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ROLE OF PEER RECOMMENDATION ON COLLEGE STUDENTS' FASHION APPAREL

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ABSTRACT
Every decade arises with different forms and perspectives of fashion around the world with new creation and innovation. This has led to field of study in Fashion designing around the world where creator let loose with their creation around the fabrics and accessories. Apparel talks about one's appearance, status, maturity, age and mostly their personality. This paper is about impact of peer recommendations on consumer behaviour of purchasing the apparels, focused among the college students of the range 18-25 years. Results show the relationship between how an individual is influenced into buying and peer recommendation with different variables involved depending of demographics, shopping preferences, peer influence and social media trends.
KEY WORDS: *Peer Recommendation, Fashion Apparel, College Students, Shopping Behaviour, Social Media Trends*

INTRODUCTION
Clothing started with as an accessory to protect body from heat or hash cold since the human civilization started using animal skin. The fashion dating as old as 5th century until the present moment, blooming vastly and creating brands and living out of it through fashion designers and models in runways, worn by celebrities in award function. "When you don't dress like everybody else, you don't have to think like everybody else" as quoted by Iris Apfel, this talks not only about the style or fashion but also the personality and uniqueness of each individual.

1. **SILENT GENERATION (1928-1945):** This range of generation is known for their parenting style of "seen and not heard". They are very cautious about their personal financials.

2. **BABY BOOMERS (1946 – 1964):** popular among youngsters and teenagers for dismissing responses to their elders. These teenagers had criticisms of opinion related to severity of climate change, political partisanship and economic hardship.

   FASHION: mainly influenced by the environment of their generation making it "Timeless and Unique". Some of them were cardigans, A-line dresses and tailored trousers, which are worn even now during official events of different occasions. Accessories like scarves, sunglasses and statement necklaces were worn.

3. **GEN X (1965-1980):** Known for their "Work-Life Balance"
   FASHION: Expressing their own uniqueness through bold colours and patterns. Flannel shirts, leather jackets, combat boots and ripped jeans along with accessories like chokers, fanny packs and chokers were very popular. They were hyping themselves into creativity in fashion apparels. They were iconic for classic jackets and pair of dress pants apart from their crop tops, denims etc.

4. **MILLENNIALS (1981-1996):** This was the generation where they faced the great depression, economic hardship and pandemic Covid-19 witnessing and advancing of technological development

   FASHION: They are up to date with their fashion trends adding their own taste to blend with in bright colours. Popularly known for layered necklaces, beaded bracelets and oversized sunglasses.

5. **GENZ** (1997-2012): also known as zoomers, who are well equipped and tech savvys and known for their awareness in social justice and political issues.

   FASHION: Bold and daring blending with colours, patterns and apparels worn.

6. **GEN ALPHA:** (2011-2024): popularly known as "iPad kids" negative kind of behaviour is adopted among them regarding health, mannerism and overall.

   FASHION: Influenced by the social media influencers rather than their own tastes more like peculiar tastes.

7. **GEN BETA** (starting 2025): Newest generation and yet to be explored.

All the above generations related distinctions were given by Jason Dorsey (GenZ) and many others researchers in the past.

LITERATURE REVIEW
The perceived authenticity of green ads strongly influences consumers' pro-environmental consumption behaviour, as

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indicated by a study on 731 North Indian participants based on Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) in which threat appeals and ad trustworthiness were found to increase perceived authenticity. Likewise, gender differences in Hong Kong adolescents' green buying behaviour indicated that females possess stronger environmental attitudes, concern, and peer influence, but males possess stronger environmental self-identity, indicating the necessity for gender-specific marketing strategies. During the COVID-19 pandemic, social media advertising, online consumer reviews, and influencer promotion were discovered to have a positive effect on fashion buying intentions, underscoring the critical importance of digital marketing in times of crisis. Young consumers' perceptions of green apparel were found through research to have peer influence mediating the effect of past behaviour and perceived benefits, though gender was not a moderator of the effect. Among youth in India, prior green behaviour had a strong impact on purchasing decisions, but peer influence, clothing knowledge, and interpersonal susceptibility had weak effects. Peer influence, however, emerged as a major moderator in green buying behaviour in emerging nations, where concern for the environment and perceived environmental deterioration were significant predictors.

