

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF BUSINESS & MANAGEMENT

Effect of Consumer Socialization on Consumer Product Choice among University Students in Moshi, Kilimanjaro, Tanzania

Dr. Amembah A Lamu Amos

Lecturer, Department of Marketing, Mwenge Catholic University, Tanzania

Mr. Erasto Massawe

Assistant lecturer, Department of Sociology, Mwenge Catholic University, Tanzania

Abstract:

The family is the foundation of human molding of behavior, persona, and mental formation. The first experiences of many human beings are by this institution through socialization. As children grow, they start demanding for different needs which continues for rest of their lifetime. The process of consumer choice then is formed. This process may stick with some consumers for their lifetime or it may change slightly as consumers socialize with the environment. The study used a quantitative research approach and the design was correlational survey. The study covered two universities in Kilimanjaro. Data collection was done using: questionnaires and interview schedules. The findings were analysed through frequencies, percentages and means. The study found out that: students product choice was influenced by socialization although the family had a major influence on them than any other factor of socialization. Consumers also faced challenges in their product choice therefore made adjustments. Therefore, the study concluded that organizations and companies should conduct regular research to understand how socialization affects consumer decision making as well as brand or product change.

Keywords: Product choice, socialization, family

1. Introduction

The family is the foundation of human molding of behavior, persona, and mental formation. The first experiences of many human beings are by this institution through socialization. As children grow, they start demanding for different needs; a process that continues for rest of their lifetime. The process of consumer choice then is formed. This process may stick with some consumers for their lifetime or it may change slightly as consumers socialize with the environment. In addition, the modern family up bringing has also changed whereby social-economic responsibilities are shared in the family between the parents. Children no longer attend school nearby their homes. Technology and globalisation have brought about changes as neighborhoods change their composition into cosmopolitan towns or cities. Consequently, the process of socialization has changed making most consumers to change how they behave. Consumer socialization is a *cultural process* which as Ward argued in one of the most thorough studies on the topic allows the young to acquire skills, knowledge and attitudes relevant to their functioning as consumers in the marketplace" (Ward, 1974, p. 2). In this way, young people learn attitudes toward prices, knowledge about product features, social and economic motivations for consumption, consumer roles and preferences among alternative brands and goods. The evolution and development of information technology has become more accessible to almost every knowledgeable consumer. Hence opening ways for consumers to access information: evaluate, compare and make decisions about their choice of product. Customers can compare contents about products, prices, brand promises, weighing options and have pertinent questions about products (Voinea & Alina 2011). Social media is seen as a more direct and intentional strategy of engaging with the consumers whereby companies can assess the consumer behavior through data analytical.

Therefore, the objectives of this paper were:

- To know if the process of socialization has affected consumer product choice experience.
- To understand the challenges of socialization that consumers face in their process of consumer product choice experience
- To find out how consumers have adjusted their consumer product choice experience due to socialization.

2. Statement of the Problem

The constant change and dynamics of the market have brought about a shift in how consumers purchase products. The process no longer involves the normal routine of purchasing the same products over a lifetime. Consumers are exposed to more choices through socialization: interactions, discussions, consultation and observation. Therefore, according to Roberti (2014) the importance of the realm of consumption for the identity and socializing dynamics of young people has grown progressively over recent years. Increasingly, it appears that consumer practices are mediating the personal expression of individuals, enabling them to communicate to the outside world the subcultures they belong to and their personal value system. Because individuals, in making their selections of products and brands, use a variety of

criteria that take account not only of the characteristics of a product/service and its price/quality tradeoff, but also of its symbolic and/or social significance, it is becoming ever more important for researchers to understand the mechanisms underlying consumption patterns, as well as the influence of these patterns on society in general. Therefore, this study investigated the effects of socialization the choice of consumer products.

