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## The Adolescent Consumption Pattern and Its Susceptibility to Peer Pressure and Communication – An Empirical Study Conducted in Hyderabad

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### **Abstract:**

Peer communication has always been a source of information to the children and adults in making various consumption decisions. University of Maryland led study revealed that the peer pressure starts in childhood and not in the adolescence. It has stated that the children's consumption is a way too much influenced by their peers at the play area or educational institutions. While young the children stand up with the group giving a lot of scope for the opinion leaders to rule them with their expertise and technical know-how. The theory of reasoned action comes into force and the information processing phase starts. The reference groups who are observed by the children and the teens, through their familiarity with certain product categories influence their buying patterns. In this paper, the researcher has tried to explore the various factors influencing the adolescent consumers of the city Hyderabad with peer pressure and communication as the major focus. One-Way ANOVA has been used to handle data and the findings speak about the definite peer pressure and communication as a major reason behind their consumption pattern

**Keywords:** Reasoned action, peer communication, information procession, opinion leadership, reference groups

### **1. Introduction**

In a broad sense, consumer behavior explains the psychology of how consumers think, feel and observe their consumption and also make a decision among different alternatives. The consumers, irrespective of their age and profile, are influenced by their cultural, family and media factors. The crux of the consumer behavior as an exclusive study is that it is shopping patterns, psychology of consumers, consumer's economy and the marketing baits, all rolled into one. It becomes imperative to the marketers and the industry experts to explore the factors influencing the consumption design of the ultimate target audiences to sustain in the market.

#### *1.1. Who is an Adolescent?*

The consumer psychology describes adolescence as the years between 13 and 19, which is the transitional stage from the naïve childhood to the understanding adulthood. During this period, adolescents can be little or too much disoriented depending upon the magnitude of his exposure to the marketing spectrum.

#### *1.2. Individual Characteristics of a Consumer*

The individual features of a consumer may be some or the sum total of values, beliefs, principles, attitudes, traits, socio cultural factors and cognitive abilities. Of all these, the cognitive capabilities are little technical while the other factors are quite natural and inborn. It indicates the psychological processes involved in comprehending the marketing activities and problem solving aptitude.

#### *1.3. Need for the Study*

We live in an era where the children are brand-savvy and know more brands than the elders at home. During adolescence, the children tend to know more about the immediate effects of the choices they make and prefer to ignore the potential risks of the same in the long run. Consumers always want to attach themselves to a group according to their requirement and capability. They get influenced by the group's behavior in many ways. Many adolescent children yield to the peer pressure because they want to be liked and admired. The study becomes necessary from the parent's perspective to know exactly what has affected the child's consumption pattern.

#### 1.4. Limitations of the Study

The study was conducted with a sample size of only 80. A larger sample size could have yielded a marginally different result. The place of study was the city of Hyderabad only. Some of the samples may not have understood the depth of certain questions and answered in haste. Parents also could have possibly answered certain questionnaires on behalf of their children as a few questionnaires were sent by post. The time period of the study was only 2 months within which period, the researcher had distributed and collected the questionnaires from the samples for analysis

#### 1.5. Future Directions

A combination of different metros and a comparison of adolescent consumption based on peer communication can bring out different interesting outcomes. Analyzing the peer influence on an adult and an adolescent could be another dimension. The role of parenting style in bringing the child from the clutches of peer communication can add value to the existing theories of adolescent consumption fashion.

#### 1.6. Review of Literature

Berndt, 1979, Brown, 1999, Santor, Messervey & Kusumakar, 2000 have all registered in their literature about the negative effects of the peer pressure on the adolescents. Peer communication and interaction are considered to be major factors contributing to a child's social development, but this also leads to taking to certain products like alcohol opines Dilorio (2001), Tildesley (2000) and Prinstein, Boergers & Spirito (2001). Authors like Klerman, Weissman, Rounsavile and Chevron (1984) such negative peer pressure may also lead to depression and in some extreme cases, early death. Fulingni, Eccles, Barber and Clements (2001) have observed that yielding to peer pressure at a very early stage is indicative of certain problematic behavior in the later years. Collins in 1990 has stated that autonomy in a societal relationship involves a number of characteristics and the ability to think for the self. But being in a family a child is forced to develop an amicable relationship with the parents and at the same time develops his ability to maintain his autonomy, declared Allen, hauser, bell and O'Connor in 1994. Vitaro, Tremblay, Kerr, Pagani and Bukowski found out in their research that the children who have moderate behavioral disturbance are probably the ones who yield to the peer pressure to the maximum.

