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Shopping with Friends and Youth's Susceptibility to Peer Influence: With Reference to Indian Retail Shopping

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Abstract: In Indian perspective, to get a success in the dynamic marketing environment there is an important need from the retailer's point of view to learn and anticipate whatever they can about consumers. The better they know and understand consumers, the more advantageous it would prove in accomplishing their goals and objectives. Retailers want to know what consumer think, what they want, how they entertain themselves, how and from whom they get influenced etc. specifically. To answer all these questions perfectly they must understand the behavior of consumers so that they can make their strategies accordingly. Youth (16-25) is a crucial time for developing life and livelihood skills, accessing new information and knowledge, and experimenting with cultural, artistic, and physical expression with peers.

In this research, we examine the phenomenon of youth's retail shopping with friends, and, in particular, whether shopping with friends might enhance youth's attitude toward retailing and their tendency to spend more when shopping with friends. We also examine why youth like to shop with friends. Specially, we relate friend's knowledge (Informational/ Normative) to youth's susceptibility to informational and normative influence from friends. Susceptibility to peer influence is then related to various aspects of youth shopping, such as frequency & enjoyment of shopping with friends in groups, which in turn, are related to sentiments toward retailing and spending tendencies.

Keywords: Susceptibility; Normative/informational Influence; Retail Shopping, Peer Influence in Retail..

I. INTRODUCTION

Globally the youth market has evolved into a brand-oriented and materialistic society. For instance, Americans under the age of 25 spend 5 times more money than their parents did at that age (Ewold, 2003). In a similar fashion, the Asian society too has become brand conscious and is particularly prominent among the youth and in India, this market comprises generally of school/college and university students and young working adults. This lucrative segment for retailers makes up more than 40% of the total population (www.yionline.org/youthindia.html). In India the retail industry has undergone great transformation in the last 12-15 year from unorganized to organized retailing with more and more brands entering the market, acceptance of mall concept and the recent past years have seen the entry of numerous international brands in the Indian market.

India's resurgence potential as an economic and a socially responsible power rests on the Indian youth. Statistics like 72 % of India's population is below the age of 40, 47% of Indians is under the age of 20 and 10% of the world population is an Indian under 25 is a common assessment of India by all countries now. It is this population of young people which constitutes, for India, a potential demographic target for the growing organized retail. This predominance of youth in the population is expected

to last until 2050. The "BRIC Report" by Goldman Sachs predicts that the economies of Brazil, Russia, India and China would become larger forces over the next 50 years and mentions that India's economy could be larger than Japan's by 2032, that the combined GDP of the BRIC countries would cross that of the G6 by 2039 and that India could show the fastest growth in the next 30 years.

Research on adult consumers indicates that, when adults shop with friends in groups, this co-shopping has certain advantages for retailers, namely that co-shopping adults tend to spend more time in stores, cover more of the store's area, purchase more and spend more money than when shopping alone (Granbois,1968;Sommer,Wynes,&Brinkley,1992;Woodside & Sims,1976). Given that such positive effects have been found for co-shopping adults, it seems likely that shopping with friends would be even more important and relevant for youths and, thus, also have a significant and positive impact on retail performance. This is because peer groups are a particularly strong source of influence in the youth age. Indeed,given the crucial role peer group play in adolescents development, youths may be especially subject to peer influence and particularly prone to shop with friends. In fact research has indicated that youth shop primarily with friends and that they like being with friends while they shop (Tootelian & Gaedeke,1992). However the issue is how shopping with friends might affect retailing attitude and behaviors. More importantly from a theoretical context, why do youth (or more generally, buyers) shop with friends? What process underlie youth's tendency to shop with friends? The focus of our research is to address these important but under-researched questions specifically in Indian retail consumer's context.