3. Literature Review

Socialization is process that starts and continues throughout a person's lifetime. It is orderly but sometimes discontinuous. As two or more people engage in conversations, discussions or transactions, ideas and opinions are passed across or adopted. Individuals are socialized over time depending on societal demands and changes. This propensity to view socialization as a one-way linear sequential process, limits the ability to understand how consumers are influenced by others in a social interaction context (Watne & Brennan, 2009). Consumer behavior is much more than studying what consumers buy. It attempts to understand how the decision-making process goes and how it affects consumers' buying behavior (Solomon 2004). Marketers study consumers buying patterns to solve where they buy, what they buy and why they buy. However, why consumers buy a specific product is not easy to solve because the answer is locked deep within the consumers' mind. (Kardes et al. 2011, p. 8; Kotler & Armstrong 2010, p. 160.)

The continuous search for evidence as to how socialization influences the purchase behavior of people found that "family is the most influential unit in consumer behavior. Family members have a growing effect on each other's in decision-making. Based on demographic segmentation within the family, a husband and wife have different needs, wants, motivation and behaviors". (Hanzaee & Lotfizadeh, 2011). Parental communication styles are known to influence consumer socialization through control of exposure to consumer situations (Carlson & Grossbart 1988). McNeal (1987) found out that, "Parents engage in consumer behaviour instruction through both direct and indirect means. Direct consumer learning is the intentional instruction by the parent for the purpose of teaching the child some aspect of consumer behaviour, while indirect learning is the unintentional instruction of some aspect of consumer behaviour that is initiated by the child through direct observation or participation". However, most consumer instruction between parents and children does not take place directly. Parents place children in consumer situations, simply because the parent and child are together when the activity takes place, often referred to as co-shopping. Family media behaviour refers to media consumption and co-viewing by parent and child; discussions about advertising messages and the parent's attitude about media directed at children. As with co-shopping, co-viewing allows the parent an opportunity to provide both direct and indirect instruction about media information and influence, and allows the parent to establish implicit and explicit viewing rules and share media-related attitudes.

The consumer search for value attracts him to engage in an ever-continuing process of value study and choice; which probes him to adjust and adapt to changing product value in the market. this is the result for making decisions as Walsh (2002) stated that, decision-making is becoming increasingly complex for consumers and with the emergence of electronic forms of product display and information, the complexity of decision-making intensifies further. The advent of global markets has resulted in a plethora of product choices, retail channels and promotional activity, which make consumers' decision-making increasingly complex. In the extensive consumer behavior literature, most studies assume that all consumers approach shopping with certain decision-making traits that combine to form a consumer's decision-making style. a study that was conducted in Italy by Robert (2014) found out consumers were compelled to modify their consumption behavior by reducing their quantities and re-structuring because of the economic crisis.

Consumers don't just buy products they buy value; that which can be of benefit to them. Some of these purchases are influence through socialization. They purchase products that can make them feel better both emotionally and physically. Recently consumers have become more creative and selective because of the explosion of choices in the market. Some fear making the wrong choice of a product; hence some seek purposeful pleasures that last longer and have deeper satisfaction. Impulse shopping gives way to a more considered and conscientious form of consumption. All these announce a new era: the era of mindful consumption and of new consumer. Voinea, Alina 2011. Lewis and Bridger (2000), they show that the new consumer behavior is derived mainly from purchasing authentic products while traditional consumers largely purchased product based on the need for comfort.

4. Research Methods

The study used a mixed research approach and a concurrent research design to find out how socialization affected consumer product choice. A pilot survey was conducted to test the research instruments. Respondents selected randomly from the student population. to make a sample of 221. Then data collection was done through questionnaires and then analysed by descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages). Thereafter conclusions and recommendations were made.

5. Data Analysis and Presentation of Findings

The following discussion presents a data that was obtained from the field to show how socialization had an effect on consumer choice of products.

