network for mobility, security, accessibility and quality of life, even though the programs are increasing, but they still have a shortage.

Comfort is one of the requirements that the elderly cherish the most, because due to advanced age, mobility patterns decrease, that is, depending on public transport, it makes it difficult to get to and from, whether for work, walking or going to the doctor, so the elderly people look for cars that are comfortable to reduce this difficulty of commuting and not to depend on others.

In a survey carried out in Great Britain, Banister and Bowling (2004) observed that the elderly prefer cars to get around, as they lose less time, have more mobility to develop their social activities, since if they were to depend on public transport, these activities would be carried out in a smaller number. In this sense, in Brazil, Sant'Anna (2006) points out a relationship between mobility and quality of life. So that the elderly achieve greater quality when they have a car to get around and are now more selective in terms of comfort.

No, I like him because he has comfort [...]. Exactly, every time I choose when I change I choose for an even better one than I already had (Lara, 71 years old, teacher).

In addition, one of the interviewees stated that she bought the car for comfort, not for the model, nor for the renowned brands in the market, as she had already had articulation problems and needed a car in which she had an ergonomic seat and that provides her with the necessary support for the spine and hips.

So it was more for the sake of comfort, you get in the car you think it is comfortable and buy more for it, not even because of the model preference [...]. I had the problem of articulation, it was because of comfort, because of the seat that did not accommodate right on the hip or spine (Bruna, 66 years old, anesthesiologist).

The main meanings for the automobile were not linked to luxury, a status that this car would bring to the person (Belk, Bahn, and Mayer, 1982; Franca, Casotti, and Faria, 2013). Therefore, in the present study, it was realized that the stability of the car was an important factor, and visibility was a decisive component at the time of purchase, this is because to drive safely you need to be seen and see what you have on the road, and some cars makes this option impossible.

It is a safety car, it is an instability car, which when you look at it, I go there, it is a good car, right, a car that has stability that is quiet (Júlio, 70 years old, civil servant).

May it give me more driving comfort, accessibility, visibility [...]. Mine is very comfortable, very complete, he is tall, he is resistant and has no defect (Clara, 66 years old, retired).

When analyzing the elderly population, Vecchia (2005) categorizes the elderly group into three types, the first that prioritizes the affective issue and the family, the other the quality of life and the last group the obtaining of pleasure and comfort. In this last category, it is possible to highlight the elderly who choose the car for pleasure, select the accessories that will satisfy them, and the comfort that the car provides them when they go to work, perform daily activities or when they go on a long trip, so some they choose their vehicle according to their standards and prefer to carry out their wishes and do not want interference from third parties.

Mine is very comfortable, compared to the other cars I've had, this is one of the best seats I've ever had [...]. The others were very hard, this one is very flexible, holds the person well, he is very comfortable [...]. At this age, the question of comfort is fundamental (Valério, 65 years old, retired).

Nobody, who only helps me, that I am going to make my own and I don't like others (Lara, 71 years old, teacher).

Thus, with the feminist movement the configurations of the role of women have been changing and undergoing changes, you can see the example of the interviewee Socorro, in which she is responsible for buying the car and makes the choice alone, before the purchase of the car was tied to the man carry out the process of purchase, choice and payment of the vehicle.

3.5 Automobile as a language

Language can be expressed through clothing, food, houses and objects that are used to represent cultural principles and that will be codified and made manifest. The car can represent a language when the consumer owns more than one car and uses them to travel to different locations. In this context, one of the interviewees reported that he owned 6 cars and each of them would have a purpose, one for going to the site, another for long trips and others for use within the city. In addition, each car had a perfume, which would distinguish the cars, as they symbolize attachment, in which he considers and compares with his home.

I drive my cars in six, you know, so each one I put on a perfume that they are expensive, because it is my house, so each car has a perfume of those expensive [...] so when you buy an object you have to take care (Julio, 70 years old, civil servant).

In the studies carried out by Grubb and Hupp (1968) it is possible to verify that the car has a symbolic relationship with man and the meanings are transmitted through the preference of brand, color, model and this allows the consumer to have several options of cars so that he can aspire to his needs, because if a car doesn't allow him to perform a certain function he can acquire others so that they can fulfill his desires.

The vehicle becomes a means for the owner to express personality characteristics and becomes a member of the car carrier (Belk, Bahn, and Mayer, 1982).

The automobile becomes the language of the consumer and this changes over generations, different cultures and how this car will represent ways of customizing it to receive values attributed to social status, superiority and greatness (Belk, 2004).

Totally automatic, he is top of the tops [...] because he has a light alloy wheel, and everything is totally automatic in him is sporting, which is why I thought I should buy it (Lara, 71, teacher).

I have a 1980 D10, okay, I travel to the farm I have a farm there [...] I care for these little ones it is very small it is very good, this little one goes everywhere in it, I travel everywhere in it (João, 94, retired).

Through the automobile as a language the individual can sacralize it as an object of extreme importance and giving it importance as a member of the family, that is, an attribution of feelings and desires, it is very common in contemporary times to do this in a way that neither people themselves realize that they do this, the consumption of it becomes a way to experience the sacred (Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry Jr, 1989).

Final Considerations

This research, which sought to understand the meanings of the automobile for a group of elderly consumers, brings findings that show different characteristics from other groups previously analyzed by consumer studies that focus on this good with strong symbolism, in addition to advancing theoretically in discussions on two theories: full nest and empty nest theory and attachment theory.

The elderly are individuals who have an emotional deficiency in the home, either due to the empty nest, that is, when the children have already married and started to build their own families, or even because they lost their partner prematurely. Thus, the car and its constant and permanent presence in the domestic environment begins to receive affective transference that would be for family members, based on demonstrations of attachment to the good. Reporting the car as a companion for many years now shows the feeling of permanence, of a loved one who remains, who does not abandon him, in a context in which people left, but he remains.

Other elderly people see the car as a way to compensate for the daily absence in the lives of these children who are already in other nests, when passing this car from generation to generation, now that children or grandchildren can use it. Similarly, it returns that feeling that absent parents, usually because of work, do not participate in the child's daily life and seek to compensate for this with gifts, only now in another moment of life for both.

Automobile companies can use the autonomy generated by the product as a value in the sale of the car to this group of consumers. Cars with ergonomic seat adjustments alleviate the sensation of pain, based on the comfort generated. Equipment such as reverse cameras, in 3D view and rear view mirrors with adjustments close to the driver by means of clicks are items that can be valued in marketing campaigns, in order to understand this individual as a being who without this type of car is a fragile person, with little vision, but who, when acquiring this good, becomes almost like a superman, with an enlarged view of his surroundings.

An important social issue to be raised is the lack of public transport that provides this type of comfort mentioned above to the elderly user. Difficulties such as finding seats reserved for this public available on the bus, which are sometimes occupied by younger people, waiting points without protection and accessibility, vulnerable to rain or violence are constant problems in the lives of these consumers. However, in some situations, they use bank financing as the gateway to the dream of purchasing a car, even if it will generate high interest rates and compromise their retirement.

It is suggested that future research may understand elderly consumers who buy their first car, that is, those who, because they no longer support the poor service of public transport, already decided at this stage of life to commit their retirement with the bank financing of the first car.

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