



Consumer Preference of Adolescents in Kerala: An Exploratory Study

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Abstract

This study was conducted to analyse the consumer preference of adolescents in Kerala with a view to suggest suitable measures to create ideal consumer preference in adolescents. In a state like Kerala where consumerism is rampant in all sections of society, this assumes very relevant. A survey was conducted on 250 higher secondary school students using a consumer preference record card. The analysis revealed that adolescents in Kerala are highly brand conscious and they prefer expensive brands. Recommendations for instilling ideal consumer preference in adolescents is discussed with emphasis on parents, schools, teachers and policymakers.

Keywords: *Consumer Preference Record Card, Adolescents, Higher Secondary School Students, Consumer Preference.*



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1. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Adolescence is a critical period of transformation, marked by rapid physical, cognitive and emotional changes as individuals transition from childhood to adulthood. During this period, cognitive abilities undergo significant refinement, with abstract thinking, problem-solving skills, and the capacity for introspection reaching new heights. This period is also characterised by rapid emotional and social development, as adolescents grapple with identity formation, navigate shifting peer relationship and strive for greater autonomy and independence. These multifaceted changes can

often lead to intensified emotional volatility, risk-taking behaviours and a heightened sense of self-consciousness.

Adolescent consumer preferences are shaped by a complex interplay of various factors, with family, peer groups, social media and advertising playing crucial roles. Family acts as the primary socialising agent, transmitting values, beliefs, and consumption patterns to adolescents. Parents' attitudes towards spending, saving and brand loyalty significantly influence their children's purchasing decisions. For instance, if parents prioritize frugality, adolescents are more likely to adopt similar

spending habits. Peer groups exert a strong influence on adolescent consumer choices, particularly in areas related to fashion, music and social activities. The desire to fit in and gain social acceptance often drives adolescents to conform to peer preferences, leading them to favour brands and products popular among their social circles.

Social media has emerged as a powerful force shaping adolescent consumer behaviour. Platforms like Facebook and Instagram provide constant exposure to trends, influencers and product endorsements, influencing adolescent perceptions of desirability and creating a sense of social comparison. Advertising also plays a significant role in shaping adolescent consumer preferences through targeted campaigns that exploit their vulnerabilities and aspirations. Advertisements often employ emotional appeals, celebrity endorsements and aspirational imagery to create a desire for specific products and brands. These factors interact and influence each other in complex ways, shaping the overall consumer preferences of adolescents.

In a consumerist society like Kerala, exploring the consumer preference of adolescents is very relevant as it can provide us with valuable insights on the consumer behaviour of adolescents which can be used for guiding them in practising healthy consumer preferences. The constant pursuit of material possessions can distract individuals from more meaningful pursuits such as relationships, personal growth and community engagement. It can also contribute to a culture of materialism and superficiality, where individuals are valued based on their possessions rather than their character or contributions to society.

Consumerism can have several negative effects on adolescents. The constant exposure to advertisements and social media promoting material possessions can create unrealistic expectations and a sense of inadequacy in adolescents. This can lead to increased anxiety, depression and low self-esteem, particularly if they feel unable to keep up with the perceived standards set by consumer culture.

Consumerism fuels social comparison, where adolescents constantly evaluate themselves based on their possessions and compare themselves to their peers. This can lead

to peer pressure to acquire certain brands or products, even if they are unaffordable or unnecessary. Consumerism can promote a materialistic mind-set, where happiness and self-worth are equated with the acquisition of material possessions. This can lead to a focus on short-term gratification and a neglect of long-term goals, such as education, personal growth, and meaningful relationships. The negative impact on environment also is another factor. The production and consumption of goods have a significant environmental impact, contributing to resource depletion, pollution and climate change. Adolescents who are heavily influenced by consumerism may be less likely to adopt sustainable consumption practices.

The present study is an attempt to find out the consumer preference of adolescents in Kerala. The investigator thought that such a study will provide valuable insight into the consumer behaviour of adolescents and its pitfalls, if any. It is crucial to raise awareness about the potential downsides of consumerism and encourage adolescents to develop critical thinking skills and make informed choices about their consumption preferences. By conducting rigorous research on adolescent consumer preferences, educators and policymakers can develop effective strategies to support the healthy development of adolescents in a consumer-driven society.

Keillor, et al. (1996) studied the brand preferences of Mexican and American teenagers and found that parents' influence is higher for Mexican teenagers compared to American teenagers in their brand preferences. **Rhee and Johnson (2012)** studied how adolescents' favourite apparel brand was related to congruency between brand image and self-concept. Adolescents who were influenced by their family members and peers in their apparel purchases linked their favourite brand with their ideal self-concept.

