

## **SHOPPING STYLES AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS: IMPLICATION FOR CONSUMER EDUCATION**

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the adolescents' shopping styles from the consumer socialization perspective. Eight shopping styles were conceptualized as outcomes of socialization agents, namely parents, peers, printed media, television commercials and in-school education. The study also proposed five social structural variables (social class, gender, ethnicity, residence and religion) as being associated with the adolescents' interaction with socialization agents. The study sample consisted of 934 secondary school students between the age of 16 and 19 years. As a result of regression analyses, significant relationships were found between social structural factors and socialization processes, suggesting that the influence of socialization agents on adolescents may vary according to certain demographic characteristics. Significant relationships were also found between social structural factors and socialization processes. Peers, printed media and television commercials are also found to be significant sources of the acquisition of both desirable and undesirable shopping styles. Parents and in-school education, however, were not significant in the acquisition of any shopping styles among adolescents.

**Keywords:** Shopping styles, secondary school students, consumer education, consumer socialization, five social structural

### **Abstrak**

Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji trend berbelanja remaja hari ini daripada perspektif sosial pengguna. Lapan budaya ini merupakan hasil daripada proses sosialisai dan hubungan interaksi dengan ejen-ejen sosial seperti ibu bapa, rakan sebaya, media cetak, iklan televisyen dan interaksi di sekolah telah dikenal pasti. Kajian ini juga mencadangkan lima variable (kelas sosial, gender, bangsa, tempat tinggal dan agama) untuk menggabungkan hubungan interaksi dengan ejen-ejen sosial tersebut dan dikaji kepada 934 orang pelajar ryang berusia antara 16 hingga 19 tahun. Hasil daripada analisis regresi, hubungan antara faktor struktural sosial dengan proses sosialisasi telah dikenal pasti. Faktor kelas sosial, demografi, rakan sebaya, serta pengaruh media telah memberi kesan kepada budaya berbelanja. Namun begitu ibu bapa dan suasana prasekolah tidak memberi banyak pengaruh kepada budaya berbelanja dalam kalangan pelajar sekolah menengah ini.

**Kata Kunci:** Trend berbelanja, pelajar sekolah menengah, pendidikan pengguna, sosialisai pengguna, lima struktur sosial

## **INTRODUCTION**

Adolescents in Malaysia have rapidly come to represent one of the most lucrative market segments as this population shows a positive indication in recent decades. The 1991 Census showed that 6.7 million of the Malaysian population was below the age of 14 years, while another 3.5 million was in the group 15-24 years has increased by 2.3% per annum, from 3.97 million in 1995 to 4.45 million in the year 2000. Yet, as the standard of living among Malaysians have improved significantly, further stimulated by changing lifestyles, adolescents today are granted greater freedom from their parents to make their own shopping and consumption decisions. As a result, adolescents' buying power has increased rapidly as more of them enter the marketplace. This is not surprising when considering that shopping has become one of the leisure activities most often participated in by young Malaysians (Othman and Ong, 1993).

Adolescents' eagerness to undertake an active role as consumers is evidenced by their greater participation in purchasing a wide range of consumer products such as clothes, make-up, food, sports equipment and entertainment, which in turn has led to the increasing phenomenon of conspicuous consumption behaviour among young Malaysians (Tsuruoka, 1992). Apart from this, it is widely believed that the adolescent period is the life stage in which an individual's consumption leverage increases very rapidly in terms of financial resources and decision-making discretion. Hence, with an expanding young population and the strong economic impact that they have created, consumer educators need to understand the shopping styles among students as young consumers in order to respond more effectively to accusations made by various consumer movements about the effects of marketing programmes targeted at young people. On one hand, consumer activities claimed that promotional campaign through advertising strongly influences young people and would result in undesirable socialization outcomes such as nonrational and impulsive buying behaviour. On the other hand, marketing practitioners responded by stating that advertising sets up the agenda for positive parent-child interaction and reinforces consumption-learning experiences among the young people. Such issues should be concern to consumer educators in their efforts to educate adolescents on shopping strategies; as most adolescents were found to be ill-prepared to make many critical purchasing decisions.

