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The Role of Peers in Shaping Purchasing Decisions of Fashion Products among Teenagers

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Abstract: This study explores the influence of the social environment on consumer decision-making patterns among teenagers. This research uses a qualitative, descriptive approach and a literature study. The results showed that the social climate significantly influences adolescent consumer decision-making patterns. These findings can help understand how the social environment affects adolescent consumer behavior and contribute to developing effective marketing strategies; keywords: social environment, consumer decision-making patterns, adolescents, qualitative approach, and literature study.

Keywords: Purchase Decision, Fashion, Teenagers, Social Media, Teenage Lifestyle

Introduction

Teenage consumer behavior is currently an essential concern for marketing researchers and practitioners. Teenagers are a consumer group with great potential to influence the market, as they have significant economic power and tend to follow popular trends and lifestyles. However, teenagers' consumer behavior is also influenced by various factors, including the social environment.

Teenagers' social environment, including family, friends, and social media, can influence their consumer decision-making patterns. Therefore, it is essential to understand how the social environment influences teenage consumer behavior and how marketing strategies can be developed to meet their needs and wants.

On the other hand, the fashion industry continues to proliferate and plays a vital role in teenagers' lives. Fashion in adolescence is not just a clothing necessity; it is a way to demonstrate social relationships, boost self-confidence, and show self-identity. Teenagers

are likelier to buy clothes that match the latest lifestyle and trends, often influenced by their social environment. Peers become one of the most critical factors influencing teenagers' purchasing decisions in this situation. Peers shape perceptions of a particular brand, model, or style because they are an emotionally and socially close reference group. They create social pressure that indirectly encourages teens to choose " acceptable " items from their peers.

The influence of peers on adolescent purchasing decisions is inseparable from the nature of teenage behavior. Teenagers are going through a phase of social and psychological development strongly influenced by their group's desire to be accepted. They often see their peers as inspiration or “trendsetters” who can support their choices, including fashion products. This creates both opportunities and obstacles. Peers can encourage teens to be more innovative and try new styles. However, the pressure to follow trends can also lead to excessive consumption or unreasonable purchases. By understanding these dynamics, research on how peers influence consumers' decisions to purchase fashion products is essential.

The purpose of this study is to explore the influence of the social environment on adolescent consumer decision-making patterns and to identify the most significant social, and environmental factors in influencing adolescent consumer behavior. The results of this study are expected to contribute to the development of effective marketing strategies to meet teenagers' needs and desires.

Literature Review

A. The Influence of the Social Environment on Consumer Decision-Making in Buying Fashion Products

The social environment is an external factor that plays a vital role in consumer decision-making. In the context of fashion products, consumer decisions to buy are influenced by individual factors, such as personal needs and preferences, and various social elements around them, such as family, friends, social groups, and culture. Therefore, understanding how the social environment affects consumer behavior is essential for designing effective marketing strategies.

The social environment can be defined as groups of people or individuals who influence a person's decisions, either directly or indirectly. These influences can come from close people such as family and friends and larger social groups such as society or trends that develop on social media. In fashion, the social environment has a significant role in determining whether a product is accepted or rejected by consumers.

B. Consumer Decision Making Theory

The consumer decision-making process in buying fashion products cannot be separated from the various factors influencing their decisions. One theory often used to explain consumer decision-making is the theory of consumer behavior developed by Engel, Blackwell, and Miniard (2015). In this theory, consumer decision-making is described as a process that starts from need recognition, information search, alternative evaluation, and purchase decision to post-purchase.

In addition, according to Solomon (2018), social, cultural, and psychological factors influence each stage in consumer decision-making. The social environment, such as reference groups, family, and social norms, plays a significant role in the alternative evaluation and purchase decision stages.

C. The Influence of Family and Friends in Fashion Purchasing Decisions

Family is one of the most powerful social groups that influence consumer decisions. This is due to the role of the family in shaping fundamental values, behavior patterns, and individual preferences. In the context of fashion, parents or spouses often influence an individual in choosing a style of clothing or brand to buy.

Friends also play an equally important role in influencing purchasing decisions. In many cases, individuals tend to choose fashion products that are trending or used by their friends. Therefore, friend groups can act as a reference group that influences consumer behavior in selecting products and determining whether the product is considered "fashionable" or "appropriate" to existing social standards.

D. Influence of Social Media and Cultural Trends

Technology and social media development has changed how consumers make decisions. Social media, especially platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Pinterest, significantly influence the fashion world. These platforms allow consumers to access information about the latest fashion trends, follow influencers or celebrities who are role models, and share experiences or reviews about specific products.