The purpose of this study was to examine how the social influence of friends might be related to youths' retailing attitudes and behaviors. Our basic premise was that youths' evaluations of retailing are an output of a social comparison process with co-oriented others. Specifically, we proposed that shopping with co-oriented friends provides youth with information and normative standards by which youth may evaluate retailing phenomena. This susceptibility to interpersonal influence from friends, then, shapes the construction of retailing attitudes and behaviors, such as frequency and enjoyment of shopping with friends, teens' sentiments toward retailing, and their spending tendencies.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

EMPIRICAL EVIDENCES OF THE IMPACT OF MARKETING ON VULNERABLE CUSTOMERS

Today we live in a World in which market triumphalism is seemingly the only game in society. Recent Years have seen a boom in the Marketing Industry. Since the 1980's an increasing number of advertising, marketing and consulting agencies have emerged, providing psychological and anthropological insight into the behavior and attitudes of children and adolescents. Marketers are thus exerting greater and greater influence over what children and adolescents eat (increasing amount of fast foods and sugar filled beverages), how they dress (with little regard for what is age – appropriate), and how they behave (increasingly restless and aggressive). They are being trained in these attitudes and behaviors by multibillion-dollar industry. They target the vulnerable consumer group with a steady stream of messages that emphasis self indulgence, instant gratification and materialism. These attitudes are antithetical to what parents seek to teach their children and also antithetical to the attitudes and values that make for healthy living and democratic life.

- A study published on *May 2004* by *Tim Kasser* found that the Vulnerable consumer groups view a wide range of problems common in youth as influenced by the practices of the youth marketing industry.
- A study published in the December 2006 issue of the peer-reviewed journal *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine* found that exposure to tobacco marketing, which includes advertising, promotions and cigarette samples, and to pro-tobacco depictions in films, television, and videos more than doubles the odds that children under 18 will become tobacco users. The researchers also found that pro-tobacco marketing and media depictions lead children who already smoke to smoke more heavily, increasing the odds of progression to heavier use by 42 percent. 81.3 percent of youth (12-17) smokers prefer Marlboro, Camel and Newport – three heavily advertised brands. Marlboro, the most

heavily advertised brand, constitutes almost 50 percent of the youth market but only about 40 percent of smokers over age 25.

- A study in the *American Journal of Public Health* showed that adolescents who owned a tobacco promotional item and named a cigarette brand whose advertising attracted their attention were twice as likely to become established smokers as those who did neither.
- A survey released in March 2006 showed that kids were more than twice as likely as adults to recall tobacco advertising. While only 28 percent of all adults recalled seeing a tobacco ad in the two weeks prior to the survey, 53 percent of kids aged 12 to 17 reported seeing tobacco ads.

In 2006 Business world - Hansa Research Survey Researchers concluded that Marketers spend huge sum on targeting the young, to get connected with them in their new media spaces.

PEER INFLUENCE AND YOUTH BEHAVIOUR

Two competing perspectives offer explanations for how peer influence affects adolescents' behaviour. On the one hand much research has focused on the role of peer pressure in various detrimental and negative youth age behaviors, such as smoking and drug and alcohol use (Brown Clasen & Eicher 1987, Melby et al, 1993) In marketing peer effects have been studied in relation to adolescent shoplifting and consumption of harmful products (Cox. & Moschis1990: Rose, Beaden & Peel.1992)

An alternative view casts the role of peer influence on youth agers in a more positive light. Indeed one of the primary developmental task of adolescents is to establish an identity separate from parents (Gecas, 1981: gecas & Seff,1990: Youniss & Smollar.1985) Because peer groups are voluntary in nature and peers are not directly responsible for monitoring youths actions. Peer may provide an early forum in which youths can try out various aspects of the social self (Gecas & Seff.1990; Youniss & Smoller,1985) As such peers may be one of the earliest groups by which individual learn to deal with the world outside the family. Indeed, early sociologists pointed to the primary nature of peer groups in socializing individuals, In addition to the important role played by the family (Cooley1909). And one of the most important peer groups is friend.

SOCIAL INFLUENCE

Social influence has long been recognized as an important force shaping an individual's consumer behavior. Reference groups may exert influence in a number of ways: by providing information in ambiguous situations (i.e. informative influence), by setting normative standards of conduct, and/or by enhancing an individual's self- image (i.e. normative influence). These influences may occur before purchase (e.g. through word of mouth communication and pattern of information seeking), during purchase (e.g. when others are present in purchase settings), and after purchase (e.g. when others are present in consumption context).

