AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF PEER GROUP INFLUENCE:
HOW YOUNG INDIAN WOMEN CHOOSE THE CLOTHES THAT THEY BUY
AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF PEER GROUP INFLUENCE: HOW YOUNG INDIAN WOMEN CHOOSE THE CLOTHES THAT THEY BUY

(Postgraduate Master's Degree Dissertation)

A dissertation submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements of the Masters of Business Administration (Marketing) to Dublin Business School.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research study is to explore the concept of peer group influence as a socio-psychological factor behind the behaviour of consumers in the field of marketing, which is now well integrated with the field of psychology. The researcher has come in terms with various different arguments and elements that different authors have proposed to exist behind the concept of peer group influence.

The research involves primary as well as secondary research, followed by an analysis of the interviews conducted during the course of this research. Firstly, the researcher has explored the various bases of peer group influence that exists, critically evaluated the literature that exists from the past and explored different arguments. Post that, various research methods and designs available were evaluated and the researcher chose to conduct the research using a subjective-deductive approach using qualitative interviews on young Indian women to test the knowledge explored from the literature.

Results of the research show that:

- Peer Group Influence can be related to an array of different factors that in a socio-psychological way influences the consumer behaviour.
- Peer Group Influence is pivotal in case of young women when they engage in purchasing fashion apparels.
- Peer Group Influence not only drives the need to conform and fit in, but also drives the need to maintain the social identity and peer group memberships.

This value of this research is that it provides knowledge to marketers and academicians about how far the concept of peer influence has been studied and explored so far. It also gives an insight into how consumers from collectivist societies such as an Indian society, who are now under the light of globalisation and are turning individualistic, are affected by their peers.
Chapter 1: Introduction

A study of consumer behaviour is highly critical not only from the point of view of developing new models but also to help marketers adapt to the dynamic nature of the consumer’s psychological patterns. This paper aims at studying and exploring the peer group influence element of the consumer behaviour concept. Below you will find a background to consumer behaviour and the evolution of what peer group influence is. Also, the hypothesis is then applied to Indian women who purchase fashion apparels, and hence the reader will also come across a brief overview of how the Indian apparel industry has evolved, pitted against the collectivist culture prevalent there.

Once the background has been given, this chapter will then entail the approach to the dissertation, the scope of the research, the limitations, the organisation of the dissertation and the contributions of the paper.

1.1 Background

Consumers spend a lot of their time and interest in scrutinizing the features and attributes of the products that they are inclined towards. Whereas, alignment towards exploring the different facets of a product depends upon the ability of the product to satisfy consumer needs, at the same time, a part of it is also based upon the extent of the product’s influence on self-image and societal image of the consumer (Mathwick and Rigdon, 2004).

Involvement in the information search for a particular product is dependent upon the nature of the product. In a case, where the information is not readily available, or there is a wide array of information available, the customer tends to look for such information from people who are deeply engrossed and relatively more knowledgeable in that product category. According to research by various authors (Radder and Huang, 2008; Kapferer and Laurent, 1985), the apparels are a product category with a great degree of involvement by the customers. Further research by Price and Feick, 1984 suggests that in such intensely complex purchase environment such as apparels, the customers highly relied on their friends and peers for the search of information and opinions.

Coming to the study of the consumer behaviour, according to Schiffman et al. (2010, p. 36), the two crucial factors that determine the consumer’s behaviour are the firms marketing efforts and the socio-cultural environment. The latter, being beyond the marketer’s control. Solomon (2013, p. 430) states how pivotal the reference / peer group (as a part of the socio-
cultural environment) is in influencing the consumer’s behaviour. An analysis of the ‘Lifestage Segments’ (2006, p. 76) explains how the young consumer, who is no longer restricted by his parents and can financially support himself, looks at shopping as a tool of identity formation. It is this where the concepts of *injunctive* and *descriptive* norms from psychology intermingle with this study of consumer behaviour (White and Simpson, 2013). The consumer tends to succumb to the *subjective norms* (Schiffman *et al.*, 2010, p. 253) and alters his behaviour according to the *social identity* (White *et al.*, 2012) he wants to form of himself.

Talking about the psychological factors, Sigmund Freud claims that people are mostly unaware of the fact that their behaviour is being shaped by psychological forces. According to Freud’s theory, a person’s purchase decisions are being influenced by a plethora of subconscious forces and motives and the person is oblivious about it. He explains that the “consumers often don’t know or can’t describe why they act as they do”. Further discussing the same psychological aspect, Abraham Maslow has explained why people are motivated by certain specific needs to buy a particular product. His answer lies in his model of hierarchy of needs, whereby the psychological needs lie at the bottom of the pyramid (Armstrong and Kotler, 2013, p. 167-168).

According to Bearden *et. al.* (1989), the tendency of the customer to succumb to interpersonal influence is looked upon as a need to seek conformance for the self-behaviour by others. As human beings, we have this subconscious tendency to act in accordance and in affiliation with each other and hence exist in groups. Buskist *et. al.* (2000) states that a group usually has a shared definition of the way they should act and feel. Without any concrete evidence to the extent of such influence, our emotions, behaviour and cognitions are strongly influenced by the ones in our group we interact with. Such influences are unintentional in the truest sense, with the ones who influence us being completely unaware of it themselves (Santos *et. al.*, 1994).

The entire concept of social conformity to peers remained in the dark until the 1950s when Solomon Asch conducted experiments on Social Influence. Owing to the impact of Asch’s experiments to this field of study, his contribution to the study of peer group influence cannot remain unmentioned (Bleeks, 2007).

As a part of Asch’s conformity study, he presented a set of parallel lines (refer to the picture below) to a group of respondents and asked them to figure out which of the lines on the left has the same length as the line X on the right.
The respondents were to put a tick on the line they thought was of the same length as that of line X and justify it with a reason. Asch and his team gave the respondents a second chance at the same observatory selection, however prior to that the respondents were let to know that the majority of the respondents had chosen C in the first go. They were asked to make a choice again the second time and were asked if they had chosen the same line or a different one. As a result of this experiment, it was found that almost one third of the respondents who had initially chosen another line, switched their choices to Line C. They were not reluctant to change their choice to what they thought was chosen by the majority of the respondents (Earls, 2009, p. 157-158). This experiment is considered as a landmark example of the study of conformity and social influence in the study of this subject by various different authors.

However, the conformity patterns that were highlighted by Asch’s experiment are not restrictive. It is equally applicable in the consumption and purchase patterns of customers across various different product categories. And hence this is also applicable when it comes to customers dealing with fashion trends and thereby their clothing and apparel purchase decisions. One of the first authors to state that the use of apparels and clothes was more than just to cover or protect the body was Veblen (1953). His early theory of fashion consumption indicated that the fashion apparel consumption by women had a great deal of social worth and social identity element hidden in it. He also threw light upon the roles of membership groups and aspirational groups (White and Dahl, 2006) in the consumption of fashion apparels. According to the studies by Horn and Gurel (1981) and Roach and Eicher (1973), fashion apparels have been referred to as ‘second skin’ and the ‘visible self’. Research conducted by Piacentini and Mailer (2004) found that the clothes purchased by
the young people have been looked upon by them as a means of identity formation and perception formation.

