
Investigating the potential influence of C in making young people's choices in the context of Brand Sensitivity

Sara Amin (Corresponding Author)

Lecturer, Department of Sociology, The Women University Multan, Pakistan.
Sara.soc@wum.edu.pk

Malka Liaquat

Assistant Professor, Institute of Management Sciences, The Women University
Multan, Pakistan
Malka.liquat@wum.edu.pk

Samra Malik

Lecturer, Department of Business Administration, University of Sahiwal,
Pakistan
samramalik@uosahiwal.edu.pk

Abstract

According to the research, clothing with well-known brand names appears to be crucial for young buyers. Regarding Pakistani young people's brand sensitivity, this study investigated how two socialization agents influenced the development of Pakistani young people's comparative importance and sensitivity to brand messages. T-tests and regression analyses were carried out on participants between the ages of 18 and 24. According to the findings, social media and peer influence are significant indicators of young people's brand sensitivity, particularly among boys. According to the study's conclusions, social media is a more socializing solid agent in today's modern period than in previous periods. According to these data, young ladies appear to be more brand-conscious than young males in clothing. The data has been analyzed to emphasize peer pressure and social media advertising to attract a more youthful demographic.

1. Introduction

In recent years, the textile industry in Pakistan has experienced a resurgence of growth. Although Pakistan is a third-world country, it has gained momentum in launching branded

products as international consumer culture spreads throughout the entire world, including Pakistan (Zeb & Rashid et al., 2011). Young boys and girls are becoming increasingly interested in international and national brands. The branded and expensive designer dress industries are thriving as more and more young people become involved in consumer culture and consider these products a social status symbol in their communities (Durmaz& Ozer et al., 2020). Young people use these high-priced items to symbolize their social standing and identify with the group and community they have joined (Mazali et al., 2011). Pakistani women have become more accustomed to donning prestigious brand names in the last ten years. Various socialization agents influence individuals to become more sensitive to brand names and purchase specific, expensive products. (Finkle, 2018) asserts that peer pressure is one of the most influential factors in young people's decision to use products. These young people's peers attempt to compete with one another and integrate into their social circles (Mansoor & Ansari et al.,2021). As people in Pakistan become more aware of the existence of branded products, they are becoming more brand sensitive. Nowadays, social media and networking sites have skyrocketed, particularly in the developing world. Advertisers and brand owners are incredibly focused and professional when targeting young people through advertising, and social media plays a significant role in this effort (Haidery& Kamran et al., 2020).

Jean-NoiKapferer was the first to recognize the importance of brand sensitivity. Thus, Kapferer (1991) states, "Brand sensitivity is a psychological construct associated with the customer's decision-making process. To say that an individual is brand sensitive implies that brands play a critical role in the psychological process leading to the purchasing act." Individuals become more brand sensitive as they become more involved in a product category. Today's youth are more receptive to consumer culture and have a strong interest in fashion. Apart from their functional value, these branded products endow young consumers with symbolic and social values (Cheah et al., 2015).

Consumers' psychological and social development is facilitated by various socialization agents, including (Family, Peers, and after technological advancement, social media). Family and peers are the classical agents that influence a consumer's behavior and state of mind. Numerous adolescents adopt the practices of their peers to gain acceptance within the group (Marwaha, 2015). With the advancement and widespread use of technology, branded product

placement is becoming an increasingly important part of social media practices (Romao & Moro et al., 2019). Advertisers attempt to capture the attention of young people, and their primary target demographic is the young population (Pagala et al., 2014).

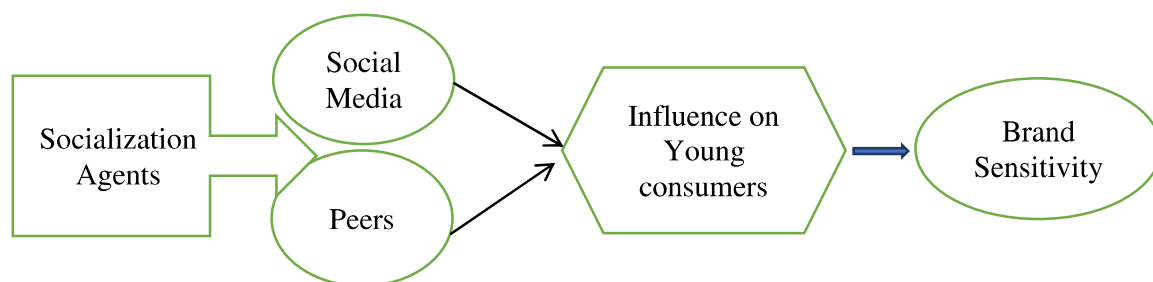
Brand sensitivity can help young people develop materialistic values. Being brand-obsessed can be detrimental to young people, as they may exert pressure on their parents to purchase expensive products (Lachance & Beaudoin et al., 2003). Due to financial insecurity, parents may not buy those opulent products that encourage young people to abandon traditional values (Daud et al., 2011). Thus, this study aimed to examine the impact of two primary socialization agents (social media and peers) and their relative importance on the development of Pakistani adolescents' brand sensitivity in apparel from an explanatory perspective. The researcher used the Super-Peer theory to bolster her findings. The branding phenomenon is not new and has been discussed previously due to the economic strain on parents and young people, as evidenced by media reports on the youth craze for clothing brands (Beaudoin & Lachance et al., 2006). Fewer studies, particularly in the Pakistani context, have examined the effect of these socialization agents on young people's brand sensitivity.