## **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

Within the Malaysian context, the purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of consumer socialization agents on secondary students' shopping styles. The objective are:

1. To examine the influence of socialization agents on students' shopping styles.
2. To examine the effect of social structural factors on students' interaction with socialization agents.

## **Consumer Shopping Styles**

The consumer behaviour literature suggest that examination of the shopping construct can be categorized into three major approach and the consumer characteristics approach. Psychographic research postulates that a consumer's activity, interest and opinion (AIO) statements can be very effective in measuring consumer personalities and predicting consumer behaviour because they are closer to the marketing function (Wells and Tigert, 1977). Investigation using this approach has identified more than 100 characteristics relevant to consumer behaviour (Lastovicka, 1982). The consumer typology approach attempts to define specific aspects of consumers' shopping motives and attitudes by classifying consumers into a limited number of types, which differ from each other (Shim and Kotsiopulos, 1993; Kenson, 1999; Ownbey and Horridge, 1997). On the other hand, the consumer characteristics approach focuses on cognitive and effective orientations that relate specifically to consumer decision-making.

Among these three approaches, the consumer characteristics approach has been widely acknowledge by consumer researchers as the most explanatory and powerful construct because it focuses on a cognitive and affective aspect of consumer behaviour. This approach deals with consumers' general predisposition towards that act of shopping and describers mental orientation of consumers in their decision-making process (Lysonski, Durvasula and Zotos, 1996). Sporels and Kendall characterizing a consumer's approach to decision-making style as "a mental orientation characterizing a consumer's approach to making choices" (p. 268). The consumer style concept represents a cognitive and affective aspect of consumer behaviour, and it is closely linked with various personality traits, similar to the concept of personality in psychology. Psychologist suggest personality traits as one of the general factors that have a tremendous impact on numerous human behaviours.

The origin of the characteristics approach began with several researchers who were particularly interested in profiling consumer decision-making styles. The later exploratory study by Sproles (1985) identified 50 items related to a consumer's cognitive and affective orientation towards shopping and buying. He believes that measuring consumers' general predisposition towards shopping and buying can identify their shopping styles. The underlying assumption in their study is that all consumers are thought to approach the market with certain fundamental decision-making styles. Sproles and Kendall (CSI) that they have developed consists of eight shopping styles, as presented in Table a.

For the purpose of this study, the eight constructs were conceptually classified into three types of shopping styles: (a) desirable; (b) undesirable; and (c) social and hedonistic; this is similar to the classification done by Shim and Gehrt (1996). The first two shopping styles (quality-conscious and price-conscious) represent desirable consumer styles because price and quality are emphasized. The next two styles (impulsive and confused by overchoice) represent undesirable consumer styles because adolescents may make poor decisions because of impulsiveness and confusion about consumption. Finally, brand-conscious, novelty/fashion-conscious, recreational and brand-loyal represents their social motivations for consumption. Consumers with these orientations are characterized as seeking well-known brands or expensive products and as being drawn to the recreational aspects of shopping.

This inventory is further refined by other studies undertaken by several researchers in different settings. For example, Walsh and Mitchell (2001) investigated the existence of different market mavens in Germany and its relation in identifying the general marketplace influences and their function in providing more effective product and message diffusion. More recently, CSI was used in looking at different cross-section of consumers such as the male consumer decision-making (Bakewell and Mitchell, 2004), female decision making in profile (Bakewell and Mitchell, 2003) and different ethnic groups (Leo, Bennett and Hartel, 2005).