Clothing today has become beyond a mere necessity; it has become a tool of social and self-identity formation. They are being looked upon as a means of social stratification in the society (Blackburn, 1999) and consumers have been highly critical in choosing clothes that are in line with their personality or more so over the personality they want the world to see (McWilliams, 2004). An individual learns by ‘social learning’ and consumer’s lifestyle patterns are considered in relation to his reference group (Bearden and Etzel, 1982). Therefore, if a consumer feels that his behaviour is being controlled or perturbed by an external element, it could lead to a ‘contraire’ behaviour (Clee and Wicklund, 1980). Also, not only the consumer behaviour is influenced by the peer or the reference group in itself, but also the delivery of messages is affected by the peer group such as celebrity endorsements, social media conversations, word of mouth, etc. According to Byrne et. al. (2003), these are different modes of peer group influence that lead a customer to conform to peer pressure.

Having looked at the background of the concept of Peer Group Influence and Fashion Clothing perspective of it, let’s look at the Indian consumer. During the last ten years, there has been a considerable increase in the organised retail sector in India (Jain and Gupta, 2011). Even though, the influx of international foreign brands in the apparel industry is a very recent trend, it is catching up at a very fast pace and the Indian consumer has metamorphosed from just being a hoarder to being an extravagant spender (Sippy, Hindustan Times, 2014).

India today, is on the verge of a lifestyle transformation among a large section of the population living in the urban areas. This in fact has led to the need for the marketers to gauge the variances of the emerging markets and study consumers behaviour, in order to build a strong brand for themselves in the market (Kansra, 2014, p. 1). This analysis of the consumers behaviour is not only important from a point of view to develop a niche in the market but also to build the ‘brand equity’, which is pivotal to building the strategic competitive market edge and mitigate competition in the market place (Pandian et al., 2012).

In the context of India, Biswas (2013, p. 10-12) has aptly highlighted the role that family and friends play in the decision-making and brand perception forming stage of a potential consumer. Especially, when speaking about the Indian women, the past decade has witnessed a drastic shift in their role. The change in the demographics, growing
opportunities in the urban areas, and globalisation has brought the Indian women in terms with themselves. Women comprise about more than a quarter of the workforce in India (Technopak Advisors, 2010) and the number has been increasing at a rate of 70% (Vishwanathan, 2010).

This increase in their share of the workforce and the encouraging figures are of great social and economic importance. As per a research by Technopak Advisors (2010), this phenomenon is affecting the purchasing habits of the women, since they are becoming more self aware of their social identity. The Indian society exhibits ‘collectivist cultural values’ and their purchasing behaviour is deeply under the strong impression of social norms (Banerjee, 2008). This research is an exploratory study of coupling the changing face of the Indian women, against the deeply rooted concepts of conformity and peer influence in the study of consumer behaviour.

The term ‘reference group’ or ‘peer group’, which was first defined by Hyman in 1942, refers to those group members or peers who are “psychologically significant for one’s attitude and behavior” (Turner, 1991, p. 5). Empirical evidence about the existence of the peer group influence and the conformity needs of the consumer in the consumer decision-making process, already exists. Coming to the literature, there are various models that have been computed in order to analyse this aspect of the consumer behaviour, such as the Theory of Reasoned Action, The Fishbein Model, Social Identity Theory, the concept of subjective norms, social comparison theory, the concept of injunctive norms and so on and so forth. This study is being conducted in the form of exploring the concept of peer group influence further, and testing it in the growing apparel industry in India, by interviewing and gaining an insight into the urban Indian women shoppers.

1.2 Main Research Question

An exploratory study of the peer group influence: How young Indian women choose the clothes that they buy.

1.3 Sub Research Questions

Through this research, we shall explore the peer group influence on consumers in great depth and gain deeper insights from various authors by exploring the concept at length, by looking at the different aspects related to it.
Some of the sub research questions that aim to be answered by this paper are as follows:

1. What is the basis of peer group influence when it comes to consumer behaviour?
2. What are the different factors that are said to bring about the influence of peers on the consumers?
3. How does the peer group influence affect consumers when they engage in buying fashion apparels?
4. Do young Indian women find it difficult to negate the effect of peer influence while making their purchase decisions for apparels?

1.4 Aims and Objectives

The aim of this study is to explore the concept of peer group influence, it's origin, and the various factors that authors from the past have said to be attributed to it. The analysis will be conducted with respect to the role of the concept in fashion apparel purchases by young women. The study also encompasses a brief analysis of the growth of the fashion apparel industry in India and how the role of the young Indian women has evolved over the last few years. The various factors that were identified based on the review of the concept of peer group influence, will then be tested by means of qualitative interviews on young Indian women. At the end of such exploration, the researcher aims to achieve answers to the research questions enlisted above.

1.5 Approach and Scope

The researcher approaches this study in a subjective manner and uses a deductive approach. The secondary data is collected and critically evaluated by looking at the perspectives of different authors from the past and the research findings that have been discovered before in this subject. The primary data is collected by means of qualitative interviews and in the end the researcher has verified the theory from the secondary research by the findings from the primary research.

1.6 Personal Interest & Contributions

The researcher wants to conduct this research because he holds a bachelors degree with a dual major in marketing and finance. Currently, he is pursuing a master’s degree in marketing and wants to pursue a further degree to study people, by combining his marketing
knowledge with psychology. The study is also beneficial from the point of the following contributions that shall be made such as:

1. Give marketers in the growing fashion industry in India an insight into how the young Indian women are affected by their peers. This shall help marketers to target the consumers in such a way that it is channelled through peer reviews and peer influence.
2. It would give researchers in the future a brief yet detailed and wholesome overview of the concept of the peer group influence, so it can give them an opportunity to indulge deeper into further research of a particular area being covered in this paper.

1.7 Layout

This dissertation has been structured as follows: Chapter 1 is the Introduction and includes a background to the problem, the research question, sub research questions, the aim and objectives to be achieved, the approach and scope of the study, personal interest of the researcher and contributions that would be made. Chapter 2 is the Literature Review and has been further sub divided into chapters such as the concept of Peer Group Influence, Social media and Peer Influence, Fashion Clothing and Involvement – Peer Group Perspective, Women and Fashion Clothing, Young Consumers and Fashion Clothing and Young Indian Consumers and Indian Apparel Industry. Chapter 3 lays down the research methodology that has been adopted for this research and consists of the research philosophy, nature of the study, the research strategy, the sampling method, the data collection and analysis method adopted and so on. Chapter 4 consists of an analysis of the research findings and illustrates it in a descriptive way. Chapter 5 is a discussion of the data analysis against the theory generated from the literature review, offering implications and interpretations. Chapter 6 is the conclusion to this exploratory study and contains future recommendations. Chapter 7 is the Reflective Analysis by the researcher, followed by the bibliography and the appendices.

1.8 Limitations

The researcher has used only a single-method approach and it is limited only to qualitative research. Where as a quantitative method could have been used to collect more data, by means of a survey or questionnaire, the researcher maintains that given the time restraint for the dissertation and the nature of the topic, a qualitative method was apt for a subjectivism
philosophy. And because of the ontological nature that guides this topic, that is examining the social actors (the customers) a subjectivism philosophy was best suited.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This purpose of this chapter is to determine how this dissertation will be structured and conducted basing it on the theory that already exists. Given the widespread information that is available, the researcher has subcategorised this chapter into different sections so as to finally reach the crux of the research topic. Every section caters to various arguments given by different authors and research conducted in the past.

