



Together always better? The impact of shopping companions and shopping motivation on adolescents' shopping experience



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ABSTRACT

Although it is well known that teenagers primarily shop together with other teenagers, few studies have been conducted to date regarding the impact of joint shopping among teenagers. The objective of this study is to analyze the direct and indirect effects of teenagers shopping with a friend on customer satisfaction through consumer emotions. Furthermore, we examine whether the strength of this relationship differs across adolescents' shopping motivations. In a scenario-based experiment, data was collected from 150 pupils from a German comprehensive school. The results show a direct impact of a shopping companion on consumers' positive emotions but no significant effect on negative emotions. Moreover, positive emotions mediate the relationship between shopping with a friend and satisfaction with the shopping experience. This research also shows that shopping motivation partly moderates this relation. Our results provide an improved understanding of the effects that shopping companions have on adolescents. We also examine the possible limits of this distinct social orientation. We recommend that retailers concentrate on the positive effects that shopping companions have on adolescents and create a hedonic and welcoming store atmosphere.

1. Introduction

Retailers often express reservations about groups of teenagers, as they are associated with shoplifting and “loitering” for hours in shops without purchasing anything (Lee, 2006). Nevertheless, adolescents are becoming increasingly interesting as a target consumer group (Ogle et al., 2014). They enjoy consuming (Haytko and Baker, 2004), are open to trends (Yap and Yazdanifard, 2014), influence the consumption behavior of their family, and have sufficient financial means at their disposal (Lee and Collins, 2000). The discretionary spending power of adolescents has risen steadily during recent decades (Zmuda, 2011). In Germany, as one of the countries with the highest purchasing power in Europe, young consumers have an average income of \$315 per month (Bundesverband deutscher Banken, 2015), which they spend primarily on clothing and electronics (Youngcom, 2013). Overall, German teenagers spend nearly \$6.7 billion on clothing alone (Icon Kids and Youth, 2017). In order to clarify the profile of this target group, their consumption behavior needs to be better understood. Although there is scientific consensus that peers have an immense impact on the consumption behavior of adolescents (e.g., Childers and Rao, 1992; Moschis and Churchill, 1978), little research has been conducted to date on the impact of peers as shopping companions at the point of sale. Shopping together with friends is certainly based on teenagers' social

habitus, because social orientation reaches its peak during adolescence (Erikson, 1968). For adolescents, being with friends is most essential when shopping, and it is also what they like the most about shopping (Gentina et al., 2014). Nevertheless, most of the work on adolescent consumption has focused on individual consumers, and there is a lack of research dealing with the topic of shopping companions. The existing literature has focused on the antecedents of choosing a shopping companion (Gentina and Bonsu, 2013; Gentina and Chandon, 2013) and the impact of shopping companions on attitudes towards retailing and spending behavior (Mangleburg et al., 2004). Studies involving adults have shown that having friends as shopping companions positively influences the consumer's positive emotions (Borges et al., 2010), and that accompanied consumers are more satisfied with the shopping experience (Hart and Dale, 2014). Despite the importance of satisfaction and consumer emotions as significant retail outcomes, however, no research to date has examined this relationship among teenagers. The main aim of the present study is to fill this research gap by analyzing the impact of a shopping companion on teenagers' emotions, and the linkage between these emotions and consumer satisfaction. We propose a mediation model with positive and negative emotions as mediators between shopping situation (shopping alone vs. shopping with a friend) and shopping experience satisfaction.

With respect to adults, we know that a shopping companion could

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be consider disruptive if the consumer has an explicit shopping goal (Prus, 1993). A companion can hinder the effectiveness and efficiency of fulfilling a purchase task by distracting the consumer from the actual objective by their presence. In line with this, Kaltcheva and Weitz (2006) demonstrated a link between shopping motivation and the preference for a high- or low-arousal shopping environment. This raises the question of whether this also applies to adolescents, based on their intensive social orientation and their need for group interactions. We argue that shopping motivation will function as a boundary condition on the mediating effects of positive and negative emotions in the shopping situation–shopping experience satisfaction linkage. If there are limits to teenagers' social orientation in relation to consumption, it will be important for retailers to be aware of these so that they can react to them.

By investigating consumer emotions as mediators on the relationship between shopping companion and shopping satisfaction, we aim to explore the reason why shopping companions have a positive impact on consumer satisfaction. Furthermore, we consider the shopping motivation in order to reveal whether task-oriented motivational orientation is a boundary condition for teenagers' social orientation in relation to consumption. Hence, we contribute to the literature by combining two models, while positive and negative emotions act as mediators between shopping situation and consumer satisfaction. Furthermore, we extend results from studies with adults to the teenager context, and modify previous models by inserting shopping motivation as a moderator.

First, we discuss whether shopping with friends positively influences the emotions of teenage consumers, and, second, whether positive and negative emotions represent potential mediators for the relationship between the shopping companion and satisfaction with the shopping experience. The third key question analyzes whether teenagers with a specific objective, as well those without, perceive a shopping companion as pleasant, and whether shopping motivation impacts the shopping experience. To test the conceptual model, we use data from a scenario-based study with a sample of pupils from different grades of a comprehensive school in northern Germany.

