

The Role of Peer Influence on Purchase Decisions among University Students

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ABSTRACT:

This study looks at how buying behavior of university students is influenced by peer pressure. From the gathered facts, the study aimed to identify trends and connections between consumer behavior and peer influence. The findings imply that peers affect food, clothes, fashion, technology, and other purchases decisions of students. High degrees of social interaction, peer recommendations, and social normative influences are just a few of the several factors causing this impact. These qualities drive teenagers to purchase what they think to be trendy or socially acceptable. Consequently, even if those decisions do not match their personal tastes or financial constraints, students often give purchasing items that enable them fit in socially top priority. As a result, students often prioritize buying products that help them fit in socially, even if those choices do not align with their personal preferences or financial limitations. The study highlights how social dynamics within peer groups can override individual decision-making processes, leading students to favor socially endorsed items. Ultimately, peer pressure has a notable effect on students' consumer behaviour, emphasizing the power of social influence in shaping purchasing habits during university life. Understanding this impact can help educators, marketers, and students themselves become more aware of how peer relationships shape everyday decisions.

KEYWORDS: Peer Influence, Purchase Decisions, University Students

1. INTRODUCTION

Peer influence on the purchasing behavior of college students makes it an essential area in studying consumer dynamics and marketing strategies of this target group. Young consumers' brand perception and choice are greatly influenced by important peers. Consequently, brand loyalty that they show for certain products is also determined by the peer group. Nunes and Agante (2014) highlighted a strong connection between peer pressure, brand segmentation by age, and brand loyalty. This relationship emphasizes that peers act as a powerful force in shaping preferences, as students often seek social approval and validation from their friends when deciding on purchases. The need for acceptance and group conformity frequently results in impulsive buying and a tendency to favor brands popular within their social circles.

Peer pressure either favorably or negatively shapes the decision to buy something. This situation could inspire someone to start good habits, including buying eco-friendly goods or pushing better living. In return, it might also lead to bad behaviors, impulse buying, and too high consumption. Tranell (2014) notes that infectious behaviors in young adults are quite often expressed with conformity to social conventions, so highlighting the two-sided character of peer influence. This phenomenon is evident among college students passing through a crucial period of self-discovery for whom the need to belong greatly shapes their choices. For a long period, consumer behavior studies have known about the influence peers and reference groups have on the development of personal opinions about product orientation. Reference groups offer information; they also provide the foundation for social comparison and validation based on which opinions about brands and products are rather grounded. Peers are the main reference group for college students; thus, their opinions have great influence on what they buy. In the digital era of today, when social media and online networks magnify peer influence, this reliance is especially noticeable. Digital channels provide venues for trends, reviews, and recommendations, so highlighting the influence of peers on consumer behavior.

Buying decisions reflect more general social and cultural trends as well as personal-level influence. Not only consumers but also trendsetters; college students regularly influence the tastes and behavior of the industry. Many factors influence their purchase decisions: personal ambitions, financial constraints, and social ties. Studies show that before making decisions, college students often seek their affirmation, ask their peers for advice, and look to them for acceptance. This relationship makes peer influence a major factor in the purchasing behavior of this group. Though many studies have examined how peer influence influences consumer behavior, additional study on how this dynamic operates inside specific age groups, especially among college students—is still greatly needed. Although it generally provides broad insights, certain research already in publication lacks extensive investigation of the specific variables influencing the decision-making process of this age group. By examining the intricate ways in which peer influence impacts purchasing decisions among university students, this paper aims to close that discrepancy. This is meant to provide legislators, educators, and marketers developing strategies to fit the requirements and behavior of this important group.

Peer pressure is the influence that members of one's peer group have on others, pushing them to adopt behaviors, attitudes, and norms. Peer influence can have both beneficial and adverse effects since it can cause people to act contrary to their morals or better judgment. Peer pressure can either lead individuals to engage in activities that contradict their principles or better judgment, or it can encourage positive behaviors. Since adolescents frequently look to their friends for acceptance and approval, they are more likely to comply with social norms, which is why peer pressure is most often linked to this age group. However, peer pressure can impact people of all ages and in a variety of social settings. To avoid harmful peer pressure and make decisions that are in line with their beliefs and well-being, people need to cultivate a strong sense of self-awareness and decision-making abilities. It's human nature to give in to peer pressure, but some people are more effective at resisting and sticking to their principles than others. Those who lack confidence and follow rather than lead may be more prone to give in to a dangerous challenge or suggestion to win over their peers. Those who are new to the group lack confidence, or have never faced peer pressure may also be more likely to give in.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Participants

The respondents of the study were students from the College of Business and Entrepreneurship of Eastern Visayas State University, Tacloban City enrolled in the first semester academic year 2024 to 2025. A simple random sampling technique was used to ensure equal chances of selection for all COBE students. The sample included 297 students 74 from each program and year level and the demographics providing a well-rounded and inclusive view for analyzing the role of peer influence on purchase decisions.