Variable		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	145	65.6
	Female	76	34.4
Age	18-27	194	87.8
	27-36	21	9.5
	37-46	6	2.7
	46 and Above	0	0
Level of Studies	Certificate	2	0.9
	Diploma	47	21.3
	Degree	162	73.3
	Postgraduate	10	4.5
Marital Status	Single	182	83.5
	Married	28	12.8
	Other	8	3.7

Table 1: Demographic Information

The data in the table 1 show that there were more male respondents 55.6% this implies maybe there are more male students in the university. The data also shows that more respondents were in the age bracket of 18-27 (87.8%) which is the common age for many graduate students, while no respondent was found in the age bracket of 46 and above. in the question which sought to find out the level of study from the respondents, most respondents were pursuing their degree program 73.3%. this again is a reflection of the percentage of respondents who were in the age bracket of 18-27. that data also showed that many of the respondents were single 83.5% while 12.8% were single.

6. Research Objectives

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Groups which has a major influence on your purchase behavior		
Family	117	53.2
Friends	65	29.5
Peer Groups	22	10.0
Media	16	7.3
Family member makes the purchase decision most		
Brother	7	3.6
Sister	3	1.6
Mother	62	32.3
Father	90	46.9
Parents (Mother &Father)	17	8.9
Cousin	1	0.5
Grandfather	1	0.5
Guardians	1	0.5
Friends	5	2.6
Peer groups	3	1.6
Husband	2	1.0
Factor determines which family member makes the purchase decision		
Age	10	6.3
Belief and Attitude	20	12.5
Life Style	13	8.1
Motivation	14	8.8
Economic Situation	45	28.1
Family Needs	28	17.5
Neighbors	1	0.6
Income	18	11.3
Knowledge	2	1.3
Personality	8	5.0
Test and Preference	1	0.6

Table 2: Show if the Process of Socialization has Affected Consumer Product Choice Experience

The data in table 2 shows that many respondents agreed that they were influenced by their family in the purchase behaviour of product choice 53.2% and friends 29.5%. It also reveals that the mother 32.3% and father 46.9% were the

ones who made the purchase decisions while only 8.9% said both (mother and father) made decisions. The data also reveals that father made the purchase because of economic reasons and 17.5% because of family needs.

Variable	Frequency (%)					Mean
	SA	A	N	D	SD	
My family influences how I purchase products	78(35.3)	105(47.5)	13(5.9)	21(9.5)	4(1.8)	4.05
My family advices me on what to buy	49(22.5)	99(45.4)	29(13.3)	31(14.2)	10(4.6)	3.67
I imitate family members in my consumer product choices	45(20.5)	89(40.5)	44(20.0)	31(14.1)	11(5.0)	3.57
My friends influence how I purchase products	35(15.9)	94(42.7)	28(12.7)	46(20.9)	17(7.7)	3.57
I imitate my friends in my consumer product choices	38(17.3)	82(37.3)	36(16.4)	50(22.7)	14(6.4)	3.36
My friends advise me on what to purchase	43(19.5)	88(39.8)	40(18.1)	33(14.9)	17(7.7)	3.57
My neighborhood influences how I purchase products	23(10.5)	80(36.5)	45(20.5)	49(22.4)	22(10.0)	3.15
I still use product brands that I used in my childhood	28(12.7)	67(30.3)	42(19.0)	53(24.0)	31(14.0)	3.04
Socialization has changed my consumer product choices	74(33.5)	91(41.2)	23(10.4)	23(10.4)	9(4.1)	4.03
I am product of socialization	56(25.5)	107(48.6)	34(15.5)	17(7.7)	6(2.7)	3.86
My environment influences my consumer product choice	93(42.3)	91(41.4)	17(7.7)	14(6.4)	5(2.3)	4.15

Table 3: Process of Socialization has Affected Consumer Product Choice Experience
Key**: SA= Strong agree A = Agree N= Neutral D = Disagree SD = Strong Disagree