Two primary types of social influence have been identified in the literature : Informational & Normative social influence (see. e.g. Bearden & Btzel,1982; Bearden, Netemeyer & Teel,1989-1990; Burnkrant & Cousineau,1975; Childers & Rao,1992;Deutsch & Geard.1955; Eagly & Chaiken,1993; Park & Lessig,1977; Price & Feick,1984) Informational social influence is 'an influence to accept information obtained from another as evidence about reality (Deutsch & Gerard,1995. P629). Informational influence occurs through a process of internalization(see. e.g. Bearden & Efel,1982; Burnkrany & Cousineau,1975; Kelman,1961;Park & lessig,1977).Here a social other has influence to the extent that(s)he provides information that enhances another's understanding of some phenomenon.

SHOPPING WITH FRIENDS

One of the most direct examples of how others affect consumer behaviour during purchase is shopping with friends. Some research has focussed on adult consumers’ shopping with friends. Purchase pals are “individuals who accompany buyers on their shopping trip in order to assist them with their on-site purchase decisions” (Hartman & Keicker,1991p.462) in general , previous studies of the shopper –purchase pal dyad have been exploratory or descriptive in nature and have focussed on identifying the characteristics and motivation of adults who use purchase pals as a source of information. Research indicates that consumers who are inexperienced and/or who lack confidence in their ability to evaluate products and brands are more likely to take a pal along when they shop (see e.g. Bell, 1967; Furse, Punj & Stewart.1984; Midgley, 1983; Solomon, 1987). Findings suggest that shopping with a friend or pal reduce perception of risk and uncertainty that buyers associate with purchase decisions (Kiecker & Hartman,1993) and increase the buyer’s confidence that a wise decision was made (Kiecker & Hartman,1993) . Research on information search confirms that collecting information is an effective strategy for reducing perceived risk and uncertainty and that buyer often consult personal sources to acquire information(see, e.g. Locander & Herman,1979; Lutz & reily.1973; midgley,1983; Price & Feick,1984;Srinivasan,1990).

III. MODEL DEVELOPMENT

As our research pertained to finding out the behavioral implication on purchase behavior on youth during the shopping experience in a retail mall, it was imperative to formulate a conceptual model in order to better understand and characterizes the implications of influences on youth’s buying pattern and its susceptibility to such influences. On the basis of the considerations outlined above, we developed a conceptual model for the roles of friends’ influence in youth shopping behavior (see Fig.1). The reasons and rationale behind our theoretical model is given below.

FRIENDS’ KNOWLEDGE

To the extent that youth perceive their friends to have greater knowledge of products, brands, and stores, one might expect youth to be susceptible to both normative and informational influence from these friends. On the one hand, friends may possess knowledge of the social or symbolic aspects of stores would impress the youth’s peer group to which the youth would like to belong. On the other hand, friends may possess knowledge of the technical or performance aspects of products, brands, and stores. In the first instance, the influence of friends would have normative implications and, in the second, the influence would be informational in nature. On the basis of these considerations, we hypothesize that:

H1: The greater the perception of friends knowledge of marketing phenomenon relative to youth, the more susceptible the youth will be to a friend’s normative influence.

H2: The greater the perception of friend’s knowledge of marketing phenomenon relative to the youth, the more susceptible the youth will be to a friend’s informational influence.

Friend’s greater knowledge may also have implications for youth’s enjoyment of shopping with friend’s .Hartman and Kiecker (1991) found that one reason people shopped with purchase pals was because they enjoyed the shopping experience more when a pal accompanied them.

