Gender, Social Class and Peer Group Influences on Teenagers' TV Involvement in a Developing Country

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to develop and confirm a multi-item measurement scale for peer group influences on teenagers' TV involvement in a developing country and report on the role teenager's gender and social class background plays in this regard. Various researchers have proposed reinforcement, modelling, motivation, co-viewing and mediation as the domain items for peer group influence on teenagers' media involvement. Using a multi-step process, this research refined and tested a multi-item measurement scale for peer group influence on developing country teenagers' TV involvement. Results show that peer groups influence teenagers' TV usage behaviour by sharing information and knowledge, giving preferences and opinions about different TV programs and also watching them together. However, there is limited variation between teenagers' of different genders and social class backgrounds in this regard.

Key Words: peer group influence, teenagers, social class, TV involvement

1. INTRODUCTION

In the social sciences, peers have traditionally been viewed as important social force acting on adolescents (French, Pidada & Victor 2005). As a socialisation agent, peers have been found to exert both informative and normative influences on teenagers. Normative influence is reflected in a consumer's willingness to conform to the expectations of others (Lachance, Beaudoin & Robitaille 2003). Whereas, informational influences are reflected in a tendency to learn about products and brands etc. from others or acquire consumption-related knowledge based on the observation of the behaviour of others (Choi & Ferle 2004). Various researchers indicated that peer groups, particularly friends, play an important role on teenagers' media usages and involvement, particularly in Television vehicle and content selection that ultimately affects their consumer socialisation (Lueg & Finney 2007). However, peer group influence on teenagers' media involvement is a relatively less researched area and the limited research that have been carried out so far have been mostly in developed countries or western cultural settings (Lueg & Finney 2007). Also, the role teenagers' gender and social class backgrounds play on the extent of peers influence on media involvement has not been adequately researched. This paper will contribute towards plugging that gap. Particularly, this paper will focus on peer group influences on developing country teenagers' Television involvement and the effect of teenagers' gender and social class background on such influences.

2. CURRENT LITERATURE

Social learning theory suggests that peer groups and friends are instrumental in shaping an individual's behaviour (Bush, Smith & Martin 1999). Through modelling and observational learning, children acquire skills and behaviours during interactions with family members that carry over to their peer relationships (Dotson & Hyatt 2005). Peers and friends also influence teenagers' attitudes towards advertised products and brand sensitivity, and response to retail shoppers' offers (Byoungkwan, Salmon & Hye-Jin 2007; Lachance, Beaudoin & Robitaille 2003; Williams & Burns 2001). On the contrary, Moore and Bowman (2006) indicated that peer groups and friends are also influencing deceptive expenditure and bad cash management forces that are associated with materialism and antisocial behaviour.

It has been shown in various consumer socialisation researches that teenagers' media usage behaviour is highly influenced by their peers (Lueg & Finney 2007, Moschis & Moore 1979). However, compared to parental control of teenagers' media involvement, peer group influences on the same has received less attention from researchers, particularly in developing countries. Within the limited range of current literature, peer groups influence on teenagers' media consumption are measured by reinforcement, modelling, motivation, co-viewing and mediation (Edward & Grantham 2009; Nathanson 2001). Peer communication is conceptualised as encouragement or approval of certain behaviour and intention, either spoken (reinforcement) or unspoken (modelling) messages, which peers send to each other. Peer communication also influences teenagers' attitudes toward the media vehicle and content, which leads to the development of their material values and provides social motivation for consumption (Bush, Smith & Martin 1999). Moreover, teenagers' shopping behaviour through media (e.g., e-shopping) is largely influenced by their peers' reinforcement and modelling (Lueg & Finney 2007). According to Bush, Smith and Martin (1999), reinforcement happens when peers encourage making purchases through TV and the internet. Also, teenagers seek advice from their peers about buying through the media (e.g., internet). Furthermore, modelling can indirectly influence teenagers' media usage by their peers' media consumption behaviour, as they want to have some attachment with their peers (Edward & Grantham 2009).

Peer groups serve the function of social comparison, self-evaluation, and co-learning (Lloyd 1985), influencing teenagers' motivation of media usage. Motivation occurs when an individual is exposed to an external or internal stimulus, and is then pulled or pushed in a direction to act upon the stimulus. Peers as co-learners play a role of extrinsic motivation for using any particular media. Additionally, teenagers with similar values tend to reinforce each other through supporting, sharing of resources, and clarifying tasks for each other. These processes guide a teenagers' motivation to act while using any media. Overall, as a mediating factor, peers play a significant role between the media and teenagers. Peers' mediation can be found through media discussion with peers, peers co-viewing and perception of peers' attitudes towards the media (Lueg & Finney 2007; Nathanson 2001).

3. METHODOLOGY

As a developing county, Bangladesh is a country with a large population. A large number of teenagers socialise with their peers and friends, either in school or within the community. Furthermore, teenagers of Dhaka city have involvement with media (Nath 2006). For this research, data has been collected from Bangladesh using a structured survey instrument that was developed using a multi-item measurement scale for the construct 'peer group influence'

based on the current literature. A pilot survey was conducted using the draft survey instrument among 20 Bangladeshi teenagers to establish content validity of the survey instrument and was focused to evaluate and determine the applicability of questionnaire in Bangladesh. The final instrument was developed in English, which was than translated to Bangla (local language) and retranslated to English. The Bangla version was administered for data gathering purposes. All questions were closed ended using 7 point likert type scale. Fieldwork for the study was carried out during June-July 2009. The questionnaire was administered among 400 Bangladeshi teenagers of both genders, with 50% representation of each group. Within each gender there was equal representation of lower and middle class teenagers. Social class cannot be measured directly but indicators of social class status are typically perceived by tangible factors (e.g., income, occupation, education) (Pope, Brennan & Voges 2007). In this research, respondents' social class was verified by using composite variable technique (Pope, Brennan & Voges 2007). Due to absence of sizeable upper social class in the country, the samples were divided into middle and lower social classes. Two schools were randomly selected. Respondent teenage children were than randomly selected from those two schools. Considering the age of the respondents, survey instrument was administered face to face. The data gathered was coded and analysed using SPSS version 18.0. Data has been analysed using mean scores, t-tests, factor analysis and one way ANOVA.