Table 3 shows that most respondents were positive that socialization affected their consumer product choice experience. Many respondents agreed that family influenced how they purchase with a mean of 4.05, socialization changed their consumer product choices mean of 4.03 and environment influenced consumer product choice mean of 4.15. It implies that family had the most effect on consumer choice, socialization and environment. although the family had influenced most respondents took advice from the family mean of 3.67, most imitated family members mean of 3.57 friends also were most 3.57 as well as neighbors mean of 3.15. Interestingly, as much as many respondents agreed that socialization affected their consumer behavior, most respondents with a mean of 3.04 agreed that they had changed their childhood brands. This implies that although socialization had an effect on consumer choice many respondents only changed their product choices within a brand as revealed that socialization changed product choice 4.03. Finally, only a mean of 3.86 shows that most respondents were products of socialization. This implies that socialization changes the way consumers made choices, through: family, friends, neighbours and the environment.

Variable	Frequency (%)					Mean
	SA	A	N	D	SD	
I face a challenge of Choice of brand/product because of socialization	70(32.0)	89(40.6)	14(6.4)	32(14.6)	14(6.4)	3.77
I face a challenge of personal image	27(12.3)	93(42.5)	41(18.7)	48(21.9)	10(4.6)	3.36
I face a challenge of pressure to conform others behavior	37(16.8)	94(42.7)	35(15.9)	44(20.0)	10(4.5)	3.47
I face a challenge of Cost/prices of products	71(32.4)	105(47.9)	15(6.8)	20(9.1)	8(3.7)	3.96
I face a challenge of Understanding the culture of other people	56(25.5)	97(44.1)	28(12.7)	32(14.5)	7(3.2)	3.74
I face a challenge of adjusting to change of product choice	38(17.5)	99(45.6)	28(12.9)	41(18.9)	11(5.1)	3.52
I face a challenge of being independently minded	36(16.4)	73(33.2)	38(17.3)	48(21.8)	25(11.4)	3.21
I face a challenge of being different	32(14.5)	70(31.8)	41(18.6)	57(25.9)	20(9.1)	3.17
I face a challenge of living in a cosmopolitan environment	37(17.0)	82(37.6)	42(19.3)	40(18.3)	17(7.8)	3.38
I face a challenge of socializing with people who use different products from me	58(26.4)	77(35.0)	25(11.4)	44(20.0)	16(7.3)	3.53

Table 4: Challenges of Socialization that Consumers Face in Their Process of Consumer Product Choice Experience
Key**: SA= Strong agree A = Agree N= Neutral D = Disagree SD = Strong Disagree

On the question which sought to find out challenges that were experienced by the respondents while making product choice. The following data was obtained as shown in table 5. The data shows that most respondents faced challenges while making product choices. the highest factor challenge was cost or price mean of 3.96, brand or product choice mean of 3.77, culture mean of 3.74, adjusting to change mean of 3.52 and socialization with people who use different products at a mean of 3.53. This implies that consumers were affected by external forces in their socialization process of consumer choice. While internal forces received a slightly lower mean for example: personal image 3.36, pressure from others 3.47, independently minded 3.21, being different 3.17. Those who lived in cosmopolitan environments were also not affected to a large extent with a mean of 3.38.

Variable	Frequency (%)					
	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean
I have found a new way of adjusting how to make product choice	74(34.6)	111(51.9)	16(7.5)	10(4.7)	3(1.4)	4.14
I have change how I make decision on my product of choice	58(27.2)	119(55.9)	21(9.9)	13(6.1)	2(0.9)	4.21
I have changed my location to a new location(city/town/street)	46(21.5)	89(41.6)	36(16.8)	32(15.0)	11(5.1)	3.59
I have changed the shop where I purchase my products	41(19.2)	99(46.5)	39(18.3)	27(12.7)	7(3.3)	3.66
I purchase what I can afford (reducing purchases)	101(47.2)	77(36.3)	19(9.0)	10(4.7)	5(2.4)	4.22
I have a personal budget for my purchases	95(44.6)	90(42.3)	15(7.0)	9(4.2)	4(1.9)	4.23
Purchase durable goods	65(30.5)	110(51.6)	22(10.3)	12(5.6)	4(1.9)	4.03
I have adjusted my way of purchasing products recently (1 to 5) years	49(23.1)	91(42.9)	36(17.0)	29(13.7)	7(3.3)	3.69
I have changed my attitude towards purchasing certain products	69(32.2)	94(43.9)	27(12.6)	20(9.3)	4(1.9)	3.95
I purchase new brands (lifestyle)	65(30.4)	101(47.2)	24(11.2)	18(8.4)	6(2.8)	3.94
Modified my previous purchase habits.	50(23.4)	98(45.8)	38(17.8)	17(7.9)	11(5.1)	3.74