2.2 The Concept of Peer Group Influence

Before looking at this concept critically, let's look comprehensively as to what exactly a peer group or reference group stands for. According to Solomon (2013, p. 430), a peer group is, as some may call, as "an actual or imaginary individual or group conceived of (as) having significant relevance upon an individual's evaluations, aspirations, or behaviour". However, he further elucidates the importance of such reference groups on the consumer, owing to the 'social power' that it has, in order to alter the actions of the consumer. For instance, consumers' actions may be perturbed by the person he admires, or could be in the nature of 'expert', 'legitimate' or 'reward' power (2013, p. 432). However, sometimes a consumer may also tweak his actions in order to disassociate himself from a particular group, which is called the 'avoidance group' (2013, p. 436). And in contrast to this, sometimes, the consumers act owing to the need to 'conform' out of pressure, which is also associated to the concept of bandwagon effect from the field of economics. For instance, we can consider the case of a Tupperware Party (2013, p. 437). At the same time, in the current state of technological and social media advancement, consumers are more influenced by an 'aspirational reference group' than the 'membership reference group' (2013, p. 434-435). However, there is not a hard and fast rule of thumb that defines the manner in which a peer group can influence a person.

The susceptibility to interpersonal influence (CSII) as stated by Bearden et.al. (1989), could be considered on an individual basis and would depend from person to person. Such desire for conformity is usually linked with a range of social decisions. As McGuire (1968) has put it that an individual’s tendency to get peer influenced in one situation has a direct impact on him getting influenced in various other range of activities too.
As per Schmid Mast, Jonas and Hall (2009), it is observed that people who tend to have lower levels of self-esteem tend to be more prone to such influences. Batra et. al. (2001) further augment the argument by stating that 'personality' factors such as self esteem has a significant role to play in the extent of the effect of peer group influence too. Peer group influence is a direct by product of the social norms that exist. Such social norms tend to influence the customers to adapt their behaviour and act accordingly (Weidman, 1989).

The two different dimensions of the CSII scale developed by Bearden et. al. (1989) are normative and informational. The informational dimension of this CSII scale deals with the information search phase of the consumer decision-making process. It involves the customer’s hunt for the information regarding the key attributes and features of the product (Roberts et. al., 2008). The scope of this exploratory study deals with the normative dimension. The normative dimension of this scale deals with the degree to which the people (customers) succumb and give in to the influences by others to conform to the expectations of the ones around them (Kropp et.al., 2005). Previous research suggests that these normative beliefs are ‘utilitarian’ in nature (Batra et, al, 2001, Bearden et. al., 1989; Bearden and Etzel, 1982).

Bernard Dubois (2000, p. 143) has explained the function of normative beliefs by using a research that was conducted in a European Business School, whereby a group of thirty students were subjected to taste three different brands of mineral water in a ‘blind test’ (with no product identification packaging) and at the end mention which brand did they prefer. However, all three brands were actually the same and there was no difference in them. The subjects were unaware of this. After the tasting, each respondent was invited to give their preference in a group of four, where the other three subjects were actually ‘stooges’ and acting as per the instructions of the experimenters. In a controlled situation where the real subject was asked to give his preference first, the subject found no reason to prefer one product to the other. Their preferences were randomly distributed. However, when the stooges gave their unanimous preferences first, the subjects were faced by a ‘norm’ situation and hence in most cases the subject conformed to the other three members in their group.

This need for customers to give in the peer influence and succumb to these normative beliefs could also be understood from the Theory of Planned Behaviour as brought up by Ajzen (1991). This theory was developed over a long period of time and started off with the Fishbein’s (1963) expected-value theory of attitude. And the extended model was renamed as the Theory of Reasoned Action by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) (Robert et. al., 2008).
According to this theory, the motivational influences such as subjective norms and perceived behavioural controls have a great influence on consumer behaviour. Whereas, perceived behavioural controls are the consumer’s perception of what would be perceived as acceptable or unacceptable by their peers, subjective norms deal with the subconscious pressures that the customer experiences from his peers to conform to a particular form of behaviour. Hawkes (1975, p. 888) states that these norms could be referred to as a “prescription” for the right kind of behaviour expected by the reference or the peer group.

Different authors have different observations to make in this regard. According to the analysis of the ‘Lifestyle Segments’ (2006, p. 76), for a young adult, who is no longer dependent on his parents and is financially independent, shopping is a tool of identity formation. Wearing the right clothes, driving the right car and using the right product are a means of seeing themselves in the desired peer group. The individual discretion is curbed by the need to ‘conform’ and ‘fit in’.

On the other hand, Hollingworth (2014, p. 15) has a different take on this subject. According to him, there is an inverse relationship between a person’s number dealing capacity and the degree of peer influence on them. He opines that lesser is a consumers capacity to deal with numeric calculation based decisions, greater is the probability for him to be influenced by personal “narratives and anecdotes” and the word of mouth.

White and Simpson (2013) have taken a more psychological stand on this. According to them, a consumer’s behaviour is driven by “norms” and “appeals”. The first being the ‘self-benefit’ appeal that in simplified terms denotes the cost benefit analysis of the product from a personal point of view. The second appeal is attributed to the influences from the peers. This implies the behavioural standards and modes of action that are approved by the peers (Cialdini et. al., 1990). This brings us to the discussion of the injunctive and descriptive nature of the subjective norms. First stance is the ‘injunctive norm’, which indicates what others think you should be doing and then the ‘descriptive norm’, which indicates what others are actually doing themselves. Where on one hand, the social injunctive norms, can have a direct impact on the customers actions, by focusing on the pros and cons of a desired behaviour; similarly on the other hand, the descriptive norms relates to one’s own perception of the prevalent acceptable behaviour by others in a particular social setting (White et. al., 2009). Rimal et. al. (2005) further elaborate that the social injunctive norms are points of “social pressure” on individuals that pressurize the individual to behave in a particular fashion.
Another such concept from psychology that undermines the essence of peer group influence is that of the ‘social identity theory’. Basis the Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner 1986) and the Self Categorisation Theory (Turner 1985), White et al. (2012) explains that a consumer has a dual identity. The first one is his personal identity. However, the second and the most influential one is societal in nature. It is related to the societal groups that the customer is a member of. It is the degree of importance of this ‘social identity’ that denotes how a customer reacts to identity related products, such as clothes, cars, etc. This concept is applicable not only in influencing a customer to associate themselves to a peer group but also to disassociate him or herself from one.

On a similar context, Singelis (1994) has interlinked the concept of self-construal to the social identity concept. Self-construal refers to the extent and degree as to which an individual sees him or herself connected, or separate from a particular peer or reference group. This denotes the independent self of a customer, which implies looking at one self in an autonomous light, or the interdependent self which implies looking at one self in an intertwined or collective light with the others (Markus and Kitayama, 1991). The social identity concept is equally prevalent in both the types of individuals. Those who tend to be more independent in nature are more driven by the ‘self-enhancement motive and disassociate themselves with any such social conformations that could lead them to tarnish their self-image or “personal identity” (White et. al, 2012, p. 705). However, the individuals (customers) with a lesser degree of independency, but a higher level of interdependency, would be less likely to protect their personal identity and would adapt more in order to safeguard their “social identity” (p. 706). According to Trafimow et. al. (1991), these individuals identify their self-concept on the basis of their peer group memberships and hence are more likely to be under the influence of the peer members. Therefore, the extent of such peer influence is higher on more interdependent individuals.

To further elaborate, Schiffman et al. (2010, p. 246-247) argues that consumer’s behaviour is guided by his own attitude, which is a “learned predisposition”, and such learning takes place from eclectic sources, quite paradoxical in nature. The Theory of Reasoned Action Model, which also incorporates the Tricomponent Model, is a good analysis of the ‘subjective norms’ behind a customer’s attitude towards a particular product and his consequent decision (2010, p. 253). This ‘subjective norm’ is an emotional dilemma that a customer faces while contemplating a purchase decision, as to how would his family, friends, classmates and peers would react to the outcome of the purchase. This could also be related to the concept of socialisation agent. For example, how the influence of the mother in the family, who is a socialisation agent, is higher in the East than in the West
Schiffman et al. (2010, p. 338-339) also throws light upon the social comparison theory, which emphasises upon human’s behavioural tendency to compare their own possessions with that of their peers in order to gauge their ‘social class’ standing with that of others. This in turn helps them to engage in certain purchase actions and to avoid the rest.