## 2. Research Methodology

Samples: Adolescent children between the ages 9 and 19

Sample size: 80

Ground: The city of Hyderabad

Data collection: Primary and secondary

Data collection tool: Structured, close ended questionnaire

Sampling method: Convenience Sampling

Data handling tool: One way ANOVA

#### 2.1. Objective of the Study

To examine the various factors that make adolescent yield to the peer pressure and to understand the extent to which the peer communication affect an individual adolescent's consumption pattern

Data Analysis:

##### 2.1.1. Table 1: The Role of Price in Yielding to Peer Pressure

H0: The prices do not influence the adolescent in yielding to the peer pressure

H1: The prices do influence the adolescent in yielding to the peer pressure

Research tool: One-way ANOVA

Strongly disagree, 2- disagree, 3- neutral, 4 – agree, 5 – strongly agree

Sources	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Price does not matter if a peer insists on the product	0	1	0	12	1	13
I consider my financial capability to buy though my peer has the product	3	2	1	7	8	21
If the price is too low, even the slightest urge from my peer makes me buy	0	3	0	3	5	11
I sometimes feel that the peer acts as an opinion leader when the price is high	5	1	0	9	4	19
I prefer to compromise on price when the peer likes me to possess that product	3	3	0	8	2	16
<b>Total</b>						80

ANOVA Table						
	X1	X2	X3	X4	X5	Total
Number (n)	5	5	5	5	5	25
$\sum x$	11	10	1	39	20	81
Mean	2.2	2	0.2	7.8	4	3.24
$\sum x^2$	43	24	1	347	110	525
Variance	2.28	1.00	0.16	10.70	7.50	
Std deviation	1.510	1.000	0.400	3.271	2.739	
Std error	0.675	0.447	0.179	1.463	1.225	

ANOVA result				
	SS	df	MS	F
Between	166.16	4	41.5400	9.5980
Within	86.56	20	4.3280	
Total	252.72	24		

Table 1

TV = 2.87  
CV = 9.5980

According to the values yielded, it is clear that H0 is rejected and the prices do matter to the individual adolescent consumers when they want to buy the products possessed by their peers.

2.1.2. Table 2: The Dynamism of the Peer

H0: The dynamism of the peer does not influence the buying behavior of the adolescent

H1: The dynamism of the peer influences the buying behavior of the adolescent

Research tool: One-way ANOVA

Strongly disagree, 2- disagree, 3- neutral, 4 – agree, 5 – strongly agree

Sources	1	2	3	4	5	Total
The peer should have adequate knowledge about the product I look to buy (opinion leader)	2	0	0	7	0	9
The peer should be well connected with the specific industry	3	0	1	9	7	19
The peer should be expressive	6	0	0	0	9	15
The peer should be accessible	3	1	1	12	1	18
The peer should give additional information than I ask for	1	9	1	5	3	19
<b>Total</b>						80

ANOVA Table						
	X1	X2	X3	X4	X5	Total
Number (n)	5	5	5	5	5	25
$\sum x$	15	10	3	33	20	81
Mean	3	2	0.6	6.6	4	3.24
$\sum x^2$	59	82	3	299	140	583
Variance	3.50	12.50	0.12	9.41	11.00	
Std deviation	1.871	3.536	0.346	3.068	3.317	
Std error	0.837	1.581	0.155	1.372	1.483	

ANOVA result				
	SS	df	MS	F
Between	102.16	4	25.5400	3.4958
Within	146.12	20	7.3060	
Total	248.28	24		

Table 2

TV = 2.87

CV = 3.4958

The value secured after applying the tool clearly shows that H0 is rejected and the dynamism of the peer definitely matters an adolescent buyer when he makes a choice of purchase