2. Literature Review

Globally, consumer culture has been introduced over the last decade. Globalization is the primary driver of this culture of branded product consumption (Goodman, 2007). According to biennium Baber (1996), branded merchandise, particularly from the United States, has spread worldwide, bringing us all to a MacWorld where these branded products are considered a status symbol. This global acceptance of the homogenized culture of consuming branded products as a status symbol (Moriss, 2008). Due to increased access to technology and interactions, today's youth are more brand-savvy than previous generations (Sharda & Bhat, 2018). Previously, due to a lack of technology and advertising, young people were not exposed to branded products. They typically learn about brands through traditional channels such as family and friends. However, the days of young people spending money solely on branded shoes, pairs, or dresses are over (Lachance & Beaudoin et al., 2006). They desire expensive ensembles with matching accessories to impress their peers and classmates and showcase their expensive products on social media platforms such as Facebook (Nistor, 2019). These adolescents are inundated with advertising for branded products (Zafar, 2013).

People in Pakistan are deprived of their necessities, according to the World Bank (2020). A low preliminary wage rate does not even cover most people's basic needs. To meet their basic needs, the middle class must work hard. Until recently, Pakistanis had little knowledge of international brands and preferred to buy local products (Bushra & Bilal, 2014). Over the past decade, Pakistani young people have become more brand-conscious and brand-conscious due to their adoption of consumer culture (Ahmed & Razi et al., 2013). Globalization and advanced technology have led to an increase in brand awareness. When young people believe that wearing a particular brand will elevate their social status and enhance their physical attractiveness, they become brand loyalists. Young people's dissatisfaction and materialism are promoted by these commercials (Faridoon & Iqbal, 2018). Among young people, the proliferation of brand culture has created an abnormality. To compete with their social circle, they buy the most expensive and sought-after branded products (Islam & Wei et al., 2017).

Victor C Strasburger (2002) argued that media can significantly influence how people behave in today's world. Furthermore, the media's influence can be so strong that it can outweigh the impact of older peers and companions, as young people can obtain information that they would not receive from any other source. The media's influence can be so strong that it can affect adolescents' and teenagers' behavior, actions, and practices. Advertisers attract a young audience by introducing characters similar to their age (actors, celebrities, etc.). Teenagers idolize these figures and emulate their lifestyles. Thus, according to the given theory, two socialization peers and media have the greatest influence on teenagers' socio-psychological behavior. They adopt these agents' distinct behaviors and attitudes. This paper aims to investigate the impact of peers and the media on young people's brand-conscious behavior.



Social Media

According to Siddique (2015), This fast-paced world has made people brand conscious of their social status and the recognition they receive from their social group. Brand advertisers use social media to reach a broad audience, particularly young people. The impact of advertisements on young people is enormous. Advertisers can quickly reach a large audience with the help of television, social media, and other technological tools (Elmore & Scull et al., 2017). Adverts for mobile phones are more appealing to young people, particularly girls and boys. Advertising agencies employ various celebrities and social workers to entice young people to participate in their products (Ali et al., 2014). People's obsession with specific brands and their products has become almost sacralized thanks to social networking sites and other forms of social media (Das et al., 2016).

Peer

Along with social media, other agents of socialization, such as family and friends, influence young people's brand sensitivity and awareness. According to Houser (2016), the most influential factors in young people's brand selection are their friends and peers. Since they must enter a particular social circle, they desire acceptance and integration into that circle (Isaksen & Roper, 2008). Fashion brands influence many women through social media advertising, but they tailor their messages to their group identity and pleasant personality. For these women, peer group affects their socio-psychological behavior when purchasing various branded products (Marwaha, 2015).

3. Methodology

The quantitative research design was used to collect and analyze the data for this study. The method was chosen because it is the most effective technique for determining the relationship between multiple variables. An experimental research approach was used, which aids in scientifically quantifying the research objectives. The current study's universe includes Pakistani youth primarily attracted to branded products and adhering to consumer culture (Hussain, 2017). Four hundred sixteen boys and girls aged 17-25 years were randomly selected from four Multan city educational institutes.