Cultural trends also play an essential role in consumer decision-making. Fashion is often influenced by cultural norms that apply in society. For example, in some cultures, certain dress styles are considered more fashionable or appropriate for specific events, influencing consumer decisions in purchasing fashion products.

E. Social Influence Model in Fashion Purchasing Decisions

The social influence model proposed by Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) explains how mass media and social groups can influence individuals in making decisions. They stated that social influence is divided into two main stages: direct and indirect. Direct influence occurs when individuals are directly involved in social interactions, such as discussions or persuasion from friends or family. At the same time, indirect influence is more related to the influence of mass media or celebrities that influence individual preferences without direct interaction.

Currently, indirect influence through social media is very significant. Consumers are often exposed to fashion trends carried by influencers, celebrities, or product advertisements, influencing their buying choices.

It can be concluded that the social environment has a major influence on consumer decision-making regarding buying fashion products. Family, friends, social groups, and social media are factors that shape consumer perceptions and preferences for fashion products. Therefore, it is important for companies to understand these social dynamics in designing the right marketing strategy to influence consumer purchasing decisions.

Methodology

This study will use a descriptive qualitative approach to explore how peers influence fashion product purchasing decisions in adolescents. Through in-depth interviews with adolescents aged 13-18 years in Surabaya. The research sample will be selected purposively, considering gender diversity, socio-economic background, and level of exposure to social media. As students who can directly observe their environment, and with the help of literature studies, this study will reveal the key factors that encourage adolescents to follow fashion trends set by peers. The data obtained will be analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. In the initial stage, the data will be transcribed entirely. Furthermore, the data will be read repeatedly to identify emerging keywords, phrases, and themes. These themes will then be grouped and arranged hierarchically. The analysis will be carried out interactively by continuously comparing the data with the previously explained theory. Thematic analysis will identify patterns and themes that emerge from the data, providing a clearer picture of the dynamics of peer influence in the context of purchasing fashion products. The results of this study are expected to contribute to a better understanding of adolescent consumer behavior and its implications for fashion product marketing strategies.

Result and Discussion

A. Dominant Influence of Peers

One of the most dominant factors is the influence of peers in shaping fashion product purchasing decisions among teenagers. Adolescence is a phase of development in which

individuals tend to experience an increased need for social acceptance. In this context, peers are often the main reference group that shapes preferences, lifestyles, and consumption decisions, including fashion.

1. The Role of Peers as Reference Groups

Peer groups function as "reference groups," which directly or indirectly influence an individual's attitudes and behavior. In the case of teenagers, this group often has a more significant influence than the family, especially regarding fashion product choices. There are several main reasons why peers have a strong influence:

- Identity Search: Teenagers often see peers as mirrors that help them build their self-identity. Teenagers feel more connected and accepted in the group by imitating their friends' dress styles.
- Group Norms: Every social group has unwritten norms about how its members should dress or behave. Teenagers tend to conform to these norms to avoid exclusion or criticism.
- Direct and Indirect Influence: People can influence teenagers through advice, recommendations, or observing their friends' dress styles.

2. Conformity and Social Pressure

Conformity is when individuals adjust their attitudes, behaviors, or choices to fit in with their social group. In the context of adolescents, social pressure from peers can encourage them to purchase certain fashion products that are considered "cool" or trendy. This pressure can be:

- Explicit: When friends directly give opinions or pressure someone to buy a particular product.
- Implicit: When a teenager feels the need to follow their friends' dress style without any direct pressure, simply because they want to be part of the group.

3. Factors that Increase Peer Influence

The following factors influence the influence of peers on purchasing fashion products:

a. Intensity of Interaction

The more often teenagers interact with their friends, the more likely they are to be influenced by their fashion preferences. This interaction can occur directly or through social media, where they share the latest trends or shopping experiences.

b. Similarity in Age and Interests

Peers with similar ages and interests tend to have a more significant influence because they are considered to have relevant and trustworthy views.

c. Peer Credibility

Friends who are considered to have a good fashion sense or are often trendsetters in the group tend to be more influential. Teenagers often idolize friends who are considered to have an attractive style or appearance.

4. Psychological and Social Impacts of Peer Influence

Peer influence is not always positive. Several psychological and social impacts may arise, including:

- Increased Consumerism: Pressure to always follow trends can make teenagers more consumptive, even beyond their financial capabilities.
- Social Anxiety: Fear of rejection or feeling not good enough can affect the emotional well-being of teenagers.
- Increased Self-Expression: On the positive side, peers can encourage teenagers to express themselves through fashion, an essential aspect of developing their identity.