Table 1: Characteristics of Eight Consumer Shopping Orientations (Shim and Gehrt, 1996)

<b>Shopping Orientation</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>
<b>A. <i>Social / Hedonistic</i></b>	
Brand-Conscious	An orientation characterized by the degree to which a consumer is oriented toward buying well-known brands.
Novelty / Fashion-Conscious	An orientation characterized by the degree to which a consumer appears to like innovative products and gains excitement from seeking out new things.
Recreational	An orientation characterized by the degree to which a consumer enjoys the act of shopping.
Brand-Loyal	An orientation characterized by the degree to which a consumer tends to buy on the spot of the moment and is unconcerned about how much they spend

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***B. Overpowered***

Impulsive

Confused by Overchoice

An orientation characterized by the degree to which a consumer tends to buy on the spot of the moment and is unconcerned about much they spend.

***C. Utilitarian***

Quality-Conscious

An orientation characterized by the degree to which a consumer searches for the best quality in products.

Price-Conscious

An orientation characterized by the degree to which a consumer is cognizant of prices.

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### **Consumer Socialization Theory**

Consumer socialization refers to “the process by which young people acquire skills, knowledge and attitudes relevant to their effective functioning as consumers in the marketplace” (Ward, 1974, p. 2). Previous research has generally acknowledged that parents, peers, printed media, television and in-school education are the most important agents of consumer socialization, contributing to a variety of desirable as well as undesirable consumer behaviour. Using a Singaporean sample of 359 respondents, Mehta and Keng (1985) found that frequency of communication with parents has an important impact on consumer activism in adolescents and the extent to which they hold economic motivations for consumption. Peer group communication was associated with adolescents’ brand consciousness, materialistic attitudes, consumer affairs knowledge and social motivations for consumption. Newspaper readership was found to correlate with consumer competency such as consumer affairs knowledge, consumer role perceptions, ability to manage consumer finances and propensity to perform positive consumer activities.

In another study, it was found that newspaper have a major impact on consumer affairs knowledge in adolescents. Television viewing on likewise led to the acquisition of a wide variety of desirable and undesirable consumer orientations such as the development of materialistic values, social motivations for consumption and consumer affair knowledge among adolescents. Only a few studies have been done on in-school education related to consumer behaviour and consumer socialization. A study by Moschis and Moore (1979) found that formal consumer education at school did not contribute to the acquisition of consumer competencies.

In explaining of how consumer socialization process works among children, Dotson and Hyatt (2005) studied young people’s shopping and media usage behaviour pertinent to various socialization factors.

The findings showed five major consumer socialization agents which significantly influenced marketplace behaviour i.e., irrational social influence, television, family, shopping importance and brand importance. It was also found that socialization agents do vary according to child's gender, age, amount of money available and amount of television viewing. Several studies on cross-cultural comparison of ethnic consumer socialization were done in the context of young consumers search behaviour and their susceptibility to different types of media (Singh, Kwon and Pereira, 2003), media usage patterns (Choi and LaFerle, 2004) and material aspect of life (Benn, 2004).

Relating the concepts of consumption and socialization, consumption is regarded as part of young people's education, and plays a critical role in the development of identity and self-image (Benn, 2014). Institutional consumer enlightenment and the education of students in school stand in contrast to informal consumer enlightenment and the education of students in school stand in contrast to informal consumer socialization via various social agents. Consumer education is aimed for educating critical consumer awareness and action competence while consumer socialization is an informal way of educating young people on their skills and knowledge about the marketplace. Hence, there is a need for a better understanding of consumer socialization in order to improve formal consumer education and to reflect on how empowerment becomes part of consumer education.

Consumer socialization is also related to learning process, where young people need to acquire competencies necessary for them in playing different consumer roles and how to interact with different socialization agents in their learning process (LaChance and Choquette-Bernier, 2014). Young people's consumer socialization process is mainly achieved through communication, observation, and learning through trial and error. LaChance and Bernier's study found that mother appears to be the most influential socialization agent; however father seems to play an increasing role. On the same note, it was revealed most students felt consumer education in high school was useful but boring, and some others did not remember having received this education. The perception of meaning of consumer competence.

