



ROLE OF SCHOOL IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF IDEAL CONSUMER ATTITUDE IN HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Consumerism is rampant in our society. The present day culture often equates happiness and success with acquiring possessions and latest trends. Since adolescents often imitate the behaviour of adults, this trend has widespread influence on their life which often create barriers in their personality development and create unpleasant situations in the family through financial burden. It is high time that we recognise excessive consumerism as an evil. Considering this reality, this study sought to analyse the influence of school on the consumer attitude of higher secondary school students. This descriptive study collected data from 350 higher secondary school students from Kollam district of Kerala state. A Consumer Attitude Scale and a Scale to measure the influence of school on Consumer Attitude were used for collecting data. The study revealed that school exerts significant influence on the consumer attitude of adolescents. It is recommended that school authorities, especially teachers, should act as role models in shaping an ideal consumer attitude in adolescents by showing simplicity and frugality in their lives. Other recommendations are also provided. Though the study was done in Kerala, its implications are worldwide as excessive consumerism is an evil which can be seen everywhere.

Keywords: Consumer Attitude, Influence of School, Higher Secondary School Students, Consumerism.



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1. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROBLEM

Consumer attitude refers to a lasting evaluation or perception that individuals hold towards something related to consumption. This can be a product, brand or service. It is not just a passing feeling, but a more enduring assessment, positive, negative or neutral. Consumer attitude is a combination of what a person thinks (beliefs about features, quality), how they feel (liking, disliking), and what they plan to do (buy, avoid). These elements act as a filter through

which consumers interpret information and make judgments, ultimately influencing purchase decisions and brand loyalty.

Adolescents are at a crucial stage in developing consumer habits and several influences can shape their attitudes. First and foremost is the family where the members of the family act as role models. The guidance of parents is very crucial at this stage in shaping the right kind of consumer attitude in adolescents. **Subhasri (2018)** found that the opinion of trusted

family members and friends persuade the consumer's mind set positively towards the product and their purchase decision. The parents can guide the adolescent through open communication about finances and responsible spending which can shape how adolescents evaluate products and services. Parents and older siblings who demonstrate responsible consumption habits can be strong influences for adolescents.

There are several negative influences on the consumer attitude of adolescents. Advertisements frequently depict lifestyles and experiences that are unattainable which create unrealistic expectations and dissatisfaction. Subtle messaging and misleading claims in advertisements can make it difficult for adolescents to distinguish genuine products from fake ones. Endorsement of celebrities to a particular brand or product often acts as key influence in the acquisition of that product or brand. **Sinha and Jain (2018)** studied the impact of advertisement on consumer buying behaviour and found that the consumer buying behaviour and advertisement is positively correlated. Results also revealed that celebrities in the advertisement influenced the consumers more and they considered advertisement as a trustworthy source of knowledge. The desire to fit in and impress friends can lead adolescents to crave trendy brands or expensive items, regardless of need or budget. The materialistic consumer behaviour of the society where acquisition of material objects is considered as the primary aim of life often mislead adolescents and induce a craving for expensive material possessions. Overindulgence of adolescents in social media platforms also paves way for consumerism. These platforms track online behaviour and target advertisements based on preferences which create a desire for buying. Above all, the glorification of consumerism by mass media is one of the major negative influences in shaping an unrealistic and material-oriented consumer attitude in adolescents. In this context, the importance of educational institutions in sensitising about the importance of frugal lifestyle assumes significance.

Schools have detrimental influence on the consumer attitude of adolescents. Schools have a vast influence on the consumer attitude of adolescents after family. Schools play a much bigger role than just teaching. They play a

significant role in shaping how students become future consumers. Schools act as mini-societies where students learn not just subjects, but also social norms, value and behaviours related to consumption. The school environment itself sends subtle messages. Dress codes, uniforms and even the types of extracurricular activities can influence how students view fashion, technology and lifestyle choices. Considering the above-mentioned facts, the investigator conducted a study to assess the extent of influence of school on the consumer attitude of adolescents.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED STUDIES

Almeshal and Almawash (2022) studied the influence of parent and peer influence on buying decision making of Saudi female consumers and found that both parents and peers exert significant influence on the buying behaviour of Saudi female consumers.