To further explain this, there exists two key theories that explain this concept in further theory. The first being, as mentioned above, Leon Festinger’s Social Comparison Theory, which as discussed implies the tendency of the customers to use “social comparison” with similar individuals or peers to validate their own personal opinions (Buunk et. al. 2007). This theory has been studied in depth and explored especially in studies concerning “academic standing comparisons and negative body image” (Roman and Medvedev, 2011; Marsh et. al., 2008; Lindner et. al., 2008; Shomaker and Fur-man, 2007).

The second such compelling and gripping theory is Bib Latane’s (1981), Social Impact Theory. This theory suggests that the social impact is directly proportional to the degree of importance of the source, the relative proximity and closeness to the source with the perceiver, and the frequency and number of sources that create a correspondingly similar impact (Latane, 1981; Latane and Nida, 1980).

In a similar study of the social impact and “behavioural mimicry”, Tanner et. al. (2008) found out that the customers have a high tendency of mimicking the brand preferences and choices of the people with whom they share a great level of interaction such as their close friends and peers. Shoham and Ruvio (2008) have further augmented the argument here stating that this tendency leads to a situation of “diffusion” whereby the preferences and opinions of the “opinion leaders” are inactively adopted by the “opinion seekers” (Roman and Medvedev, 2011).

Zhang et al. (2014, p. 25-26) state that not just the immediate peers, however, various external social elements also have a direct impact on the consumers purchase decisions. For example, a direct interaction between the customer and the other shoppers in a retail outlet can also influence the customer to alter their decisions. Also, shopping with others can lead to impulse buying. At the same time, peer group influence is not always channelled from people the customer knows already, but sometimes even the sales person in a retail outlet can have a significant impact on the customer.
To further elaborate this point, various researches conducted by Argo et. al. (2005, 2006) in this context, have resulted in various findings about the influence of others on the shoppers mind. For example, according to their 2005 research findings, a shopper tends to be happier when shopping with a companion, however the happiness levels start to decline when the number of co-shoppers increase to three or beyond. Also, when the product while shopping has been physically touched by a co-shopper, the psychological influence on the customers mind is of the product being ‘contaminated’ and hence it’s attractiveness declines (2006). On the other hand, if the co-shopper is an attractive person of the opposite sex, it has a positive influence on the shopper (2008).

This brings us to another key feature of the customer behaviour and the buying decision process, which is impulsive purchasing. Kollat and Willett (1967) refer to this form of consumer buying as an unplanned form of purchase. It accounts for almost 80% of all the sales in all types of product categories. Previous research suggests that the presence of our peers and other people who influence us, have a direct normative impact on us, when they are present with us in a purchasing set up. The degree of such impact depends upon the ‘perception of the normative expectations of the individuals who exert the influence and the motivation to comply with these expectations” (Luo, 2005, p. 288). Forsyth (2000) refers to this tendency to be affected by the peer group as the Group Cohesiveness (i.e. the extent up to which the membership of that group is attractive to the individual). Luo (2005, p. 288-289) further explains that this can be associated with the theory computed by Fishbein and Ajzen in 1975 that assumes customer behaviour to be multiplicative in nature. This multiplicative function is a product of what the peers or others consider to be socially desirable and the customer’s motivation to ‘comply’ with such expectations.

Returning to the various forms these peer groups can take, White and Dahl (2006) categorises it to the following:

- Membership Groups – Positive reference groups that a customer is connected to and is a part of. Primarily refers to family, friends and so on.
- Aspirational Groups – Groups a customer feels attracted to and wants to be a part of. Refers to celebrities, a desired social group membership.
- Dissociative Groups – Groups a customer wants to avoid and has an inverse relationship with choices and evaluations made by the customers.

Where as, the last two of the groups mentioned above, vary from individual to individual based on their interests and lifestyle, the influence of the membership group which refers to family and peers, is not in the hands of the customer.
Various previous researches have been undertaken, with findings that have validated the existence and the impact of the membership of a particular group. For example, in Terry and Hogg’s research from 1996, group members have been seen to influence exercise intentions of other members, as well as induce sun protective behaviour in other members. The effect of such membership influence tends to be amplified and higher if the product is publicly consumed, rather than privately, for example, fashion apparels and clothes (Childers and Rao, 1992; Bearden and Etzel, 1982). Also, Lockwood and Kunda (1997 and 2000) suggests that people tend to get inspired and motivated to get into a behavioural pattern if the state of affairs in the aspirational membership group appears to be achievable to the individual. Perfect examples of aspirational groups are the celebrities. As per research conducted earlier, celebrities act as perfect endorsers of a particular product and have a great influence on the buyers when the customers can identify the product with the celebrities (in addition to that, if the celebrity endorses only selective products, the level of influence is higher) (Tripp et al. 1994; Kamins, 1990). For example, in Madrigal’s research of 2000, a sponsor’s product purchased increased because the customers could identify with the basketball team being endorsed, which was an aspirational membership group.

Coming to the last form of the membership groups, the research suggests that there are various identities that an individual can get subjected to and some of them are also the ‘undesired selves’ that the individual desires not to be associated with (Markus and Nurius, 1986). Further, the customers tend to avoid such products that have unpleasant and avoidable symbolic features associated with them (Banister and Hogg, 2004) and have lifestyle attributes that they tend to avoid (Lowrey et al., 2001). White and Dahl (2006) further explained this concept using an example of a student who wants to be in a particular group of peers say “the jocks” and would then consider a “skaters” group to be a dissociative group and would avoid purchasing and wearing all forms of apparels that are related to the skater’s group, such as cargo shorts.

Despite the existence of the above mentioned three broad categories of membership and peer groups, Margaret Linehan (2008, p. 203) is of the opinion of the existence of a fourth type of peer group as well. This is the Virtual Group. She explains that with the growth of the World Wide Web and the advancement in the varied forms that the social media platforms have taken (discussed in detail in the next section), consumers now have access to their peers without geographical or demographical barriers. There is plenty of consumer information available on line and discussion with peers is now possible to take place on an amplified level. Therefore, this could be considered as a different type of peer group influence altogether.
This also brings us to the concept of ‘consumer socialisation’. Linehan (2008, p. 204) explains that another way the peer groups and reference groups can have a considerable impact on the consumer’s decision is through the process of socialisation. It refers to the way or the means by dint of which the customers first acquire the know how, values, skills and the attitudes that are pertinent for execution in given circumstances. Customer Socialisation has been defined as “the process by which individuals learn to become consumers and come to know the value of money; the appropriateness of saving versus spending; and how, when and where products should be bought and used” (Ward, 1974). It is through this process of socialisation that the consumers become aware of the knowledge and skills for the consumption of a particular category of product. And hence, the peer group involved in the process of such initial socialisation has a pivotal influential role to play.

According to Sahay and Sharma (2010, p. 18), the influence of family and peers vary according to the age group being catered to. The influence of the family declines progressively over the teen years and as an individual reaches adulthood, they tend to be more influenced by peer social groups. They also elaborate that such influence is crucial in forming brand preferences too. Let’s look at it in a deeper aspect. Until the age of about 12 years, the influence of the parents on their children in their product selection process is relatively really high. This is owing to the fact that the children are still in their growing up phase and only can request for a particular product (Isler et al., 1987). As the individual progresses towards his teenage years, the influence of the parents start diminishing, because of the decline in the dependency on the parents. They start associating themselves with a particular group of peers and hence the effect of the peers supersedes that of the family and parents (Auty and Elliot, 2001). Once the teenagers have reached the age of 20-25 years, they reach a phase where they start associating products with their self-identity as well as their social identity (Sahay and Sharma, 2010). This shift in the influence cycle occurs because a peer group also defines the boundaries for the information search and in certain instances a pressured use of a particular brand (Singh, Kwon and Periera, 2003). In this exploratory study, we shall focus on the age group of 23-25.