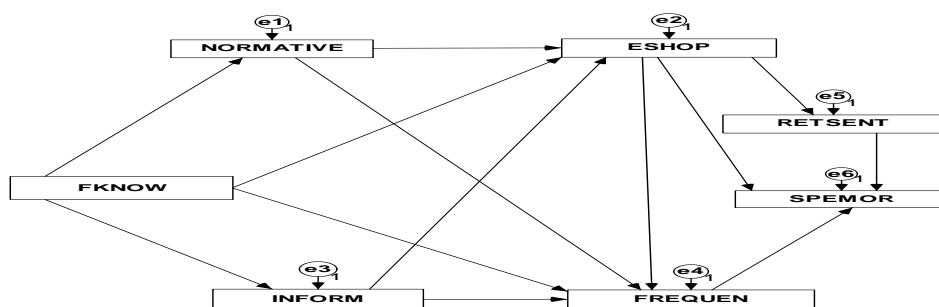


Fig.1 Conceptual Model

To the extent that friends know more about shopping-related factors (e.g., products, malls, stores, etc.), they may facilitate the process of shopping for youth, which may enhance youth's enjoyment of shopping with friends. Shopping with a knowledgeable friend may also increase youth's confidence in their purchase decisions and, hence, their enjoyment of this experience. Enjoyment of shopping with a slightly more knowledgeable friend is also consistent with the "unidirectional upward pressure to enhance performance" hypothesis of social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954), according to which individuals look for ways to improve performance and so may use others of slightly greater ability as comparison points for improving their own behavior. This opportunity to enhance performance by comparison with more knowledgeable friends is likely to be enjoyable for youths. Therefore, we expect that:

H3: Friend's greater knowledge of marketing phenomenon relative to the youth will be positively associated with youth's enjoyment of shopping with friends.

Finally, to the extent that their friends possess greater knowledge of marketing phenomena it is youth's advantage to shop with a friend. Having a knowledgeable source readily available in the purchase settings has a number of advantages for buyers. Such as reducing the effort associated with acquiring information and evaluating products, brands and stores (See e.g. price & Feick 1984). Therefore,

H4: Friend's greater knowledge of marketing phenomenon relative to the youth will be positively associated with youth's tendency to shop often with friends.

SUSCEPTIBILITY TO FRIEND'S INFLUENCE

Being susceptible to influence from another implies that others' opinions and evaluations are important. Whether others' opinions provide evidence about reality or serve to maintain or enhance the individual's self-esteem, the consumer has significant others along who can help meet his/her informational and social (normative) needs. Consistent with social comparison theory, shopping with co-oriented others facilitates the process of social comparison, whether the co-oriented others provide information about marketing phenomena or serve to support positively valued group norms. Indeed, shopping with friends is a social activity, and, to the extent that friends' opinions are valued, buyers are likely to evaluate social situations in which such important individuals are present more positively, in large part because co-shopping facilitates direct comparisons with these co-oriented others and makes it easier for youths to evaluate their own behaviors and opinions as a result. Therefore,

H5: Youth's susceptibility to normative influence from friends will be positively associated with youth's enjoyment of shopping with friends.

H6: Youth's susceptibility to informational influence from friends will be positively associated with youth's enjoyment of shopping with friends.

Susceptibility to influence from friends is also likely to affect the extent to which youths shop with friends. As stated previously, friends may help reduce uncertainty by providing information that helps buyers make wiser purchase decisions (informational influence). Friends may also provide feedback that helps buyers construct desirable social identities (normative influence). In either case taking friends along when shopping benefits the buyers because it permits buyers to make direct comparisons with others and to draw directly on others' knowledge. Therefore, we expect that:

H7: Youth's susceptibility to normative influence from friends will be positively associated with youth's tendencies to shop often with friends.

H8: Youth's susceptibility to informational influence from friends will be positively associated with youth's tendencies to shop often with friends.

SHOPPING WITH FRIENDS

One might expect that the more youths enjoy shopping with friends, the more likely they will be to do so. This follows from the fact that positive affect toward the experience of shopping with friends is likely to increase the frequency with which youths shop with friends.

H9: Youth's enjoyment of shopping with friends will be positively associated with youth's tendencies to shop often with friends.