Budhiraja and Gupta (2019) examined the influence of adolescents' age on family buying decisions. It was found that adolescents' influence different product levels at diverse phases of family purchase process. It was further observed that popular products obtain maximum attention of adolescents and the least consideration for common products.

Hagelberg (2017) found that social media has significant influence on the purchasing style of consumers. The study identified that consumers get more familiar with online shopping that encourages them to continue purchase from there.

Tehria (2016) studied the attitude of consumers towards advertisements and its effectiveness. It was found that buying decisions of majority of consumers are influenced by advertisements. People give more attention to T.V. advertisements and least attention is received by print media. It was concluded that presence of actors in advertising makes it more persuasive.

Salamah and Ma's (2015) compared the consumer's attitudes towards digital advertisements and traditional advertisements. The study shows a positive attitude toward digital advertisement. Consumers consider digital advertisements as more powerful than traditional advertisement in present time.

Though an exhaustive review of related literature was conducted only very few studies are reproduced here due to page restriction. The review of related literature revealed that there are

no studies which deals with the influence of school on consumer attitude of adolescents.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To assess the extent of consumer attitude of higher secondary school students;
- To assess the extent of influence of school on consumer attitude of higher secondary school students;
- To find out the relationship between consumer attitude and influence of school of higher secondary school students; and
- To compare the influence of school of higher secondary school students based on gender.

4. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

A survey was conducted on a sample of 350 higher secondary school students from Kollam district of Kerala state. A Consumer Attitude Scale and a Scale to measure the Influence of school on Consumer Attitude were used for collecting data. These tools were constructed and standardized by the investigator herself. Percentage analysis, Pearson's product moment coefficient of correlation and t-test were the statistical techniques used.

5. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- The analysis of data revealed that majority of the higher secondary school students have a moderate level of consumer attitude (69%).
- The extent of influence of school on consumer attitude is moderate for majority of the higher secondary school students (72%).
- The relationship between school and consumer attitude of higher secondary school students is positive and significant ($r = 0.612$; $p < 0.01$).
- There is no significant difference between male and female students in the influence of school on consumer attitude ($t = 0.96$; $p > 0.05$).

6. EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

The study found that schools have a significant and positive influence on consumer attitude of adolescents. In a highly consumerist world, schools should realise the importance of guiding adolescents in shaping the right kind of consumer attitude and devise strategies to infuse

this in them. Educational institutions and parents should work together to equip students with the knowledge and critical thinking skills to become responsible and informed consumers in the future. In a materialistic society, adolescents tend to show deviant behaviour for the acquisition of consumer products which are costly and cannot be afforded by their parents. Teachers should demonstrate minimalistic behaviour in front of students and sensitise them on the power of simplicity in moulding their future.

Teachers should take utmost care in treating all students equally and the prominence of academic excellence over physical appearance has to be conveyed to them. Pre-service and in-service courses may be conducted to orient our prospective and present teachers on the importance of instigating right consumer attitude in our students. Workshops and seminars can be conducted in schools for sensitizing the students on keeping restraint in their consumer behaviour. Recognition to students who show simplicity in their consumer behaviour will act as right examples for other students to follow. This may encourage them to show healthy consumer attitude and concentrate more on their scholastic activities.

Stakeholders should take the above recommendations seriously in order for paving way for a lifestyle free of excessive consumerism in adolescents. A concerted effort from all those who are involved in the education system could only achieve this goal. The present day technology enabled world wherein everyone and everything is connected, the excessive presence of commercial interests is visible everywhere, be it sports, games, movies or any other sphere in our life. To mitigate the adverse effects of this excessive consumerism on the personality development of our adolescents, everyone should act in tandem to create awareness in our younger minds on the dangers of consumerism and the importance of frugality in maintaining a healthy balance in their personal and professional lives.

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