However, the question that remains unanswered is that what is the need for such conformity to the peer group that a customer succumbs to? Gobel et al. (2010, p. 83-84) explains that conformity primarily deals with acting or purchasing in a manner, which is in accordance with the implied values and trends of a peer group. Non-conformity is looked down upon in a reference group and the individual is then to carry a “stigma of being regarded as eccentric, antisocial, or criminal, which means interpersonal dissonance and, therefore, social costs to the individual”. Various researchers in social psychology have put in their research in
evaluating the need that leads to such interpersonal and peer influence. Broadly speaking, three modes that lead to such peer influence are (a) information – because customers desire to make informed purchase decisions after having consulted some one who is aware of the product they are contemplating to purchase (b) the need to conform – the concept of influencers and those being influenced, and finally (c) a concern for self expression – because people choose to be a part of the aspirational membership groups that they want to associate themselves with (Dubois, 2000, p. 145).

On the contrary, Chan et al. (2012, p. 288-290) argues that assimilation and differentiation in this context, are often studied in isolation. However, a customer can satisfy his need for assimilation and differentiation in a single choice as well. They may make a purchase decision, which conforms to a particular peer group and restores their social identity, at the same time, differentiate them in the group and cater to their personal identity as well. Their research on daily clothing is proof enough of their proposition. Further according to Brewer (1991, p. 477), Optimal distinctiveness theory argues that people can definitely achieve to satisfy both opposing needs of assimilation and differentiation through opposing social identities so that “the need for distinctiveness is met through intergroup comparisons”. At the same time, when the distinctiveness is threatened, customers tend to succumb to the in-group influences so that it escalates their differences from the out-group members (Pickett et. al., 2002).

Mokhtaran and Assar (2014, p. 1932) further explain a dimension to this analysis, that was discussed above by Childers and Rao (1992). According to them, the degree of peer group influence on a consumer’s purchase decision also depends upon the nature of the product. Their research justifies that peer influence is stronger in publicly consumed goods (such as clothes) than privately consumed goods (Linehan, 2008). The reason behind it being that the former is easily noticeable than the latter. Their research study on Young Iranian Adults resulted in a finding that the young adults were subject to a high degree of peer influence when it came to purchase of private luxury products.

However, when we dig deeper into the concepts of necessities versus the luxuries, past literature shows that publicly consumed necessities are more likely to attract peer influence at a higher extent than the privately consumed necessities. By necessities, we mean clothes and apparels as well (Mokhtaran and Assar, 2014). There are findings from research of different authors that vouch for that such as: (a) Bearden and Etzel (1992), while conducting their research had not separated the various types of reference groups. However, the influence of the peers and the influence of the family can have varying different impacts on
the purchase decision of the customer. However, on this note, Childers and Rao (1992) argued from their research findings that the peer influence levels tend to be relatively low when it comes to products that have a low level of conspicuousness. On the contrary the influence from the family tends to be relatively higher in such cases. Product conspicuousness refers to the degree up to which a product “stands out” or remains “noticeable” by the people. For example, clothing. (b) Childers and Rao (1992) on the other hand, did combine informational features, value expressiveness and the utilitarian aspect into a single study while exploring the peer influence. However, all of these aspects tend to have a different level of effect on the purchase decision of the customer, as far as the peer influence is concerned (Mokhtaran and Assar, 2014).

Furthermore, in contrast to the social identity concept, Ward and Broniarczyk (2011) argue on the self-threat paradigm. Here, the peer group influence is not on a purchase decision but on a customer setting, that is gift giving. They elaborate that an identity-contrary gift to a close friend threatens the consumer’s social identity and hence, peer influence becomes crucial yet again.

Focusing on the sartorial purchases made by young students, Roman and Medvedev (2011) conducted a research at the University of Georgia to see how peer group influence is pivotal when it comes to choosing the clothes that the young consumers buy. According to Young (1930), fashion is extremely focal for the group that popularises them, and hence become a ‘social ritual’. Despite this, individuals deny that social influence had an impact in their apparel purchase decision. They claim to rely more on personal and practical ground (such as fit and colour preferences) over social influence while making their own purchase decisions where as believe the reverse while assessing the purchase actions of others (Pronin et al., 2007). In the survey conducted by Roman and Medvedev (2011), they found the same, however observed that even though social and peer influence on customers was clearly evident, some of it might have been subconscious.

Having analysed the concept of peer group influence in considerable depth, let’s look at our other themes, which are fashion clothing, the involvement of customers in buying clothes, the women consumers, the young consumers and finally the Indian consumer. All of these would be explored especially in terms of the purchases they make which relates to the apparel industry. Having done that, we shall have a clear understanding of how the concept of peer group influence is applicable for young adult women customers.
2.3 Social Media and Peer Influence

As explained above, the Social Comparison Theory (SCT), which is a more theoretical concept is often used as a lens by scholars to magnify and understand the correlation between the consumer behaviour and the ‘social media’ usage patterns of the consumer (Kamal et al., 2013). Past studies have shown and highlighted that customers often indulge in a subconscious judgment and analysis of comparing themselves with ‘idealised’ messages that are found scattered around social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and so on and so forth (Harmon, 2001; Richins, 1995).

Explained further by Schiffman and Kanuk (2004), there are two different dimensions to a link between influence on the customers and the social media. Within the scope of the SCT framework, users (potential customers) are subjected to peer communication as well as idealised media messages and images. Our focus as a part of this study is on the peer communication.

With a sky touching rise of platforms on social media such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Google Plus, LinkedIn and various other region specific social media portals, many users are able to identify themselves with others and seek support from online peer group members (Caplan and Turner, 2007; Steinkuehler and Williams, 2006). The peer communication and hence influence is subjected not just to that. Users who are also potential customers, are able to integrate their offline interactions with the peers and lifestyle aspects into the social media. Lehdonvirta (2010) have well argued that the online social media portals have now become a platform where by the consumption styles of peers can be shared in a virtual form.

Even though there is a lack of research in examining the exact extent of the influence of social media on the consumer behaviour (Kamal et al. 2013), it definitely has facilitated the communication process from a peer influence point of view. According to a previous research on the Arab young adults by Al-Olayan and Karande (2000), Arab consumers paid a lot of emphasis on receiving product information from their peers via the different channels of social media.

In his book The Tipping Point, Malcolm Gladwell (2000) has reaffirmed the point about social media and influence. He has elaborated that in a social media platform, trends, opinions and norms spread rapidly through a group and there are the influencers and the ones being influenced. This has been come to known as the Influentials Theory (Macdonald, 2010). This
throws emphasis on the fact that on the social media platform, there are two kinds of people that exist in a social peer group. First are the ones who are relatively more influential and the others are the ones who get more influenced by the former set of people. On a further study by Keller and Berry (2003), they have coined the proponents of this theory as to the fact that these influencers have a ‘exponential’ impact on the social peer group and they are 10% of them in a peer group where as the remaining 90% of the them are the ones who feel the pressured from such peer influencers.