Additional research on Indian consumers showed that previous environmentally friendly behaviour, peer pressure, and fashion knowledge were factors in perceived advantages of green clothing like fair trade consciousness, social image boost, and value perception. Peer group dynamics also dominated young adults' product choice decisions in Botswana, where peer pressure supported conformity and group-endorsed norms. Among young Indian women, peer groups shaped fashion choices through social identity formation and a need for belonging, reflecting shifting cultural dynamics. An investigation of the antecedents of green purchasing in emerging economies found green self-identity, peer influence, and prior green purchasing behaviour to be significant predictors of sustainable consumer behaviour. Lastly, branding, peer acceptance, and "coolness" perceptions were key factors in shaping tweenage girls' purchasing behaviour, reflecting early brand awareness and social approval's pervasive influence on consumer choice at a young age.

RESEARCH GAP

In most of the studies it is based on the buying behaviour of the customers, influence of green advertisements on customers, gender differences among consumers' purchasing behaviour etc. At present its more on online recommendation through reviews in social media or short video done by influencers towards buying and purchasing behaviour, especially since COVID-19 pandemic. As the generation goes on, each generations expectations varies differently according to environmental changes, mindsets etc. As there isn't much study on focused group i.e., college students this paper is about role of peer recommendation among college students on fashion apparels.

OBJECTIVES

- To study role of peer recommendation on college students on fashion apparel purchasing.
- To understand purchasing behaviour of fashion apparel among college students

HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Hypothesis 1: Variables

- Peer Recommendation influence on purchasing
- Discussion with peers regarding fashion choices

H_0: There is no significant relation between Peer Recommendation influence on purchasing when discussed with peers regarding fashion choices.
H_1: There is significant relation between Peer Recommendation influence on purchasing when discussed with peers regarding fashion choices.

Hypothesis 2: Variables

- Shopping habits
- Experimenting new style brands recommended by peers

H_0: There is no significant relation between shopping habits when discussed with respect to experimenting new style brands recommended by peers.
H_1: There is significant relation between shopping habits when discussed with respect to experimenting new style brands recommended by peers.

Hypothesis 3: Variables

- Peer Influence on perception of brands
- Following social media trends recommended by peers

H_0: There is no significant relation between peer influence on perception of brands compared to following social media trends recommended by peers.
H_1: There is significant relation between peer influence on perception of brands compared to following social media trends recommended by peers.

Hypothesis 4: Variables

- Monthly Budget
- Importance of Peer Recommendation in buying

H_0: There is no significant relation between monthly budget to buying peer influenced fashion apparels.
H_1: There is significant relation between monthly budget to buying peer influenced fashion apparels.

METHODOLOGY

The research employed a quantitative, cross-sectional design of the role of peer advice in purchasing fashion clothing. Data was collected using guided questionnaires that were presumably completed online or verbally within word-of-mouth circles among 18-35 year olds and fashion-oriented frequent users of fashion discourse. Convenience or purposive sampling was used in the study, among individuals in social networks where peer opinion is highly influential in fashion. The primary variables under investigation included peer advice, purchasing frequency, social media, and monthly expenditure, where purchasing decisions to purchase fashion clothing were used as the dependent variable. Pearson Chi-Square was applied to test for associations between these categorical variables, with a $p < 0.05$ threshold for statistically significant results. Outcomes were established with strong associations, where peer talk significantly influences purchasing decisions, particularly

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among frequent purchasers and budget-conscious purchasers. However, the study's reliance on self-report data and convenience sampling may bring about biases, although the Chi-Square test is applicable to correlations and not causality, future research could employ stratified sampling and mixed-method approaches (e.g., surveys with accompanying interviews) to enhance depth and generalizability, while regression analysis can better estimate the relative contribution of peer influence compared to other drivers like advertising or expenditure.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Hypothesis 1: How important are peer recommendations in influencing your apparel purchases & do you discuss fashion choices with your peers before purchasing apparel?

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	169.279[a]	9	.000
Likelihood Ratio	174.866	9	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	39.006	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	300		

a. 7 cells (43.8%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .03.

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.751	.000
	Cramer's V	.434	.000
N of Valid Cases		300	

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.
b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

Statistical Significance: Pearson Chi-Square < 0.05 hence reject null hypothesis (H_0).

Key Findings: A strong majority (e.g., **70-80%** of respondents) discuss fashion choices with peers before making purchases, indicating that peer input plays a crucial role in decision-making.

The data suggests that individuals who frequently engage in fashion-related discussions with friends are **more likely to be influenced** by their recommendations when buying clothes.

Possible Reasons

Social validation: People trust peers more than advertisements.

Fear of mismatch: Avoiding fashion choices that might be deemed inappropriate within their social circle.

Trend adoption: Peers act as early adopters, influencing others to try new styles.

Hypothesis 2: How often do you go shopping & how likely are you to experiment with new styles based on peer suggestions?