Several studies support the view that peers are a dominant factor in fashion product purchasing decisions among teenagers. For example:

- Research by Susanti (2021): This study found that 65% of teenagers admitted to buying certain fashion products because of peer influence, either through direct recommendations or observing trends in their group.
- Study by Gunawan (2020): This study shows that social media increases peer influence, where 72% of respondents said they bought fashion products after seeing them used by their friends on social media.

B. Types of Peer Influence

Peers are one of the most dominant factors that influence the lives of adolescents, especially when they make decisions about purchasing fashion products. In searching for self-identity, adolescents tend to use peers as a reflection to determine who they are and how they want to be seen in the eyes of others. In this context, peers are a place to share stories and a source of inspiration, influence, and even social pressure that determines adolescent consumption preferences.

Here are some types of peer influence that play a significant role in shaping fashion product purchasing decisions among adolescents:

1. Normative Influence: Conforming to Be Accepted

Normative influence arises when adolescents must follow the standards or norms that apply to their peer group. In the social environment of adolescents, these norms are often related to how to dress, the brands used, or styles considered "trendy."

For example, if most friends in a group use fashion products from a particular brand, an adolescent may feel the need to have products from the same brand to avoid feeling

"different" or "not fitting in" with the group. This is often done to gain social acceptance and avoid rejection or criticism.

A study by Sartika (2020) found that up to 70% of teenagers buy certain fashion products because they want to fit in with the trends in their peer group. This means that the need to be accepted often drives teenagers to buy items they may not need or like.

2. Informative Influence: Friends as a Source of Information

Peers are often a trusted source of information for teenagers regarding fashion products. In their social environment, teenagers share experiences with each other about products they have purchased, the quality of clothing, or certain brands that are currently popular.

For example, a teenager might hear a friend tell a story about a positive experience buying a jacket from an online store. This information becomes a reference for teenagers who want to buy similar products. In this case, the influence of friends is not coercive; instead, recommendations are provided that are adopted because of a sense of trust in the friend.

According to research by Gunawan (2019), peers are one of the most frequently relied upon sources of information by teenagers, especially for products that require more consideration, such as branded or trending fashion products.

3. Identification Effect: Emulating Admired Style

The identification effect occurs when a teen imitates the behavior, style, or fashion preferences of a peer they look up to. In a social group, one or two individuals are considered “cooler,” “stylish,” or have a good fashion sense.

For example, if a teen sees a close friend wearing a particular pair of shoes that look great and get a lot of compliments, they are likely to want to buy the same or similar shoes to achieve the same effect. This process is often subconscious and is part of how teens construct their identity through inspiration from those closest to them.

4. Social Pressure: The Inevitable Influence

Social pressure is a type of influence that teenagers often experience, both directly and indirectly. In this case, teenagers feel compelled to buy certain fashion products because they feel they "have to" do so to conform to their group's standards.

For example, if a group of friends plan an event together and decide to wear clothes with a specific theme, a teenager who initially does not have clothes that match the theme may need to buy something new to not look "different" from the others.

This pressure is often reinforced by social media, where teenagers see their friends posting photos of themselves wearing the latest clothes. FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) is one of the main reasons teenagers need to keep up with existing trends.

5. Competitive Influence: Who's the Most Fashionable?

In addition to working together, peer relationships can also involve elements of competition. Teenagers sometimes need to buy certain fashion products to show they are also "capable" or "equal" to other friends. This competition can be seen from who has the trendiest, most expensive, or least popular clothes.

For example, a teenager who sees her friend buying a branded bag may be encouraged to buy a similar or even more expensive product as a form of indirect competition.

Research by Wijaya (2021) found that 40% of teenagers admit to hidden competition in peer groups, especially related to appearance and style of dress.

C. Characteristics of Fashion Products that are Influenced

Emotional elements, rather than reason, drive purchasing decisions, leading to purchases of goods without careful consideration. Reason leads to purchasing commodities without considering decisions to prioritize trends, social prestige, and social adjustment. Trends, social status, and social adjustment are the main priorities for decision-makers. Emotional decisions are usually motivated by the competitive need to be recognized for appearance and the lack of social adjustment in one's peer group.

And the competitive drive to gain attention for their appearance. Products that attract attention, such as luxury goods or those with well-known trademarks, are said to be visually prominent. On the other hand, standout items are attractive items that are easier to explain or have unique qualities that set them apart from other products. (Rahmah & Setiowati, 2019)

Peers have a significant influence on what teenagers decide to buy. They are more likely to use or promote a product when their friends use it. As a result, peer groups develop consistent purchasing patterns, with the desire to own the same item being a primary motivator. Social media heavily influences teenagers' purchasing decisions in addition to the direct impact of their peers. Teenagers are more easily exposed to the latest trends due to the frequent promotion of fashion products on platforms such as Instagram and TikTok. (Azizah Ayu Ashari & Tri Sudarwanto, 2022)

Comfort and product quality are additional essential features. Good fashion products must be comfortable and safe for consumers. Clothing, for example, must be made of materials that are safe for use in various activities, easy to wear, and aesthetically pleasing. When shoppers evaluate products, the quality of the stitching, the pattern fit, and the material's durability are also important considerations. Fashion products must stand out from similar products made by competing companies. It contains elements that can attract

customers, such as color and design. Teenagers find the product more attractive due to this differentiation, which helps build a strong brand image.