Similarly, enjoyment of shopping with friends is likely to affect favorably youth's sentiment toward retailing. Defined as consumers' attitude toward the distribution/ retailing component of marketing practice (Gaski & Etzel, 1986). When youths enjoy shopping with friends there may be a halo or spillover effect on sentiment toward retailing based on youths positive evaluations of their direct experience of shopping with friends their direct experience of shopping with friends. In other words, positive evaluations of the shopping experience are likely to generalize to evaluations of retailing in general. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

H10: Youth's enjoyment of shopping with friends will be positively associated with youth's sentiments toward retailing.

Finally the enjoyment of shopping with friends and the positive mood engendered may result in more favorable evaluations of products and thus, result in youths spending more when shopping with friends. By similar logic, favorable sentiments toward retailing will likely translate into increased youth spending when shopping with friends. Therefore, we expect that:

H11: Youth's enjoyment of shopping with friends will be positively associated with youth's tendencies to spend more when shopping with friends.

H12: Youth's tendency to shop often with friends will be positively associated with the tendency to spend more money when shopping with friends.

H13: Youth's sentiments toward retailing will be positively associated with the tendency to spend more when shopping with friends.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data for this research was collected via a survey of youths, which was conducted in and nearby malls and big retail outlets of the EIGHT cities of India including *Delhi/ Gurgaon, Noida / Ghaziabad, Mumbai, Chandigarh, Kolkata, Bangalore, Chennai and Lucknow*. Since this study is limited to youth, tapping an effective pool of those youth freaking out to such malls and big retail outlets along with their friend is an easy task in the developed cities of the country i.e. India.

SAMPLE

A total of 507 responses were collected through simple random sampling using paper questionnaire which were administered to respondents who were present in the mall or nearby malls and big retail outlets along with their friends in the cities covered in this research. But owing to incomplete response and incomplete entries only 420 responses were considered for the final survey.

V. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULT

The conceptual model depicted in Fig.1 was tested using SPSS-AMOS (Browne, M.W. and R. Cudeck (1993). All analysis used maximum likelihood estimation and the observed covariance matrix. The results are reported in the form of completely standardized solution. The correlation matrix is provided in Table no. 2.

Table no.1 Constructs and associated questionnaires items

Construct	Mean	SD	Survey item
Normative Influence (NORMATIV) **	4.57	1.08	When buying products, I usually buy the ones that I think my friends will approve of. I like to know what products and brands make a good impression on my friends. It is important that my friends like the products and brands I buy.
Inform. Influence (INFORM)**	5.25	0.97	If I don't have a lot of experience with a product, I often ask my friends about it. I often ask my friends to help me to choose the best product for me. I often get information about a product or brand from friends before I buy. To make sure that that I buy the right product or brand, I often look at what my friends are buying or using.
Enjoy Shopping (ESHOP)**	3.81	1.17	I do not like to shop with my friends. I do not like to shop by myself. It's more fun to shop with friends than it is to shop myself.
Frequency (FREQUEN)*	3.64	0.96	How often do you go to the malls with your friends? How often do you shop with friends when making a purchase for yourself? How often do you go to the retail stores with your friends?
Retail Sentiments (RETSENT)**	5.56	0.98	Malls provide good services. Malls serve their customers well. Salespersons in malls are very helpful.
Spending More (SPEMOR)**	4.35	1.81	I spend more money when I shop with friends than when I shop all alone.
Friend Knowledge (FKNOW) **	3.87	1.21	The friends with whom I shop know more about products and brand than I do. The friends with whom I shop know more about shopping than I do. The friends with whom I shop know more about stores than I do.

(**) Items were measured on seven-point scales ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”.

(*) Items were measured on five scales ranging from “never” to “very often”.

Hypothesis Testing

Given that our conceptualization of the constructs was supported by the measurement model, we proceed to evaluate the hypothesized structural relationships. Fig. 2 shows Standardized parameter estimates.

Although the chi square value was statistically significant ($X^2 = 77.655, p = .00$). Other fit measures – RMR(.081), GFI(.954), AGFI(.840), CFI(.853) and CFI(.944) suggest that the model fit reasonably well. Taken together, these results suggest that the model is a reasonable basis upon which to test our research hypotheses.