Emthiyas (2017) studied the factors which affect consumer preferences and analysed the extent advertisements inspire the consumers to buy the branded soft drinks. The study found that the major factor influencing the branded soft drinks is advertisement in different media such as television, newsprint, posters, banners and internet. **Haider and Shakib (2018)**

analysed the influence of advertisement on buying behaviour of and found that the impact of advertisement is to strengthen brand name in consumer mind and they purchase products frequently found in advertisement. [Kwan et al. \(2019\)](#) investigated the impact of cosmetic advertisements on self-esteem and buying behaviour among young women and found that there is significant correlation between cosmetic advertisements, self-esteem and buying behaviour. [Kataria's \(2017\)](#) study found that tweens are highly brand conscious, digital natives and are powerful influencers in the family buying decisions. The research concluded that tweens had relatively high awareness on brand names and strong purchase preferences for branded products.

The review of related studies revealed that there are very few studies on the consumer preferences of adolescents in India. The studies reviewed are focused merely on a single product/brand. Since the present study explored the consumer preference of adolescents with respect to almost all products/brands, it is hoped that this study can provide valuable insights into the consumer preference of adolescents and help in formulating strategies to mitigate the ill-effects of consumerism rampant in our society.

2. METHOD OF THE STUDY

The objective of the study was to analyse the consumer preference of adolescents. A survey was conducted by the investigator to collect the responses of adolescents. A sample of 250 higher secondary school students from Thiruvananthapuram and Kollam districts were used for the study. Higher secondary school students are selected because they are in late stage adolescence (WHO defines adolescents as people between the ages of 10 and 19) and may have well-defined consumer preferences compared to younger adolescents. An abbreviated version of the Consumer Preference Record Card prepared by the investigator was used to collect responses of adolescents on their preference of consumer products they frequently use. Each question includes list of four brands or products which are familiar to them through advertisement. In this consumer preference record card he/she can rank (1 to 5) on the basis of preference in mind. Though the original consumer preference record card consists of 20 items, only 10 essential items were taken for the study on the premise that it will give a clear picture of consumer preference of adolescents.

3. ANALYSIS OF THE CONSUMER PREFERENCE OF ADOLESCENTS

The responses of adolescents were analysed and the ranking on each item is given below.

Table-1: Analysis of the Consumer Preference Record Card (N = 250)

Product	Brand Name	1st Rank	2nd Rank	3rd Rank	4th Rank	5th Rank
Soap	Lux	21.10	26.40	26.00	24.50	2.00
	Dove	36.70	27.90	23.80	8.50	3.10
	Lifebuoy	11.50	18.90	25.30	36.50	7.80
	Pears	21.30	25.50	22.70	27.50	3.00
	Others	9.40	1.30	2.20	3.30	84.10
Talcum Powder	Yardley	47.50	29.60	14.10	7.20	1.60
	Ponds	19.00	41.20	24.40	13.60	1.80
	Enchanter	22.30	18.50	39.30	17.80	2.10
	Cinthol	7.70	8.70	20.10	55.20	8.30
	Others	3.50	2.0	2.10	6.20	86.20
Juice	Frooti	37.30	30.40	13.80	8.70	9.80

	Fizz	26.30	27.00	18.40	25.80	2.50
	Maaza	13.40	24.90	34.10	25.10	2.50
	Tang	9.40	16.40	31.00	36.20	7.00
	Others	13.60	1.30	2.70	4.20	78.20
Soft Drink	Pepsi	27.30	22.50	24.30	23.00	2.90
	Coco Cola	7.60	22.00	36.40	29.70	4.30
	7up	26.60	28.30	23.70	19.80	1.60
	Sprite	32.00	26.30	11.40	26.10	4.20
	Others	6.50	0.90	4.20	1.40	87.00
Biscuit	Cadbury Oreo	48.90	17.30	17.00	10.70	6.10
	Britannia	13.60	37.10	30.70	16.80	1.80
	Parle	15.10	25.80	31.70	21.80	5.60
	Sunfeast	12.80	17.40	17.70	46.50	5.60
	Others	9.60	2.40	2.90	4.20	80.90
Sportswear	Nike	34.80	27.20	11.10	21.50	5.40
	Adidas	26.40	35.00	25.00	11.00	2.60
	Reebok	9.50	17.50	41.90	29.50	1.60
	Puma	20.90	17.60	19.10	36.90	5.50
	Others	8.40	2.70	2.90	1.10	84.90
Footwear	Woodland	35.70	22.00	16.30	16.30	13.00
	Adidas	21.60	36.10	26.90	14.80	0.60
	Nike	19.90	19.90	35.70	22.10	2.40
	Reebok	10.20	20.30	20.30	44.90	4.30
	Others	12.60	1.70	0.80	5.20	79.70
Chocolate	Diary Milk	62.00	15.00	8.30	11.10	3.60
	Munch	12.10	29.20	37.80	19.50	1.40
	Perk	7.20	15.20	31.40	38.90	7.30
	Kit Kat	9.60	34.50	20.90	24.10	10.90
	Others	9.10	6.10	1.60	6.40	76.80
Mobile Phone	Samsung	22.80	26.60	24.20	19.70	6.70
	Apple	38.00	27.90	18.00	14.80	1.30
	Lenovo	4.40	15.00	35.20	35.90	5.50
	Vivo	21.90	28.10	18.00	24.00	8.00
	Others	12.90	2.40	4.60	1.60	78.50
Laptop	Dell	34.40	19.10	21.10	17.10	8.30
	HP	10.60	30.70	31.50	26.10	1.10
	Acer	9.70	34.00	24.70	27.60	4.00
	Apple	37.80	22.30	9.80	26.00	4.10
	Others	7.50	3.90	2.90	3.20	82.50