The researcher made use of a single set of self-structured survey questionnaires in which the items were close ended. The questionnaire is comprised of the following: Part I deals with the profile of the respondents such as age, sex and year level. Part II asked the questions on the respondents to what extent peer influences their purchase decisions. Part III refers to the respondents' purchase behavior and peer influence. Respondents were asked to rate their attitudes towards purchase decisions using 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

2.2. Procedure

The data collection process followed a systematic approach to ensure reliability and accuracy. The questionnaire, designed to align with the study's objectives. Using random sampling, 297 students were selected to participate. The researchers administered the survey questionnaire to the students' respondents by explaining the purpose of the study, its ethical considerations, assuring them that all information was held with confidentiality and to use solely for the purpose of this study. After the survey ended, the researchers reviewed the data for completeness, downloaded, and organized it. This procedure ensured the collection of high-quality data for the study.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Frequencies and percentage distribution of key variables

The descriptive method of research was used in this study. An electronic medium using online google form survey questionnaire was designed to gather the data needed on this study. An analysis of the variables quantitatively was done which served as basis for the interpretation, implications and recommendations that were formulated. Calmorin (2007), defined descriptive method of research as statistical research that describes data and characteristics about the population being studied. Descriptive research answers the questions who, what, where, and how.

Table 1. Presents the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of age, sex and year level.

Table 1: Respondents Demographic Profile		
	f	%
Age		
27 yrs. Old and Above	3	1.0
24 – 26 years Old	4	1.3
21 – 23 years Old	133	44.8
18 – 20 years Old	157	52.5
Sex		
Female	212	71.4
Male	85	28.6
Year Level		
4 th Year	75	25.3
3 rd Year	74	24.9
2 nd Year	74	24.9
1 st Year	74	24.9

Table II. Presents the Week Allowance of The Respondents.

	f	%
1,500 and Above	10	3.4
1,500-1,000	39	13.1
1,000-500	144	44.8
500 and below	104	35

Table III. Presents the Factors of Peer Influence on Purchase Decision

	f	%
Recommendations from friends	254	85.5
Social media posts or shares	169	56.9
Comparing myself to what my peers are buying	55	18.5
Wanting to fit in with my group	40	13.5
Others	3	1

Table IV. Presents the Factors of Peer Influence on Product Choices

	f	%
Clothing and accessories	160	53.9
Basic needs	120	40.4
Food and beverages	211	71
Books and educational materials	83	27.9
Entertainment	51	17.2
Others	8	2.7

Table V. Presents through which peers learn the Products through Peers

	f	%
Face to face conversations	220	74.1
Word of mouth	118	39.7
Social media	196	66
Observation through peers	73	24.6
Others	1	0.3

4. DISCUSSION

According to the data, peers in a few notable ways shape college students' purchase behavior. The relevance of peer recommendations is shown by most respondents, 254 (85.5%), who say that friend recommendations greatly influence their purchase decisions. Furthermore, highly influential is social media; 169 respondents, or 56.9%, claimed that posts or shares affected them. Moreover, 55 respondents (18.5%) say that comparing their purchases to those of their friends influences them; 40 respondents (13.5%) admit they buy things to fit in socially. Just three respondents, or 1%, bring up additional minor considerations. Peer influence is particularly strong in certain product categories. Food and beverages come first among 211 respondents (71%), affected by peer influence. 160 respondents (53.9%) reported peer influence regarding accessories and clothes. While books (27.9%) and entertainment products (17.2%) have less influence, household goods and toiletries have a moderate impact (40.4%). According to 220 respondents (74.1%), students mostly learn about peer-recommended products through in-person interactions. After social media (66%), word-of-mouth (39.7%) comes second in importance. Seeing other people's purchases (24.6%) is another consideration. 91.9% of respondents overall agree that peers significantly affect the buying behavior of college students.

5. CONCLUSION

The study shows that peer influence significantly affects the purchasing decisions of college students at the main campus of Eastern Visayas State University (EVSU), particularly among those aged 18 to 20. This group generally follows trends and is considerably influenced by social validation. Female students exhibit a significant response to peer recommendations, social media content, and social comparisons. Peer influence is particularly significant in the procurement of food, clothing, and necessities, whereas its impact on entertainment-related products is somewhat less prominent. Most students exhibit neutrality or satisfaction post-purchase; nevertheless, financial constraints and limited allowances affect their shopping behavior. Enterprises aiming at this demographic can efficiently leverage peer recommendations, engage in social media, and implement trend-focused marketing methods. Tailoring strategies based on students' age, gender, socioeconomic status, and academic background may improve engagement. Future research ought to examine gender-specific inequalities in peer influence, monitor the progression of this influence as students' progress through college, and evaluate the distinct effects of social media platforms on consumer behavior. Moreover, examining the factors contributing to post-purchase regret or dissatisfaction may aid firms in refining their marketing and product strategies.

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