Lastly, the Social Media Report (Nielsen, 2012) is indicative of the fact that social media has not just in itself opened a new way of marketing, but has aggravated the significance and role of the most commonest form of peer communication, that is the word of mouth. Social media has amplified the reach of word of mouth across peers without any geographical barriers involved in it anymore. Also, this is not just confined to a direct peer-to-peer communication. Social media has also facilitated the users with the opportunity to browse the reviews and opinions of their peers (or the so called influencers) about different products on the product social media pages. Sharing and Liking features on these social media platforms have transformed the word of mouth to a word of mouse, and thereby elevating the levels of peer group influence on the customers to a broader level (Rondon, 2012).

2.4 Fashion Clothing and Involvement – Peer Group Perspective

Fashion has been defined as a form of “collective behaviour” and as a means of “social conformity” (Solomon and Rabolt, 2004, p. 19). Consumers engage themselves in keeping a tab on the latest fashion trends and try their best to follow the same in order to identify with their peers and others as well as associate with the current social setting (Piamphongsant and Mandhachitara, 2008; Banister and Hogg, 2004). Various researches from the past have categorised clothes to carry with themselves “symbolic meanings” (Michaelidou and Dibb, 2006; Auty and Elliot, 1998). Various products form a means of communication between the buyer and the social settings and clothes are one such category of products. Clothes in terms of fashion is “conceptualised both as an object and a behavioural process” (Vieria, 2009, p. 180).

The concept of a consumer having two identities, personal and social has already been discussed above (White et. al., 2012). Therefore, customers engage in the purchase of clothes that communicate some aspect of such identities, is valued by a particular peer group and enhances their social identity (Piamphongsant and Mandhachitara, 2008). Also, the effect of such influence on the purchase decision, as discussed above, is higher if the
product is publicly consumed (Childers and Rao, 1992). According to a study by Goldsmith et al. (1999) customers derive satisfaction from the purchase of fashion apparels as it is a tool for them to augment their self-image and at the same time seek conformity in their peer group. On a similar note, Zajonc (1980) has thrown light upon the concept of “mere exposure”. He suggests in his study that people can be subconsciously subjected to adhere to conform by being inertly exposed to certain prevalent trends and style and being absolutely oblivious of the fact that there is an outside influence on them. Various authors have conducted research earlier in analysing the way a customer buys the clothes and what are the psychological aspects of the entire purchase decision process. The various researches suggest that fashion arises out of the entire scuffle to intermingle and unite the desire in a customers mind to come across as a distinct individual and at the same time, embrace, acknowledge and live up to what is expected of them socially by their peers (Roman and Medvedev, 2011). This leads to an “ever shifting balance of individualism and socialisation (Kaiser, 1997; Simmel, 1971).

As far as the involvement levels of the customer is concerned in terms of buying the clothes, let us first understand what the concept of involvement is about. According to Zaichkowsky (1985), an involvement level means the degree or the extent of importance and significance that a product involves in the ego and personality structure of an individual. It is “a person’s perceived relevance of the object based on inherent needs, values, and interests” (1985, p. 342).

If a product fits in well with a customer’s self identity and the social identity that the customer desires, then the involvement level of the customer for that particular product category tends to be high. Fashion apparels are looked upon by different customers in different ways. It has a different level of relevance and significance to different customers and hence they all are involved in the purchase of it in varying levels (O’Cass, 2004).

The perception about fashion is prone to a higher level of social conformity and the prevalent trends in the society and the immediate peer circle. For example, owing to the collectivist society that the Indian society is, group conformance plays a very vital role and hence fashion involvement by Indian women is subject to a great deal of peer influence (Banerjee, 2008).

As mentioned above, that clothing is considered to carry with itself some “symbolic” features (Michaelidou and Dibb, 2006) and fashion hence is used as a means to nourish one’s own self identity and social identity by means of such symbolic underlying features (Goldsmith et al., 2000).
There is a great depth of “socio-psychological” meaning associated with fashion clothing, apart from its basic functional attribute (Khare et. al., 2012). Previous research suggests that an analysis of such psychological factor is key in the study of fashion clothing.

### 2.5 Women and Fashion Clothing

The next section of this exploratory paper is based on research done by interviewing five Indian women. This brings us to the question as to why was the focus of this study on women only. Previous research has validated and suggests that women tend to be more involved in the buying of clothing apparels and fashion in general (Hansen and Jensen, 2009; O’Cass, 2004; Goldsmith et. al., 1999; Zaichkowsky, 1985). This is primarily owing to the fact that women tend to be more concerned about their physical appearance and hence their self and social identity (Hansen and Jensen, 2009; Bakewell and Mitchell, 2003; Kaiser and Freeman, 1989).

Further, women tend to give a great deal of importance to the “symbolic” meaning that clothes carry with themselves and use it as a means of defining their self and the way they are perceived by the ones around them (Bakewell et. al., 2006; McCraken and Roth, 1989). O’Cass (2004) further hints upon the “feminine” aspect that fashion clothing entails in itself and hence how it appeals more to the women.

A women could have different roles, during their entire life cycle. They could be a mother, wife, or daughter. At the same time, they could be a dependent family member or could be a career women in her self. Clothing is a way of expression that women use in order to portray these different roles that they play at different life stage segments (Green, 2001).

According to the research studies from the past, females are subjected to higher impact of peer influence than the males. As a part of a study, male and female psychology students were asked to read a clinical case study, and revert with how long the patient should be hospitalised for. They were to base their answers on the opinions of their peers, clinical psychologists and more advanced psychology students. The findings of the research indicated that the male students were influence by the expert opinions of the clinical psychologists where as on the other hand a larger part of the female population size were influenced by the opinions of their peer group (Hansson et. al., 1980). There are different sides to this argument as well. According to Cox and Dittmar (1995), women desire quality and better utility when it comes to the purchase of clothes and are more inclined towards the
qualitative features of the clothes, where as on the other hand, men would look at clothes continually as a means to uplift their social standing and prestige among their peers.

In a similar study by Santee and Jackson (1982), there are both normative and attributive aspects of a decision judgement that control the behaviour of an individual in a particular situational setting. In their study, they examined the normative and attributive aspects with respect to conformity with the peers, for both the different sexes. The findings of their study indicated higher levels of conformity for females than males.

This also brings us to the concept of compulsive spending. According to a study by Krugger (1998), compulsive buyers tend to be extremely conscious of the fact how they look like and appear to others and hence indulge in a process of compulsive purchase of products to fit in the circle they want to a part of, and this is especially true in case of clothing and apparels. One of the primary functions of compulsive buying is to increase the compulsive buyer’s ability to live up to his own “subjective” perceptions of how he should conform to what is expected out of him (Elliott, 1994).

There is evidence from the past literature and research that a majority of the compulsive spenders are females (Faber, 1992). According to their research of self-identification of compulsive buyers, O’Guinn and Faber (1989) discovered that 90% of the self-identified compulsive buyers were females. Scherhorn et al. (1990) had a similar figure reported from the findings of the research undertaken by them. They have gone on to suggest that in order to cope with stress and emotional dilemmas, females tend to be more social and develop more “passive and emotional” means such as compulsive shopping (Faber, 1992).

2.6 Young Consumers and Fashion Clothing

According to the research by Goldsmith et al. (1991), those who tend to put more emphasis on fun and enjoyment in their lifestyle, tend to be more fashion oriented in their lifestyle too. Research showed that these consumers on a larger level turned out to be young people.

Sociological researchers have coined the usage of the term “cool” to refer to the acceptability of a product in younger consumer circles (Rodkin et al., 2006). Young consumers tend to assume that products or services are considered to be “cool” if they are adopted by fellow young consumers who are peers to them (Gladwell, 1997). Therefore, “cool” and “coolness” indicate some sort of a peer cohort, and results in the feelings of affiliations to the peer group (Runyan et al., 2013). This is also related to the concept of
associative and aspirational membership groups as discussed in the previous section. According to O’Donnell and Wardlow (2000) when many young people are left out from a perceived “right group”, they tend to associate themselves with the “cool” products that they deem necessary to be in possession of, in order to affiliate themselves with that aspired group.