In Multan, the researcher chose two public and two private institutions. Due to the relatively large student population at government institutes, the researcher established a ratio of 10% for all four institutes. The data were collected using a stratified and purposive sampling technique. Two strata were created in public and private educational institutions: males and females. Purposive sampling was used to collect data from boys and girls who typically prefer branded products.

To develop the questionnaire, the researcher adopted the Kapferer and Laurent's Brand Sensitivity Scale (1983) and Bearden, Netemeyer, and Teel's Susceptibility to Reference Group Influence Scale to measure the brand sensitivity and peer influence. For social media, the total number of hours young people typically spend on social media platforms during the whole week provided the complete participant's exposure to social media. The questionnaire was then pre-tested to check its validity and reliability. The data was collected from the young age group participants. The overall Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient obtained was 0.917

4. Data Analysis

The Demographic Representation of Data

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Age (Years)		
17-19 years	13	26.4
20-22 years	93	51.4
Gender		
Male	208	50
Female	208	50
Total Sample	416	100.0

The table shows that 26.4% of respondents were from 17-19 years, 51.4% were from 20-22 years, and 22.1% were from 23-25 years. The majority of the respondents were from 20-22 years. The table also illustrates that 50% of the respondents were male, and 50% were female.

Impact on overall brand sensitivity

Variables	Unstandardized		Standardized	T-Stat	P-value
	Coefficients		Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	3.885	0.888		4.375	0.003
Peers	0.56	0.022	0.114	2.556	0.011**
Social Media	0.118	0.021	0.260	5.639	0.000*

Peers have a significant association with the brand sensitivity of an individual. Social media [F(5, 419), Adj-R²=0.402 P-value(0.000)] has a highly effective association with the brand sensitivity of an individual. So it shows that social media has more influence on youths' brand sensitivity than peers.

Name of Institution	N	M	SD	t-Stat	P-value
Female	208	38.0962	7.8906	0.329	0.371
Male	208	38.3382	7.0718		

*P=NS

The mean difference (T= 0.329, df= 413) was found between male and female youth. It was found that female youth (SD= 7.8906) are comparatively more brand sensitive than male youth.

Social media has a significant impact on the development of brand sensitivity among Pakistani youth. While peers significantly affect brand sensitivity among youth, social media is exceptionally effective. The findings corroborated the super-peer theory, which holds that social media substantially influences young people's behavior and actions in contemporary times. The results are consistent with the literature, which indicates that advertising, primarily via social media, affects individuals' brand and value consciousness and materialism (Ismail & Nguyen et al., 2018). By enabling young people to interact and share experiences across multiple platforms (such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram), social media has surpassed other socialization agents, increasing brand awareness and making young people more brand-savvy (Chung et al., 2016). Young consumers can become members of various brand communities that attract them by promoting their products, offering special discounts, and hiring celebrities to promote their brands and development, thereby informing them about the latest trends and branded products (Davis et al., 2015). According to Dolan and Conduit et al.

(2019), social media advertisers attract consumers through rational and emotional appeals. Consumers, in turn, demonstrate active engagement by purchasing the advertised products and increasing their brand awareness.

Developing brand-conscious behavior is also influenced by one's peers. For young people, belonging to a group is crucial. Fashion is seen as a social status symbol and a way to gain acceptance among peers by teenagers, and brand names and logos seem to play a role in this process (Gulati, 2017). Young people use these branded products as a badge or emblem reflecting how they see themselves or want others to see them (Zollo, 1999). Individuals' self-esteem can be lowered if their peers reject them because of their clothing, promoting materialistic values and making them more aware of and sensitive to brands (Jiang & Zhang et al., 2015). In classical times, peer pressure was an essential factor in shaping young people's brand awareness (Lachance & Beaudoin et al., 2003). Due to advances in technology, social media is still a powerful tool for socializing. Using social media, young people can easily connect with friends, learn about various branded products, and become enticed to purchase them through advertising.

5. Conclusion and Policy Implications

Findings from a study show that youth brand sensitivity is directly linked to their interactions with the social environment and results from this interaction. There is no substitute for face-to-face interaction when it comes to socializing. Thanks to social media, it's easier than ever for young people to stay updated on current trends and fashions. These days, more time is spent on media devices than with other people. However, this does not rule out the importance of the peer group in shaping young people's behavior. When it comes to adopting certain behaviors and brands, young people have relied heavily on the influence of their peers for decades. Because girls are more concerned with their physical appearance, the study found them more brand-conscious than their male counterparts. Furthermore, young people are becoming more brand-conscious, promoting materialistic values due to their increased brand awareness. Consumer educators and families can use the study's findings to help young people learn how to live in a balanced environment, even if they have access to branded products at a low cost. Educators should chastise students for wearing branded clothing before their peers, and parents should keep tabs on children's spending.

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