In summary, there is reasonably good supportive evidence that parents, peers, printed media and consumer-related education at school appeared to have positive influences on adolescents' consumer style. On the other hand, peers and television commercials may be related to a variety of consumer orientations that are both desirable and undesirable. The first two hypotheses postulated for this study are:

H1 – Adolescents who interact more frequently with their parents, read printed media materials and are more receptive to in-school education are more likely to demonstrate desirable decision-making styles (H1a) and less likely to have undesirable (H1b) and social/hedonistic decision-making styles (H1c).

H2 – Adolescents who interact with their peers and watch television commercials more frequently are more likely to display a combination of desirable (H2a), undesirable (H2b) and social/hedonistic (H2c) decision-making styles.

Social structural factors are the antecedent variables that refer to the social environment within which a person's learning takes place. Female adolescents were more likely to participate in family purchase decisions and engage in more overt consumption related communication with their peers than were male adolescents. Almost no previous studies focusing specifically on consumer socialization can be found that explore the effect of religion and geographical subcultures on the process of consumer socialization. However, Moschis (1979) speculate that both religion and geographic factors are likely to exhibit different patterns of consumer behaviour and affect individual's interactions with various socialization agents. This leads to the third hypothesis, i.e.,

H3 – The Influence of socialization agents and their communication process will be associated with social class, gender, ethnicity, residence and religious group affiliations.

## **METODOLY**

### **Measurements**

*Shopping styles inventory.* Given adolescents as a unit of analysis, a total of 32 statements of Consumer Style Inventory (CSI) to measure adolescents' shopping styles were adapted from the study by Sproles and Kendall (1986), which has been validated from target population of 482 high school students. Instead of using 41 statements of CSI by Sproles and Kendall, the study adopted the four-item subscales for each of the eight consumer styles scales because they appeared to have greater reliability compared with the results obtained by previous authors. Table 2 provides sample statements and standardized alpha coefficients for each scale. Respondents were asked to indicate the degree of agreement with each of these statements as a description of themselves as consumers of products such as food and clothes on a five-point Likert-type scale. The alpha coefficient of these eight shopping orientation scales ranged from 0.43 to 0.80.

*Consumer socialization agents.* A total of 43 statements sought to measure the interaction between adolescents and socialization agents about consumption matters.

Most of the items used in this section are taken from previous research regarding adolescent interactions with four socialization agents, i.e. parents, peers, mass media and in-school education on consumption matters. Respondents were asked to indicate the degree to which they are agreed with the statements on a five-point Likert-type scale (1= strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree).

Labels and a sample statement for each factor are as follows: (a) interactions with parents (e.g. 'I often discuss my purchase plan with my parents'); (b) interaction with peers (e.g. 'I often get information about a product from friends before I buy'); (c) printed media reading (e.g. "I only buy those products that are advertised in a magazine"); (d) exposure to TV commercials (e.g. 'I watch TV advertisements to find out how good a product is'); and € in-school education (e.g. 'My teachers talk about how to manage money wisely').

*Social structural variables.* Social structural variables included social class, gender, ethnicity, residence and religious group affiliation. All variables were measured by categorical format questions.

## **DATA COLLECTION AND SAMPLE PROFILES**

Following a pilot study with 46 respondents, a survey was carried out covering two states in Malaysia with a total of 1080 students from secondary school using a seven-page Malay-version questionnaires. The schools were selected based on an area sampling procedure where the representation of east coast and west coast regions and also urban and rural schools is used. Students between the ages of 16 and 19 years were included for the purpose of the study and, therefore, only students in Secondary Four Five, Lower Six and Upper Six were randomly selected to participate in the survey. The data were entered into the computer for statistical analysis with the SPSS computer program.