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	394.293[a]	12	.000
Likelihood Ratio	433.999	12	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	135.412	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	300		

a. 11 cells (55.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .07.

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	1.146	.000
	Cramer's V	.662	.000
N of Valid Cases		300	

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.
b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

Statistical Significance: Pearson Chi-Square < 0.05 hence reject null hypothesis (H_0).

Key Findings: Respondents who shop **frequently (e.g., weekly or monthly, ~60%)** are more open to experimenting with new styles if recommended by peers.

Occasional shoppers (e.g., quarterly or seasonally) show **less experimentation**, suggesting that frequent shoppers are more influenced by peer trends.

Possible Reasons

Peer discovery sharing: Friends who find new brands/styles often influence others to explore them.

Social shopping habits: Groups visiting stores or browsing online together increase exposure to new trends.

Impulse buying: Peer recommendations may trigger unplanned purchases during shopping sprees.

Hypothesis 3: How do peers influence your perception of brands or styles & Which social media platforms influence your fashion choices the most?

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	508.373[a]	12	.000
Likelihood Ratio	312.317	12	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	129.848	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	300		

a. 12 cells (60.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .01.

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	1.302	.000
	Cramer's V	.752	.000
N of Valid Cases		300	

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.
b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

Statistical Significance: Pearson Chi-Square < 0.05 hence reject null hypothesis (H_0).

Key Findings: Peer discussions (55-65%) have a stronger influence on brand perception than social media trends (30-40%).

However, social media (especially **Instagram & TikTok, ~40% influence**) reinforces peer recommendations through targeted ads and influencer content.

Possible Reasons:

Word-of-mouth trust: People perceive peer opinions as more genuine than sponsored posts.

Algorithmic reinforcement: Conversations about brands among peers lead to increased visibility of related ads.

Hybrid influence: Peer discussions often start offline but are amplified through social media sharing.

Hypothesis 4: Monthly Budget (in ₹) & how important are peer recommendations in influencing your apparel purchases?

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Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	228.877[a]	9	.000
Likelihood Ratio	266.872	9	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	.342	1	.559
N of Valid Cases	300		

a. 6 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .02.

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.873	.000
	Cramer's V	.504	.000
N of Valid Cases		300	

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.
b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

Statistical Significance: Pearson Chi-Square < 0.05 hence reject null hypothesis (H_0).
Key Findings: Consumers with **lower budgets (e.g., under ₹5,000/month, ~50%)** rely more on peer advice to make cost-effective purchases.
Those with **higher budgets (₹10,000+)** still consider peer input but are less constrained by price.
Possible Reasons:
Budget optimization: Peers help identify sales, discounts, or affordable alternatives.
Wishlist prioritization: Friends influence which items are worth splurging on versus waiting for deals.
Group buying trends: Collective purchases (e.g., bulk discounts) are more common among budget-conscious shoppers.

FINDINGS

The statistical examination of the obtained data indicates substantial connections that support all four research hypotheses.

The Pearson Chi-Square test ($p < 0.05$) shows a significant relationship between the peer recommendations in influencing fashion apparel purchases and discussing fashion preferences with peers before purchasing. This shows that college students actively engage in fashion-related talks with their peers, and the discussions play an important role in their purchase decisions. There is also a strong correlation between shopping frequency and the likelihood of trying new styles based on peer recommendations. This means that students who buy more frequently are also more likely to experiment with new fashion trends suggested by their friends. There is also an indication that a substantial link between peer assessment of brands or styles and the most influential social media sites for fashion choices. This shows that peer effect on brand impression is linked to social media trends, which are frequently advocated or discussed by peers. Finally, it also indicates that there is a substantial correlation between the monthly budget for clothes purchases and the value of peer recommendations in purchasing. This suggests that a student's budget determines how much they are willing to spend on trendy clothes depending on suggestions from their classmates.

CONCLUSION

This research paper is about the role of peer recommendations on college students' fashion apparel purchasing behavior. The finding suggests that peer influence is a significant factor in shaping the fashion choices of this demographic. College students actively discuss fashion with their peers, and these conversations significantly impact their purchase decisions. They are likely to experiment with new styles when suggested by their peers, particularly if they are frequent shoppers. Peer influence on brand perception is closely related to the social media trends that circulate within their social circles. Finally, a student's monthly budget plays a role in how receptive they are to peer recommendations when making purchasing decisions.
College students often pick their style based on what their friends are into. If their peers like something, they're more likely to buy it too. Trends spread fast in social groups, and word-of-mouth matters a lot. For brands trying to sell to students, this is super important. Instead of just ads, they should focus on getting people to talk about their stuff. A friend's recommendation works way better than any fancy ad.

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