Similarly, research showed that women involved in fashion apparel purchase and fashion clothing, tend to have different trends over different age groups (Banister and Hogg, 2004). As explained earlier, across different age groups, owing to their different roles in the society and family, these women use their clothes as a means of defining their self-identity and social identity.

However there are some authors that have a different stance on this. They suggest that elderly women were involved in the purchase of fashion apparel and are influenced by the society, culture, peer group and family as well (Borland and Akram, 2007; Birtwistle and Tsim, 2005). At the same time, there are other authors who also suggest that age is not a factor in the involvement in fashion clothing (Huddleson et. al., 1993; Goldsmith and Flynn, 1992).

For the purpose of this research and exploratory study, we will be conducting our research on young women itself.

2.7 Young Indian Customers and Indian Apparel Industry

India’s Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) policies have come a long way with foreign investments being allowed in various sectors. It was in 2006, which was fundamentally a very successful year in fashion and lifestyle space, when the Government of India allowed up to 51 per cent foreign direct investment in the category of ‘Single Brand Retail’. In 2012, this was extended to 100 per cent in this category (Saxena, 2014). According to Sippy (2014), the Indian Apparel Industry has been completely metamorphosed in the last decade.

She cites that almost all international fashion brands have made their presence felt in India and if not, have it on their plans. From just one Louis Vuitton Store at The Oberoi Hotel, Mumbai ten years back, to the emerging mall culture, the Indian Apparel Industry has been ever evolving.
This cannot be attributed alone to the change in the legislations though. A lot has to be to the credit of the changing nature of the consumers in the country. According to Srinivasan (2013), much of it can be contributed to the brand awareness in the Indian society and the consciousness around it. Refer to the snap shot of the brand consciousness figures below as estimated by CRISIL Research (2012):

**Figure 2: Brand Consciousness In Indian Market**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Particulars</th>
<th>Size (Rs. crore)</th>
<th>Share of branded apparels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Domestic apparels market</strong></td>
<td>1,25,000</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Category-wise market</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women's traditional wear</td>
<td>34,200</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men's formal wear</td>
<td>31,900</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kids' wear</td>
<td>10,100</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casuals-Jeans</td>
<td>8,600</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casuals-T Shirts</td>
<td>6,400</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women's western wear</td>
<td>2,100</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: 'Branded apparels poised to grow', The Hindu, 2013.*

Tandon and Dalal (2014) highlights various demographic factors that have led to such a radical change in this industry. They observe that, especially in the women's western wear department, the apparel brands have witnessed a 50 per cent growth rate. This is because of more women in the society joining the work force, dressing smart and consequentially an increase in the disposable income in their hands.

Looking at a similar demographic disposition. Arora (2014) in his paper has thrown light upon how fashion is perceived in the Indian society. He states that from a time when miniskirts were ‘frowned upon’ in the traditionally rooted Indian society, to now where there has been an influx of most international fashion brands in the country, the Indian Apparel Market has come a long way.

Tandon and Agarwal (2013) further emphasise on the growth of international apparel brands in the country. According to a research by Booz and Co, a consultancy firm, fast fashion brands is growing in India at a yearly average of 25-30%. Their review also argues that with the evolving nature of the young Indian consumer, the brands will not only cater to existing customers but also expand their base, leading to an aggravated demand for western labels in the market.
Focusing on the Indian consumer and the role of the peer group influence on them, we see that almost two thirds of the market consists of young consumers. The family and the societal values also play a significant role in certain parts of the Indian society (Biswas, 2013, p. 10-12). According to Banister and Hogg (2004), younger people were largely involved in improving self-image and social identity and hence were more involved in fashion brand purchases. However, other researches believe that even elderly customers were equally inclined towards fashion, however were more prone to be affected by social norms and societal influences (Khare et al., 2012, p. 16).

Lysonki and Durvasula (2013), in their research about the Indian consumers decision making style has pointed out some key features about how psychological factors such as peer group influence function with Indian consumers. One of the key highlights of their research was the existence of shopping opinion leaders in the Indian society. Therefore, owing to the customer's susceptibility to interpersonal influence, these shopping opinion leaders have a great deal of impact on the purchasing behaviours of the customers. As a result of their research, they have opined the crucial nature of such societal and peer influence on the Indian consumer. Similarly, Pandya and P (2013) conducted a research on the perceptions of the Indian youth on the brands that they wear and have observed some influencers on their decision making process. According to the results of their research, out of 100, the influence of family can be attributed to 24.4 per cent, that of friends to 21.9 per cent and that of other peers to about 7.5 per cent. Refer the screen shot below for a holistic picture of all the influencers:

**Figure 3: Influencers on Purchase Decision Of Indian Youth**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BRAND CONSCIOUSNESS DRIVES GROWTH</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Particulars</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casuals-Jeans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casuals-T Shirts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women's western wear</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Note:** 1) Market size is estimated size in 2012  
           2) Category-wise share of branded apparels is relative to the share in total apparels market |

**Source:** Pandya and P, 2013.
In her research about the buying behaviour of branded clothes among young Indian consumers, Kansra (2014) observed that one of the crucial factors were maintaining a social status and owing to official or professional obligations. This reiterates the point of social identity that was stated in the previous section.

Acharya and Gupta (2014) conducted a research to analyse the reasons behind brand switching among Indian college students over four different non-clothing products. One of the chief variables to be tested involved the role of peer pressure. As an outcome of the research, it was observed that four-fifths or more of the respondents who had switched brands stated that their friends had a good experience with the new brand (87%, 88%, 80% and 86% respectively for mobile operators, ice cream, deodorant and theatre services). Therefore, we see that in terms of non-clothing products and services, the influence of peers has been considerably high.

Mourali et. al. (2005) discusses the role of conformity in the Indian context. People are subjected to the effect of interpersonal influence, however the extent and the consequence of such effect differ and vary across different levels of conformity. Some of the individuals are more likely to conform to peer pressure than the other. People from collectivist society backgrounds, such as that in India, are more likely to come under the influence of conformity than the others. They tend to have higher susceptibility to interpersonal influence than the others (Khare, 2014). However, there are authors who disagree on this standpoint. According to Jin and Kang (2011), according to their research on Chinese consumers who also belong from a collectivist society, globalisation in the recent times have played a level playing ground. The Chinese consumers have moved from a collectivist nature to a more individualistic nature. Increasing levels of affluence, modernisation in the society and a great deal of exposure to mass and social media, have made them more opinionated and individualistic, however the interaction with peers with regards to apparel decision making has still been aggravated (Khare, 2014). Khare et. al. (2011) finds out that the Indian customer places high importance on peer interaction and influence while making fashion-clothing decisions. Therefore, we see that there are conflicting view points from different authors with regards to the peer influence when it comes to members who traditionally have collectivist values.

2.8 Conclusion

From the above literature review chapter, it is clear that there exists different facets to the topic of peer group influence on consumer behaviour. The researcher has identified different
factors that exists behind such socio-psychological influence, the way social media has aggravated the effect of such influence, how young consumers and women are more prone to peer influence and how the growing Indian Apparel Industry and changing face of the young Indian Women is a viable field to understand this concept of peer influence.