Out of 1080 sets of questionnaires distributed, 934 sets were completed and useable for data analysis, yielding a response rate of 86.5%. Table 2 presents the demographic profiles of the sample. The sample consisted of the sample. The sample consisted of 42.8% male and 57.2% female. The Chinese constituted the largest ethnic group, accounting for 46.9% of the respondents, followed by Malays (43.1%) and Indians (9.7%). A large proportion of the respondents reside in urban areas (57.8%), followed by 25.1% respondents from suburban areas, and another 17.1% are from rural areas. The majority of the urban respondents are Chinese, whereas mainly suburban and rural respondents are Malays. Some 44.55% of the respondents fell into a lower social status category. The next largest are the upper class, which constituted 28.3%, whereas at the middle class made up 27.2% of the respondents, whereas Muslim respondents comprised 43.3%. In terms of age, the majority group is 17 years old (30%0, followed by 16 years old (31.4%), 19 years olds (23.1%0 and 18 year olds (15.5%).

## **DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

The data were entered into the computer for statistical analysis with the SPSS computer program. Following Hair, Anderson, Tatham and Black (1998), the regression model was initially tested to see if all the assumptions to apply this analysis are fulfilled. To test whether the assumptions of linearity, homoscedasticity and independence was met by the data, checks were undertaken by inspecting the normal probability plot and residuals scatterplot. An examination of the normal probability plot of indicated that the residual plots were almost close to the normal straight diagonal line, suggesting that the residual were approximate normal distribution.



To test for the possible presence of inter-correlations among independent variables, a correlation matrix was run among the eight independent variables. It was found that the inter-correlations among the eight independent variables were rather low (under 0.5). Thus there were no reasons for concern as no high inter-correlations existed among these variables. However, the absence of high bivariate correlation does not imply lack of collinearity because of the correlation matrix way not reveal collinear relationships involving more than two variables. Therefore, the tolerance values of the independent variables were assessed further while the multiple regression analyses were run using the conventional tolerance value of 0.1 as the cut-off point for high multicollinearity, as recommended by Hair et al. (1998). The result of the analysis showed that all independent variables in the regression equation had high tolerance values, showing an absence of multicollinearity problem. Therefore it can be concluded that the assumptions underlying regression analysis had not been violated.

### Relationship of Socialization Agents with Adolescents' Shopping Styles

The summary test result of H1 and H2 are documented in Table 2. All eight F-test statistics were significant ( $F = 39.238$ ,  $P < 0.001$  for brand-conscious;  $F = 37.047$ ,  $p < 0.001$  for novelty/ fashion-conscious;  $F = 11.608$ ,  $p < 0.001$  for recreational;  $F = 25.953$ ,  $p < 0.001$  for brand-loyal;  $F = 8.854$ ,  $p < 0.001$  for impulsive;  $F = 31.093$ ,  $p < 0.001$  for confused by overchoice;  $F = 14.333$ ,  $p < 0.001$  for quality-conscious; and  $F = 6.704$ ,  $p < 0.001$  for price-conscious). Therefore, Hypothesis 1a was rejected, which indicates that adolescent's interaction with parents and in-school education did not relate significantly to any of the two shopping styles under the desirable category. This findings suggest that parents and in-school education apparently contribute little to the acquisition of desirable shopping styles.

**Table 2:** Relationship of socialization agents with decision-making styles

	Desirable		Undesirable	
	Quality Conscious	Price Conscious	Impulsive	Confused by Overchoice
Parents	NS	NS	NS	NS
Peers	.123***	.073*	.134***	.159***
Printed media	NS	-.112***	-.066*	NS
TV commercials	NS	.095**	NS	.143***
In-school education	NS	NS	NS	NS
$R^2$ (adjusted $R^2$ )	.015 (.014)	.012 (.018)	.019 (.017)	.063 (.061)
$F$ values	14.333	6.704	8.854	31.093
Sig. $F$	.000***	.000***	.000***	.000**
Tolerance range	1.0	.793 to .860	.956	.868