2. Conceptual background and development of hypotheses

2.1. Peer influence and adolescents' motivation to shop with friends

Teens are in an intermediate stage. They are becoming independent from their parents, but the influence of their peers is increasing (Lerner et al., 1996). During adolescence, people's personal and social identity develops; however, identity cannot be reconstructed solely from the description of personal characteristics, but includes the individual's belonging to social groups (Simon and Mummendey, 1997). The need for social belonging is a significant characteristic of adolescence (Tajfel and Turner, 1986). Because adolescents seek to be accepted by their peers, they comply with the expectations and norms of the popular peer group (Steinberg and Monahan, 2007; Childers and Rao, 1992). This also includes the use of products and brands. Peers can help to evaluate product attributes, brands, or shopping channels, which enhances their sense of belonging and reduces consumer uncertainty (Moschis, 1976). Several studies have highlighted the importance of peer groups for adolescents' consumer behavior (see e.g. Beaudoin and Lachance, 2006; Chen-Yu and Seock, 2002; Huang et al., 2012; Mascarenhas and Higby, 1993). Research on shopping companions has revealed susceptibility to peer influence to be a primary antecedent of shopping with friends (Gentina and Chandon, 2013; Mangleburg et al., 2004). Such findings are consistent with Festinger's (1954) social comparison theory. In the absence of objective standards and the presence of great consumption uncertainty, consumers use social comparisons as evaluative standards. Specifically, social comparison theory proposes that individuals compare themselves with co-oriented peers who are very similar to themselves (Price and Feick, 1984; Jones and Gerard, 1967). Shopping together enables a direct social comparison at the point of sale, and

teenagers are directly subject to the influence of their peers. Young consumers can receive useful information from their friends, especially if they shop with those who are perceived as more knowledgeable, which could make these consumers more confident in their purchases. However, social comparison with friends not only implies information gain, but also increases identification with peers and intensifies social bonding with the shopping partner, which may lead to greater satisfaction with the shopping experience, and, in particular, enhance consumer emotions.

Gentina and Bonsu (2013) investigated the effect of social position within the peer group on the frequency of shopping with peers. Adolescents enjoy and appreciate shopping with friends (Breazeale and Lueg, 2011). The social dimension of shopping is particularly important to teenagers (Massicotte et al., 2011). Kaur and Singh (2007) pointed out that social experiences during the shopping process are a central shopping motivation. Adolescents focus on the social aspects of time spent together with friends, in which shopping serves as a link between entertainment, social relations, and the purchase of products (Arnold and Reynolds, 2003). Accompanied shopping provides positive feelings by meeting shoppers' social needs (Kang and Park-Poaps, 2010). Several studies have shown that friends are especially chosen as shopping companions when consumers looking for fun and entertainment during shopping (Hartman and Kiecker, 1991; Moschis and Moore, 1979). Adolescents enjoy joint actions such as browsing through stores or taking coffee breaks in between (Haytko and Baker, 2004). Thus far, however, only a few studies have considered the effects of joint shopping of adolescents. Mangleburg et al. (2004) showed that adolescents who like to shop with friends spend more and have a more positive attitude toward retailers. The importance of peer groups' influence on adolescent consumer behavior and the lack of research on accompanied shopping of adolescents constitute the importance of examining the impact of accompanied shopping on central retail outcomes (e.g. satisfaction) and the potential limits of positive effects.

2.2. Shopping companions and their impact on consumer wellbeing

Personal contact with known others in a retail setting satisfies both social and utilitarian needs (Hartman and Kiecker, 1991). A shopping companion could assist in the purchase decision through information provision and moral support, which reduces perceived risk and increased consumers' confidence in making a wise purchase decision. Additionally a shopping companion ensures enjoyment and fun. Conversations during the shopping experience relate, alongside the offer of the retail setting, to private topics, which meets social needs, especially in the teenage years. In particular, shopping with friends contributes to the consumer's feeling comfortable and having fun while shopping (Borges et al., 2010). This result can also be found in the literature of socio-psychological research. Joint activities with friends evoke positive feelings (Larson et al., 1986).

The positive effects of interaction with friends are particularly evident for teenagers. Even talking to friends increases their general wellbeing (Park, 2004). On the other hand, peer groups have high expectations in terms of behavior and appearance, which affect peer interactions and adolescents' own behavior (Santor et al., 2000). Individuals often behave in accordance with the standards, behaviors, attitudes and dress codes of the peer group in order to gain acceptance and approval (Kaiser, 1990). They conform to avoid being excluded from the group or having to fear other negative sanctions (e.g. to be laughed at). The immediate proximity of the peers while shopping could therefore also lead to tension and negative feelings. The argument against this presumption is that teenagers avoid going shopping with people who have different views (Mangleburg et al., 2004). In line with the social comparison theory, individuals prefer to surround themselves with others who are similar to them (Festinger, 1954). Companionship is an important determinant in the choice of a shopping companion (Kiecker and Hartman, 1994). The expected pleasure has a high impact

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