4. ANALYSIS OF THE RESPONSES OF ADOLESCENTS REVEALED THE FOLLOWING RESULTS

Dove is given first rank by 36.70% of students which is followed by Pears (21.30%) and Lux is given first rank by 21.10% students. Only 9.40% students gave first rank to other soaps. This shows that Dove is the most preferred brand by students which is followed by Pears. In the case of talcum powder, 47.50% students gave first rank to Yardley powder which is followed by Enchanter (22.30%). This clearly shows that Yardley is the most preferred brand of talcum powder by higher secondary school students.

Frooti is the most preferred packaged juice brand of higher secondary school students as the highest percentage of students (37.30%) gave it first rank. The next preference goes to Fizz (26.30%) and Maaza (13.40%). Sprite is the most preferred brand of soft drinks as 32% students gave it first rank which is followed by Pepsi (27.30%) and 7up (26.60%). Cadbury Oreo is the most preferred of biscuit as 48.90% students gave first rank to it which is followed by Parle (15.10%).

Diary Milk is the most preferred chocolate brand of students as a high proportion of (62%) students gave first rank to it. Woodland is the most preferred footwear brand of higher secondary school students as 35.70% students gave it first rank which is followed by Adidas (21.60%) and Nike (19.90%).

Nike is the most preferred sportswear brand as 34.80% students gave it first ranks which is followed by Adidas (26.40%) and Puma (20.90%). Apple is the mobile phone brand most preferred by higher secondary school students (38%) which is followed by Samsung (22.80%) and Vivo (21.90%). Apple is the laptop brand most preferred by higher secondary school students (37.80%) which is followed by Dell (34.40%) and HP (10.60%).

5. CONCLUSION

The analysis of the responses of adolescents on their consumer preference of various consumer durables revealed that brand value of the product is considered important by students. It was noted that adolescents have a high level of brand awareness. They preferred

brands which is positioned in elite category (e.g. Dove soap, Yardley talcum powder, Woodland footwear, Apple in both mobile phone and laptop) which not only shows their brand awareness but also the influence of advertisements in print, TV and social media in their brand preference. The results also show the inclination of adolescents towards expensive brands.

6. IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study clearly revealed that adolescent consumer preferences are greatly influenced by advertisements and other social media campaigns. This influence has made them prefer only top and expensive brands from among the various brands available in the market. If they fail to get these products, they may experience great stress which could affect their studies. Parents, schools, and policymakers can work in tandem to teach them on the importance of frugality.

Parents can lead by example by exhibiting responsible consumer habits. They should demonstrate that material possessions are not the aim of life. They can discuss the impact of advertising and the true value of possessions. Encourage critical thinking about marketing tactics. Parents should establish clear rules regarding spending and screen time and can encourage hobbies, sports, and activities that do not revolve around material goods. Emphasize the importance of valuing experiences, relationships and personal growth over material possessions.

Schools can arrange workshops and events on ideal consumer preference and responsible decision-making with the active involvement of parents. Integrating lessons on media literacy, advertising analysis and financial literacy into the curriculum can be of great help in curbing excessive consumerism in adolescents. Teachers and staff members can demonstrate prudence by showing ideal consumer preferences based on real value, not brand value.

Policymakers can integrate consumer education into the curriculum. Incorporate lessons on budgeting, saving, investing and debt management throughout the curriculum, from elementary to higher secondary level. They can

ensure adequate funding for educational programmes that promote consumer education and financial literacy.

A concerted effort from all stakeholders is essential for the success of the above-mentioned practices. Like moral values, ideal consumer preference is essential for our future generation to succeed in a world which is cluttered with tempting consumer products.

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