	Social and hedonistic			
	Brand	Fashion Conscious	Recreational Conscious	Brand Loyal
Parents	-.06*	.109***	NS	NS
Peers	.176***	.22***	.085*	.15***
Printed media	.232***	.133***	.075*	.146***
TV commercials	.108**	.154***	.095**	NS
In-school education	NS	.097**	NS	NS
$R^2$ (adjusted $R^2$ )	.145 (.141)	.166 (.162)	.036 (.033)	.053 (.051)
$F$ values	39.238	37.047	11.608	25.953
Sig. $F$	.000***	.000***	.000***	.000***
Tolerance range	.782 to .983	.765 to .964	.793 to .873	.956

Note: Table entries are standardized regression coefficients (beta weights)

NS = not significant

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  \*\*\* $p < .001$

Hypothesis I b was partially supported in that socialization agents were found to affect several adolescent shopping styles under the social and hedonistic category. Parents were found to be negatively related to brand-conscious ( $\beta = -0.06$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and fashion-conscious ( $\beta = -0.109$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) adolescents, implying a positive outcome of interaction with parents. This means that the more adolescents interact with their parents, the less they demonstrate social and hedonistic shopping styles. Printed media were positively related to all criterion variable under the social and hedonistic category. More specifically, printed media are related to brand-conscious ( $\beta = 0.232$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), novelty/ fashion-conscious ( $\beta = 0.133$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) recreational ( $\beta = 0.095$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and brand-loyal shopping styles ( $\beta = 0.146$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). It should be noted that the beta coefficient of the influence of printed media on brand consciousness. The result also indicate that in-school education is positively related to novelty/ fashion-conscious shopping styles ( $\beta = 0.097$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). No immediate rationale could be given for this finding, as we would expect a positive outcome of in-school education. Perhaps consumer-related education offered at school may provide some information concerning the positive aspects of being aware and keeping up with new and innovative products available in the market. In addition, it was found that printed media readership is negatively correlated with impulsive behaviour ( $\beta = -0.066$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), suggesting that the more adolescents read printed media materials, the less likely they are to display impulsive shopping styles.

Hypothesis 2a was accepted (Table 2). As expected, the statistical results with peers functioning as a predictor variables indicate significant findings for all variables under the social and hedonistic category tested in this study. Peers are positively related to brand-conscious ( $\beta = 0.176$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), novelty/fashion-conscious ( $\beta = 0.22$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), recreational ( $\beta = 0.085$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and brand-loyal attitudes towards consumption ( $\beta = 0.15$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). In general, these four shopping styles characterize consumers as oriented towards buying well-known brands, gaining excitement from seeking out new fashion, enjoying shopping as a recreational activity and repetitively choosing the same brands and stores. Television commercials are positively correlated with brand consciousness ( $\beta = 0.108$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), implying that mere exposure to the product brands advertised on television may be sufficient to create favourable attitudes towards the brand, as suggested by Moschis (1978). In addition, exposure with novelty/fashion-conscious ( $\beta = 0.154$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and recreational styles ( $\beta = 0.095$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

Peers appeared to be a positive predictor of impulsive ( $\beta = 0.134$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and confused by overchoice ( $\beta = 0.159$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) shopping styles (H2b). This suggests that the more adolescents interact with their peers, the more likely they are to demonstrate undesirable shopping styles. H2c was confirmed, as interaction with peers and exposure to television commercials contribute to the acquisition of desirable shopping styles.

Interaction with peers is positively associated with quality-conscious ( $\beta = 0.123, p < 0.001$ ) and price-conscious ( $\beta = 0.073, p < 0.05$ ) styles, implying that interaction with peers tends to facilitate the development of desirable consumption behaviour. This finding showed that the more adolescents interact with their peers, the more likely they are to be concerned about getting high-quality products and the best value for their money. Finally, the data suggest that television commercials are associated positively with price-conscious style ( $\beta = 0.095, p < 0.01$ ), meaning that, with increasing exposure to television commercials, adolescents are likely to be more conscious of prices in their purchasing decisions.