Table 2. Correlation matrix

		Correlations						
		SPEMOR	FKNOW	INFORM	NORMATIVE	ESHOP	FREQUEN	RETSENT
SPEMOR	Pearson Correlation	1	.184**	.162**	.123*	.437**	.435**	.218**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.001	.011	.000	.000	.000
	N	420	420	420	420	420	420	420
FKNOW	Pearson Correlation	.184**	1	.506**	.603**	.372**	.415**	.167**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.001
	N	420	420	420	420	420	420	420
INFORM	Pearson Correlation	.162**	.506**	1	.447**	.234**	.278**	.332**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	420	420	420	420	420	420	420
NORMATIVE	Pearson Correlation	.123*	.603**	.447**	1	.500**	.566**	.167**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.011	.000	.000		.000	.000	.001
	N	420	420	420	420	420	420	420
ESHOP	Pearson Correlation	.437**	.372**	.234**	.500**	1	.860**	.308**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	420	420	420	420	420	420	420
FREQUEN	Pearson Correlation	.435**	.415**	.278**	.566**	.860**	1	.292**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	420	420	420	420	420	420	420
RETSENT	Pearson Correlation	.218**	.167**	.332**	.167**	.308**	.292**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.001	.000	.001	.000	.000	
	N	420	420	420	420	420	420	420

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

As expected, friend’s greater knowledge about marketing phenomena relative to youth shoppers is positively related to youth’s susceptibility to normative (Beta value(β)=.60, R^2 =.36) and informational (Beta value (β)=.51, R^2 =.26) influence . R square value in social science research is acceptable even it is as low as 0.20 (Ref. pg.109, Gaur & Gaur: Sage Publication). Our result indicates that an important source of youth’s susceptibility to friend’s influence is the perception that friends have greater knowledge of marketing phenomenon relative to the youth. Friends’ greater knowledge of marketing phenomena appears to help youth to construct desirable social identities and/or potentially embarrassing or negative social consequences (H1). Also previous research has suggested the positive linkage between friends’ greater knowledge of marketing phenomenon relative to youth and youth’s susceptibility to informational influence (H2); However, this study is among the first to measure and test this idea specifically in Indian context.

The effect of friend’s knowledge on youths’ enjoyment of shopping with friends, is positive & statistically significant (β =.12, R^2 =.26) (H3). Also contrary to expectations, friend’s knowledge had a statistically Insignificant effect on the frequency with which youth shop with their friends (β =.03, R^2 =.77) (H4).

As expected in the context of a significant positive correlation between the two dimensions of social influence, normative influence had a positive and statistically significant influence on youth’s enjoyment of shopping with friends(β = .44, R^2 =.26)(H5). Where as informational influence had a positive and statistically significant influence on youth’s enjoyment of shopping with more informed friends (β =.16, R^2 =.26) (H6).

In the structural model result it is quiet pertinent that youth’s susceptibility to normative influence from friends had a statistically significant negative influence (β =-.02, R^2 =.77) on youth’s tendencies to visit frequently for shopping with friends (H7). However, susceptibility to informational influence had a positive but statistically insignificant influence (β =.01, R^2 =.26) on youths’ tendency to visit frequently for shopping with friends. (H8).

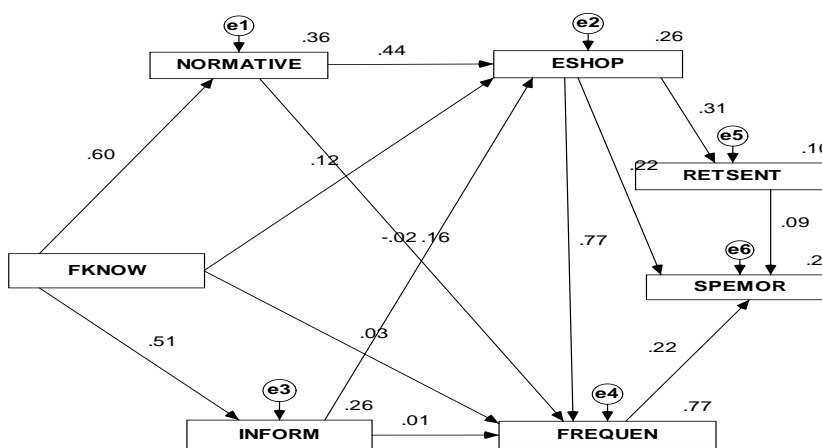


Fig.2 Structural Model Results (Standardized)