D. Social Media as a Reinforcement of Peer Influence

Social media is a powerful instrument that increases peer influence on adolescent behavior, especially in decision-making when buying trendy items. In addition to the consequences for adolescent consumer behavior, this discussion will focus on how peer influence can be strengthened or changed by interactions on social media. Their peers greatly influence Adolescents' lives, especially during socialization and identity formation. Adolescents often use them as a guide when making decisions, especially regarding fashion and lifestyle. Adolescents can be influenced by peers to adopt trendy ideas, often advertised on social media. Adolescents may feel pressured to fit in with their group, so they decide what to buy even though they do not need it (Ruri Handayani, Eka Putri Amelia Surya). Peer influence can reach a wider audience thanks to social media. Adolescents can observe firsthand what their peers do and buy on social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. Posts on social media often display idealized images of certain fashion items, which increases the desire to buy them. This content influences adolescent shopping behavior in addition to their attitudes. Social media can increase social support and give users access to the latest trends, but drawbacks exist. For example, exposure to luxury lifestyles on social media can lead to unfavorable social comparisons and pressure to meet expectations. This can lead to excessive consumption or even psychological problems such as

E. Peer influence mechanisms

In the case of adolescents, the mechanisms used by peers to influence their decisions to purchase fashion products occur in several interrelated phases. First, peers are often the primary source for informing others about new trends or style references. This happens through direct interaction and social media engagement, where people considered more fashionable or influential in the group often become role models. Second, when adolescents talk about brands, models, or product prices in friendship groups, they feel more confident in their decisions. In addition, adolescents tend to follow the majority trend to maintain social status and acceptance in their group, which is part of the social pressure in their peer group.

On the other hand, the experience of shopping with friends also strengthens this influence because friends often provide opinions, support, or approval during the purchasing process. Finally, peers exert a more significant impact when they provide compliments after a purchase, directly or through social media appreciation. This creates a cycle of influence and encourages teens to follow the same consumption pattern in the

future. This process shows that teens' personal preferences are not the only factor influencing their purchasing decisions; complex social dynamics within peer groups also play a role.

F. Implications for Marketers

Several essential elements that support each other indicate the relationship between peers and fashion product marketing strategies. First, marketers can use peer dynamics to spread their products by following teen trends, primarily through social media. By following teen preferences and using word-of-mouth marketing strategies, marketers can take advantage of teens' social pressure to follow dominant trends by creating exclusive products. This encourages teens to buy something quickly to stay relevant to their community. Third, they can enhance the shopping experience with friends by creating places that support social interaction, such as Instagrammable stores or group promotions. This concept enhances emotional connections during the purchasing process. Finally, social media has evolved into a valuable tool for amplification through user-generated content campaigns. Allowing teens to share their experiences using a product with a specific hashtag creates a proper cycle of validation and promotion. This strategy shows how marketers can leverage teens' social interactions to increase the appeal of fashion products and spread them widely.

Conclusion

According to a study titled "The Role of Peers in Shaping Fashion Product Purchasing Decisions Among Teenagers," social media significantly contributes to strengthening peer influence on teens' purchasing decisions. Social media interactions not only make fashion trends more visible but also generate peer pressure that can influence consumers' purchasing decisions. Social media can be a source of inspiration and knowledge, but it is also important to consider its drawbacks, which include comparison with peers and pressure to meet expectations.

The peer influence amplified by social media shows how vital the social environment is in determining teens' tastes and purchasing habits. Therefore, a better understanding of this relationship is needed to help teens make wiser choices consistent with their needs.

Recommendations

Creating educational initiatives that instruct teens on using social media responsibly is essential. These courses should include techniques for making wiser purchases and recognizing harmful influences, and teens should be encouraged to become more aware of peer and social media influences. They can learn how to manage these influences and how

they work through seminars or group discussions. Reducing social pressure and raising awareness of positive values can be achieved by promoting positive social media content that supports sustainable fashion choices and healthy living. It is intended that by implementing these recommendations, teenagers will be better equipped to navigate the digital environment and make judgments about what to buy that are consistent with their beliefs and self-esteem.

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