### Relationship of Social Structural Variables with Socialization Agents

The results of the stepwise multiple regression analyses with socialization agents as the creation variables and with social structures as the predictor variables are presented in Table 3. All five F-test statistics were significant ( $F = 15.689, p < 0.001$  for parents;  $F = 43.423, p < 0.001$  for peers;  $F = 6.583, p < 0.01$  for printed media;  $F = 35.799, p < 0.001$  for television commercials; and  $F = 20.207, p < 0.001$  for in-school education). Hence, H3 was accepted. Social class emerged as a significant predictor of receptiveness to in-school education ( $\beta = 0.12, p < 0.001$ ). There is an inverse relationship between social class and adolescent's receptiveness to in-school education. It means that adolescents from higher social class families are less receptive to in-school education compared with lower socioeconomic status respondents.

Gender is related to the influence of parents and peers. Male youngsters are more likely to interact with their peers ( $\beta = -0.079, p < 0.01$ ) about consumption matters than female adolescents. In contrast, female adolescents are more likely to interact with parents regarding consumption matters ( $\beta = 0.162, p < 0.001$ ). From the perspective of ethnicity, Chinese youngsters, compared with Malays, are less likely to interact with their parents ( $\beta = -0.098, p < 0.001$ ) and peers ( $\beta = -0.183, p < 0.001$ ). In addition, they are less receptive to television commercials ( $\beta = -0.192, p < 0.001$ ). On the other hand, Indian youngsters, compared with Malays, are more likely to interact with their parents ( $\beta = 0.13, p < 0.001$ ) and less likely to interact with their peers regarding consumption matters ( $\beta = -0.093, p < 0.001$ ).

**Table 3:** Relationships of social structural variables with socialization agents

Social Structural Variables	Beta ( $\beta$ ) Coefficients				
	Parents	Peers	Printed Media	TV commercials	In-school education
Social class	NS	NS	NS	NS	-.120***
Gender <sup>a</sup>	.162***	-.079**	NS	NS	NS
Ethnicity1 <sup>b</sup>	-.098**	-.183***	NS	-.192***	NS
Ethnicity2 <sup>c</sup>	.130***	-.093**	NS	NS	.072*
Residence1 <sup>d</sup>	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
Residence2 <sup>e</sup>	NS	NS	.084**	NS	NS
Religious <sup>f</sup>	NS	-.208***	NS	NS	-.246***
$R^2$ (adjusted $R^2$ )	.048 (.045)	.158 (.154)	.007 (.006)	.037 (.036)	.061 (.058)
F value	15.689	43.423	6.583	35.799	20.207
Sig. F	.000***	.000***	.010**	.000***	.000***
Tolerance range	.978 to .99	.296 to .983	1.0	1.0	.911 to .967

a: O = male; I = female

b: O = Malay and Indian; I = Chinese

c: O = Malay and Chinese; I = Indian

d: O = rural and urban; I = suburban

e: O = rural and suburban; I = urban

f: O = Muslim; I = non Muslim

NS = not significant

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  \*\*\* $p < .001$

However, they believed that in-school education is a good source of consumer education ( $\beta = 0.072$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Finally, religious group affiliations are found to correlate with the influence of peers and in-school education. Muslim adolescents are more likely to interact with their peers regarding consumption matters ( $\beta = -0.208$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and perceived in-school education as a source of consumer-related education ( $\beta = -0.246$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Peers emerged as the most important agents of consumer socialization, contributing to a variety of shopping styles. Likewise, printed media and television commercials were also found to be significant sources of the acquisition of both desirable and undesirable shopping styles, but were more likely to direct youngsters towards undesirable shopping styles. Parents and in-school education, however, did not contribute to the formulation of shopping styles for adolescents.

Another revealing finding of this study is that each of the social structural factors exerts a strong influence on the interaction between youngsters and their socialization agents. The findings suggest that the influence of socialization agents on adolescents may vary according to demographic and social characteristics. However, it should be kept in mind that demographic characteristics other than those examined in this study might also affect adolescents' socialization process and their shopping styles.