Also as expected, youth’s enjoyment of shopping with friends was strongly positively related to their frequency of shopping with friends (β =.77, R^2 =.77)(H9). This finding of our research is consistent with those from previous research on purchase pals indicating that shopping with pals is a fun and enjoyable activity and that fun is an important motivation for shopping with others (Hartman & Keicker, 1991). Because shopping with friends is enjoyable, youths may shop with friends more often. And youth who enjoyed shopping with friends are supposed to be more favorably disposed toward retailing, suggesting that positive evaluations of the direct experience of shopping with friends generalizes to more positive sentiments towards retailing (β =.31, R^2 =.10)(H10).

Further, consistent with previous research on adult shoppers (e.g., see Granbois, 1968; Sommer, Wyes & Brinkley, 1992; woodside & Sims, 1976), enjoyment of shopping with friends disposes youth towards spending more money with those friends than they would spend when they shopping alone (β =.22, R^2 =.21) (H11). Perhaps because the amount spent is visible to friends

with whom they shop, youth may spend more money when others are present to avoid appearing cheap. Or, there may be some type of synergy or snowballing spending effect that occurs when one shop with others or friends in groups.

The frequency with which youth shop with friends also positively affects their propensity to spend more when shopping with friends ($\beta=.22$, $R^2=.21$) (H12), as expected. Taken together, these findings suggest that shopping with friends may offset or make less salient a youth's concern over spending money, and the retailer may gain some tangible benefits when youths shop in groups.

The path between youth's sentiments toward retailing and the amount youth spend while shopping with friends, however, was positive but not statistically significant ($\beta=.09$, $R^2=.21$) (H12). This pattern of result suggests that youth's evaluation of their direct experiences of shopping with friends increase relative spending, but general evaluations of retailing do not.

FUTURE SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH

Given that the youth market is substantial and most likely to grow faster in the near future, efforts to understand youths, consumer behavior are likely to become especially important. Also, youths' learning of consumption values and behavior in early years may have implications for later years in their life in which retailers would be more interested in to make their future strategies for the grown up or adult consumers. This study has provided a first step toward better understanding of youth shopping behavior, but there is a need for future research focusing on this substantial and under-researched consumer population in India.

VI. CONCLUSION

This research adds to our understanding of youths, attitudes towards Indian retailer and their shopping behaviors. Specifically, attitudes toward retailers are related to how much youth enjoy shopping with friends. And the more that youth enjoy shopping with friends, as opposed to shopping alone, the more they like to shop often with those friends. Each of these in turn leads youths' to spend relatively more when shopping with peers or friends than when alone. So, Indian retailers should engage in marketing activities and tactics that make shopping with peers or friends even more enjoyable for youths. Doing so may result in attitudes and behaviors that retailers seek: even more positive attitudes on the part of youths toward retailers in general, perhaps overcoming some of the negative attitudes that youths have toward retailers, and their spending relatively more when shopping with these friends. This research also adds to our understanding of why youths shops with their friends in group. Specifically, friends appear to provide youth with standard by which they may judge retailing and shopping stimuli and tasks. Youth enjoy shopping with friends to the extent that the youth is more susceptible to informational and normative influence from their friends, perhaps to reduce risk. As such, susceptibility to friends' influence appears to be an adaptive part of the process of developing an identity that is significant part of the youth early years of life. Finally, susceptibility to friends' influence appears to be partly a function of how youth assess friends' knowledge relative to their own and also youths' age.

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