Table 5: Show How Families have Adjusted Their Consumer Product Choice Experience Due to Socialization
Key**: SA= Strong agree A = Agree N= Neutral D = Disagree SD = Strong Disagree

On the question which sought to find out how socialization has affected families, the data in table 5 shows that respondents found out new ways of adjusting how to make product choice 4.14, making decision 4.21, purchasing what they could afford or reducing purchases 4.03. This implies that respondents agreed that socialization had an effect on their product choices. Therefore, they made adjustments to accommodate changes. while on the other hand the respondents also agreed that relocation to new cities and towns made them to adjust with a mean of 3.59, change of shop mean of 3.66, changed in the last 1 to 5 years 3.69 (mean), change of attitude 3.95 (mean), lifestyle 3.94 (mean) and modification of purchase habits 3.74. Therefore, this implies that most respondents agreed that socialization affected their purchase behavior and therefore they made adjustments to accommodate change.

7. Conclusion

The researcher concludes that socialization has an effect the product choice as the results of the study reveal. It can also be concluded that consumer's choice was not constant throughout their lifetime because many respondents agreed that they had to adjust their buying behaviors at times. The study also found out that the family had a major influence on how consumers selected their products. This study therefore concludes that socialization has a positive influence on the student's product choice.

8. References

- i. Carlson, L., & S. L. Grossbart (1988). 'Parental style and consumer socialization of children',
- ii. Journal of Consumer Research.
- iii. Kambiz, H., & Fereshteh, L. (2011). Influence of Family Structure on Consumer Decision-making Style in Iran. International Journal of Business and Management. Tehran, Iran. Vol. 6, No. 11.
- iv. Kardes, C., & Cronley, M. (2011). Consumer behavior: Science and Practice. South-Western Cengage Learning.
- v. Kotler, P. & Armstrong, G. (2009). Principles of Marketing. Pearson Education. Thirteenth Edition. New Jersey.
- vi. Kozinets, R. (2010). The Field behind the Screen: Using Netnography for Marketing Research in Online Communities. Journal of Marketing Research, Number 39, pp. 61-72;
- vii. Lelia, V., Alina, F. Analyzing the Main Changes in New Consumer Buying Behavior
- viii. during Economic Crisis. Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies. International Journal of Economic Practices and Theories, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2011.

- ix. Lewis, D., Bridger, D. (2000). *The Soul of the New Consumer: Authenticity What We Buy and Why in the New Economy*, Nicholas Brealey Publishing, London.
- x. McNeal, James U. (1987), *Children as consumers: insights and implications*, Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.
- xi. Roberti, G. (2014). The influence of family socialization on consumer choices of young people. A case study of female university students. *Italian Journal of Sociology of Education*, 6(3), 41-69. Retrieved from http://www.ijse.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/2014_3_4.pdf
- xii. Solomon, M. 2004. *Consumer behavior*. Sixth edition. Prentice Hall
- xiii. Sabrina, N. (2017). Influences on consumer socialization Article in *Young Consumers Insight and Ideas for Responsible Marketers*.
- xiv. Torgeir, W., & Linda, B. (2009). *Secondary Consumer Socialization of Adults* Swinburne university of Technology, twatne@swin.edu.au, RMIT University, lbrennan@bigpond.net.au