**Table 4:** Relationship of social structural variables with decision-making

	Desirable		Undesirable	
	Quality Conscious	Price Conscious	Confused by Impulsive	Overchoice
Social class	.086**	-.099**	NS	NS
Gender <sup>a</sup>	NS	NS	NS	NS
Ethnicity <sup>1b</sup>	NS	NS	NS	NS
Ethnicity <sup>2c</sup>	-.079*	NS	-.085**	NS
Residence <sup>1d</sup>	NS	NS	NS	NS
Residence <sup>2e</sup>	NS	NS	NS	NS
Religious group <sup>f</sup>	NS	-.067*	-.145***	-.208***
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> (adjusted <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> )	.013 (.011)	.012 (.01)	.034 (.032)	.043 (.042)
<i>F</i> values	6.237	5.688	16.53	42.048
Sig. <i>F</i>	.002**	.004**	.000***	.000***
Tolerance range	.999	.971	.942	1.0

  

	Social and Hedonistic			
	Brand Conscious	Fashion Conscious	Recreational	Brand Loyal
Social class	.073*	.089**	.087**	NS
Gender <sup>a</sup>	-.089**	NS	.294***	NS
Ethnicity <sup>1b</sup>	-.226***	-.108*	-.079*	NS
Ethnicity <sup>2c</sup>	NS	NS	NS	NS
Residence <sup>1d</sup>	.092*	.092*	NS	NS
Residence <sup>2e</sup>	.176***	.178***	NS	NS
Religious group <sup>f</sup>	NS	-.133*	NS	NS

$R^2$ (adjusted $R^2$ )	.076 (.071)	.71 (.066)	.095 (.092)	NE
$F$ values	15.248	14.095	32.586	NE
Sig. $F$	.000***	.000***	.000***	NE
Tolerance range	502 to .937	.362 to .948	.958 to .989	NE

Note: Table entries are standardized regression coefficients (beta weights)

A: O = male; I = female

B: O = Malay and Indian; I = Chinese

C: O = Malay and Chinese; I = Indian

D: O = rural and urban; I = suburban

E: O = rural and suburban; I = urban

F: O = Muslim; I = non Muslim

NE = not significant

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

To government officials and consumer educators, the non-significant role of parents and in-school education in educating adolescents on utilitarian decision making should be a primary concern for them. Necessary steps should be taken by designing programmes that will involve parents at home as primary socialization agents, which may be facilitated by printed materials. Hence, it seems warranted that a formal consumerism education should be introduced in secondary schools. This subject should build a foundation upon which knowledgeable, responsible and efficient consumption behaviour among adolescents can be developed. Teaching young people to be wise consumers should begin at an early stages in their lives. Perhaps the biggest task for government officials and non-government organizations (NGO), such as consumer associations, is to foster interest in consumer education among teenagers. This is in tandem with the purpose of consumer education, which is to teach and educate young people to act as informed, rational and prudent consumer. However this perception of consumption as reasoned behaviour or action is inadequate in the late modern society, where consumerism is first and foremost characterized by globalization, cultural change and liberation of individual. Consumption as such has a significant impact on and meaning for individual and eventually becomes a means by which human beings communicate and interact.

## LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

It should be noted that, even though this study showed that many of the relationships are statistically significant and conform to previous findings, the  $R^2$  values in the regression models were very low. Hence, the goodness-of-fit is very low, suggesting caution in interpreting the result. Moschis and Moore (1979) argued that a small amount of variation in the equation is accounted for by the presence of relatively few independent variables, whereas socialization outcomes (i.e. consumer learning) may be affected by a large number of variables within the context of the general conceptual framework of consumer socialization. The situation here is very much like that in previous studies of adolescents' consumer socialization where predictor variables are able to explain only a small portion of the variance in the criterion variables. Hence, it should be a concern for future research to identify and explore the influence of more diverse variables on the process of consumer socialization.

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