4. FINDINGS

To assess and refine the measurement scales in terms of reliability and uni-dimensionality and validity, there are two main approaches like; exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) (Hurley et al. 1997). The issue on which type of factor analysis (e.g., EFA or CFA) to use in a particular situation is the subject of a debate among researchers (Hurley et al. 1997). This research employed a combination of both EFA and CFA to form a two-phase approach. The first phase involved employing EFA for scale assessment and refinement and the second phase involves employing CFA for scale validation (Fabrigar et al. 1999)

EFA was applied using principal component analysis extraction method. A total of 9 variables earlier identified from current literature were submitted for the exploratory factor analysis (EFA). After this stage, a number of variables that had poor factor loading (less than .50) were dropped from further analysis. This included variables 'peers encourage sending SMS to live TV shows', 'visit TV web sites because friends do', and 'friends participate together in live TV shows'. This solution presents satisfactory solution concerning both the explanatory variance percentage and correlation between items. Table 1 shows the variables and factor loading of the measures of peer group influence factor. To give a truer estimation of reliability and formally test the uni-dimensionality of the scale a confirmatory factor analysis was performed on the same sample. All factor loadings were significant. The coefficient alpha for the peer group influence of CFA model was 0.76 indicating that the variables are a reasonable measure. Standard regression weights of all the variables were more than 0.6. Goodness-of-fit indices also indicated that the measurement model fitted data well with value of GFI, AGFI, NFI, TLI, RMSEA and CFI all above required thresholds. Composite reliability of .92 also indicated the reliability the underlying variables of 'peer group influence'.

Table 1: Variables and Factor Loading

Variables	Factor Loadings	Mean	Sig
Teenagers and friends talk about TV content	.699	4.95	.000
Friends think TV provide useful information	.689	4.81	.000
Friends think TV entertaining	.686	5.25	.000
Talk to friends about TV shows	.667	5.32	.000
Friends watch TV together	.604	4.11	.000
Peers opinion important	.598	4.23	.000

Results show that peer groups influence teenagers' media usage behaviour by sharing information and knowledge, giving preferences and opinions about different TV programs and also watching them together. Table 2 shows the comparative results on peer group influence based on teenagers' gender difference. Results indicate that there are no significant differences between teenagers of the two genders on most peer group influence measures except in case of talking about TV contents with friends. On this particular measure, it appears that male teenagers are more likely to talk to their friends than their female counterparts.

Table 2: Peers' influence vs. Teenagers Gender

Variables	F	Sig.	Mean Male	Mean Female
Teenagers and friends talk about TV content	9.145	.003	5.29	4.61
Friends think TV provide useful information	.165	.685	4.85	4.77
Friends think TV entertaining	.019	.889	5.25	5.23
Talk to friends about TV shows	1.377	.241	5.20	5.43
Friends watch TV together	3.399	.066	4.31	3.90
Peers opinion important	1.239	.266	4.11	4.33

When compared between the teenagers' from the two social classes, not much difference could be found either on the peer group influence measures except in case of variables 'friends think TV provide useful information', 'friends watch TV together' and 'friends opinion is important'. In case of each of these three variables lower social class teenagers have higher likelihood of being influenced by their peer groups than their middle social class counterparts. Table 3 shows the comparative results on peer group influence based on teenager's social class difference.

Table 3: Peers' Influence vs. Teenagers Social Class

Variables	F	Sig.	Mean Lower	Mean Middle
Teenagers and friends talk about TV content	.528	.468	4.87	5.04
Friends think TV provide useful information	9.71	.002	5.11	4.53
Friends think TV entertaining	.000	.988	5.25	5.25

Talk to friends about TV shows	.004	.951	5.33	5.32
Friends watch TV together	7.381	.007	4.41	3.81
Peers opinion important	7.134	.008	4.50	3.96

5. CONCLUSIONS

In this research a widely used multi-step process of developing measurement scales of marketing constructs have been followed. After initially, identifying the measurement items of peer group influence on teenagers' media usage from the current literature, the same were refined and tested using two-stage quantitative measures resulting in the confirmation of a six-item measurement scale. These measurement items can now form the basis for various further researches, particularly on developing country teenagers' TV involvement and its effect on their consumption behavior. Understanding consumers' taste and preferences is the key issue for any marketer. Most of the international and local businesses give maximum priority and effort to understanding customers' consumption behaviour through consumption related cognition, attitudes and values. Accordingly, the findings of this research will be of interest to brand marketers and marketing communication planners in Bangladesh and other developing countries. Media strategist and sponsors also can get an indication of what are the different ways peer groups influence developing country teenagers' media, particularly TV program watching behavior, which might be useful for their marketing strategies.

One shortcoming of this research was that it was only conducted among urban teenagers from middle and lower social class backgrounds in Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh. In Bangladesh more than 40 percent of the population lives at the bottom of a pyramidal class system, and a significant number of people live in the middle class, followed by a small number of upper social class people. However, this research does not represent teenagers from upper social class. Furthermore, the research did not cover teenagers from other cities and the vast rural areas of the country; as such the results may not be representative of the teenagers of all Bangladesh. Also, findings of this research may not be treated as totally applicable to other developing countries, and needs to be tested further from the perspective of individual countries.

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