### 2.1.3. Table 3: The Interest Level of the Adolescent Buyer

H0: The buyer's interest does play a role in the ultimate purchase

H1: The buyer's interest does not play a role in the ultimate purchase

Research tool: One-way ANOVA

Strongly disagree, 2- disagree, 3- neutral, 4 – agree, 5 – strongly agree

Sources	1	2	3	4	5	Total
The features of the product should attract me as a buyer	8	0	0	11	2	21
The product should be what I look for to buy	3	1	1	5	0	10
The product should help me overcome any of my present problem	3	5	1	7	2	18
The product category should interest me	2	1	0	0	17	20
The peer should possess the product to give me genuine details	3	0	0	7	1	11
<b>Total</b>						80

ANOVA Table						
	X1	X2	X3	X4	X5	Total
Number (n)	5		5	5	5	25
$\sum x$	19	7	2	30	22	80
Mean	3.8	1.4	0.4	6	4.4	3.20
$\sum x^2$	95	27	2	244	298	666
Variance	5.70	3.32	0.18	7.00	45.46	
Std deviation	2.387	1.822	0.424	2.646	6.742	
Std error	1.067	0.815	0.190	1.183	3.015	

ANOVA result				
	SS	df	MS	F
Between	103.6000000000	4	25.9000	2.1002
Within	246.64	20	12.3320	
Total	350.24	24		

Table 3

TV = 2.87

CV = 2.1002

The values acquired show that H1 is rejected and the adolescent consumers do feel that their interest is greater than the peer pressure and communication when they prefer buying a product.

### 2.1.4. Table 4: Knowledge of Peers Compared with That of the Parents

H0: It does not matter if the peers know more about the product than the parents

H1: It does matter if the peers know more about the product than the parents

Research tool: One-way ANOVA

Strongly disagree, 2- disagree, 3- neutral, 4 – agree, 5 – strongly agree

Sources	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Peers should are more connected to the world than parents	1	1	0	0	8	10
Parents may be educated, but peers know more about the product	7	0	2	6	2	17
The opinion of peers matters more than that of the parents	3	0	3	10	5	21
Peers gain insights through their sociability and connectedness	0	1	0	8	4	12
Peer's opinion helps me more in avoiding faults in my purchase	7	0	2	10	1	20
<b>Total</b>						80

ANOVA Table						
	X1	X2	X3	X4	X5	Total
Number (n)	5	5	5	5	5	25
$\sum x$	18	2	7	34	20	81
Mean	3.6	0.4	1.4	6.8	4	3.24
$\sum x^2$	108	2	NaN	300	110	NaN
Variance	7.56	0.18	0.82	5.64	7.50	
Std deviation	2.750	0.424	0.906	2.375	2.739	
Std error	1.230	0.190	0.405	1.062	1.225	

ANOVA result				
	SS	df	MS	F
Between	124.16	4	31.0400	7.1521
Within	86.8	20	4.3400	
Total	210.9599999999	24		

Table 4

TV = 2.87

CV = 7.1521

From the above table it is obvious that H0 is rejected and the adolescent consumers do consider it important if the peers know more about the product than the parent

## 2.2. Findings of the Study

- i. The adolescent consumers of Hyderabad do take the opinions of the peers in their purchasing decisions but they consider price as one of the most important factors in making the final purchase
- ii. To majority of the adolescent Hyderabad consumers, the dynamism of the peer is very crucial. Many of them have specified in the questionnaire that they expect the peer to be more open and accessible so that the information is easily gathered from them.
- iii. When an actual purchase decision has to be taken, the adolescent consumers of Hyderabad do consider their interest in the specific product category to be greater than the peer's opinion.
- iv. The peer communication happens to be no help if the product in question does not invoke any interest in the adolescent consumers. This indicates the clarity they have making an effective purchase.
- v. Since a couple of decades, the children have depicted more knowledge about a new launch than their parents because of the virtue of having varied sources of information. The major sources of information are social media and mobile apps like Whatsapp which facilitate sharing of information with great ease and without time delay. This brand savviness in the children has outgrown their logical sense in a few areas. One such area is approving of a peer with product knowledge and pushing the parents to the back seat.

## 3. Conclusion

The existence of social media like Facebook and Twitter help the consumers share the product/brand information without any time delay. The adolescent consumers of Hyderabad are brand savvy and dynamic. They do consider the peer interaction and communication which is homophilous (among the peer and the similar groups which share some common characteristics) as vital, at the same time, their interest in the product category in question also matters to them. The revelations of the study are quite alarming to the parents as they bring a different dimension of the consumer in these adolescents of Hyderabad.

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