Therefore, having conducted a wholesome review of the literature that exists in the past and having looked at the various aspects of the different components of the exploratory study, we shall now proceed to testing our literature by dint of the research methodology stated in the next section.
Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this section, we shall dig deeper into the practicality aspect of the proposed exploratory study. The following section will outline the philosophy being adopted for the research, the rationale behind the approach (inductive/ deductive), and the strategy. Once, the researcher has pinned the specifics, he shall dig deeper into the justification of why such a method is being adopted and post that shall lay down the sample that would be tested for the exploration of the topic. The researcher would then move on to the data collection method and also explain how the collected data shall be analysed.

3.2 Research Method

Branick and Roach (1997) has defined Research Methodology as a “decision making process. Each decision made is affected by, and in turn, influences every other decision” (Saunders et. al., 2009). However, most of the times, research and the practice are considered to be one and the same. This is not the case in reality though. Every research has it’s own limitation and every practice is not directly a reflection of the research conducted (Bryman and Bell, 2003). A very key point with regards to the relationship between research and hence practice has been formulated by Gummesson (2000), who has coined that the researchers and the actual practitioners (who could be business leaders, management, consumers, or who so ever is being tested on the sample) are just “knowledge workers”, who each have their own methods of putting different weighted importance on theory and practice. He further explains that based on certain elements of the theory, the practitioners actually conduct their practice, where as on the other hand, based on certain elements of the practice, the researchers deduce their research findings, however primarily relying on the theory. He sees both the practitioners as well as the researchers to function in a closely knit place and claims that they have the ability to convince the society and the community that there is an element of relevance and usefulness in their research findings (Bryman and Bell, 2003).

Johnson and Clark (2006) has pointed out that in order to conduct a sound research, the researchers are required to be aware of the philosophical commitments that are being made in the due course of the selection of the research strategy, since this would have an effect not only on what is being done but also on what is being thoroughly investigated. They also argue that in a profound and sound research, what is important is not if the research has
been based on a philosophically sound ground, however, what is important is that how efficiently a researcher can defend and reflect upon the philosophical choices adopted and advocate them when pitted against the other options or alternatives that could be adopted.

There could be a wide array of choices in terms of the research philosophies, approaches, strategies, choices, time horizons and techniques and procedures, when it comes to designing a research methodology. Saunders et. al. (2009) states that there is no ‘better’ way than the other. The key point here is that each of the methods are ‘different’ from one another, and the researcher is required to adopt the design that best suits the area being investigated or explored, depending upon the nature of the research and the past literature and research that has already been conducted in that field. However, they also point out that in ‘practical reality’, a particular research area and a research question, very seldom falls into only ‘one philosophical domain’ and the choice is left to the research decision to be taken by the researcher. They have computed the ‘research onion’ that once peeled off, would help the researcher to the final design that he needs in order to conduct the research. Therefore in the next section, we shall discuss each of the aspects of the research onion as depicted below in the figure, with regards to the exploratory study on peer group influence and finally reach the research design that has been proposed.

Figure 4: Research Onion


3.3 Research Philosophy

Saunders et. al. (2009) outlines that as per the research onion, that gives a wholesome idea of how to reach the most suitable and apt research design for your research to be
conducted, there are a few philosophical stances that a researcher can adopt. However broadly there could a ontological philosophical stand, a epistemological ground or axiological stand. Whereas, epistemological philosophy is the researchers view about what compromises an acceptable knowledge, axiological philosophy is the researchers view about what role do our values play in research (2009, p. 119).

This brings us to the ontological philosophy, which shall be analysed in depth. This denotes the ‘researchers view of the nature of reality or being’. This philosophy is concerned with the “nature of the social entities” (Bryman and Bell, 2003) and is concerned with the central point that is if the social entities are objective and different from the social actors involved or the social phenomenon are nothing but a sum product of the actions and ideologies of the social actors involved in it (Saunders et. al., 2009). This philosophy can either take a objectivism or subjectivism stand. In an objective research philosophy, the researcher excludes the social actors involved in the research process from the social entity in itself (Saunders et. al., 2009; Bryman and Bell, 2003). For example, in the study of the a market place, the social actors that is the customers, would not be included.

However, this brings us to the crux of this research exploratory study. In this paper, the researcher is studying the effect of a social phenomenon that is the peer group influence on the customers in a market place, that is the purchase of the apparels. Therefore even though our social setting or entity is that of the purchase of clothes, our social actors that is the customers, cannot be excluded and are the key players in the research. This brings us to the concept of subjectivism.

The research philosophy that would be adopted for this proposed research is that of ‘Subjectivism’. This is because owing to the nature of this philosophy, the phenomenon is created by dint of the actions and perceptions of the social actors themselves (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 111). Coming to the research topic, the peer group influence, which is the social phenomenon, cannot be separated from the social actors, that is the consumers. And at the same time, it is important to analyse the actions of the customers from a subjective standpoint, rather than objectively.

Remenyi et. al. (1998) suggests that in a subjectivism philosophical approach, it is of pivotal importance, to study and observe the details of the situation, to understand and comprehend the details and the perceptions of the social actors working behind the social phenomenon tested. The social actors play a crucial role in the entire research process. This also is sometimes referred to as constructionism (Remenyi et. al., 1998; Potter, 1996). According to
Potter (1996), the world is “constituted in one way or another as people talk it, write it and argue it”. Therefore, in order to explore the effect of peer group influence further, it is important to study the perceptions and the mind-sets of the consumers who are subjected to the mentioned social phenomenon.

3.4 Research Approach

Every research study involves the use of theory. The theory may or may not have explicitly laid out the foundations to certain concepts or social phenomenon being explored, however, if not, by the end of the research, by dint of the researcher’s findings and analysis, that would have been explicitly laid out. However, the extent up to which the researcher is clear about the standpoint that the theory is stating, at the beginning of the research, is of crucial important. It is because owing to the state of this clarity, the researcher will have to decide what research approach shall be undertaken for the research methodology (Saunders et. al., 2009, p. 124).

According to Bryman and Bell (2003), there are two forms of research approaches that exist and can be used by the researcher is order to approach his research study. They are the deductive and the inductive approaches. The researcher may as well use both these approaches together, if the scope of the research requires that.

An inductive approach is the approach whereby the researcher is not explicitly clear about the stance of the social phenomenon being tested or explored at the start of the research. He then would collect the data, compute it, analyse it and hence develop a clear theoretical stance out of it (Saunders et. al., 2009, p. 124). However, as far as the scope of this study is concerned, the literature review explores the concept of peer group influence in great depth, validates from the research work done by different authors that it does exist, however different authors have different cause-effect relationship models for the existence of the phenomenon.

Therefore, this brings us to the research approach that shall be adopted for this exploratory study, which is the deductive approach. According to Gil and Johnson (2002, p. 34), the deductive approach implies and proposes the “development of conceptual and theoretical structure” prior to the commencement of the research and through qualitative or quantitative data to test the social phenomenon that has already been established by the previous literature review. The deductive approach entails the researcher to develop a theory and “hypothesis” from the literature and then design a strategy to test the previously established
theory and hypothesis (or hypotheses) (Saunders et. al., 2009). The purpose of this study is to review the literature on the existence of peer group influence on the consumer behaviour (which has been done in the previous section), pit different viewpoints from different authors against each other, explore the concept and hence test the various findings from different authors on a research sample.

The deductive research approach being adopted as a part of this paper is in line with the five sequential stages as computed by Robson (2002):

1) the deduction of the hypothesis, that is the concept of peer group influence and the various other facets related to it, from the theory. This has been done as a part of the literature review chapter.
2) expressing that how the various aspects of the hypothesis, that is the peer group influence, exist in operational terms. The literature review explains how different authors have linked the existence and extent of peer influence on consumers to different factors.
3) testing the hypothesis on the basis of a research strategy that shall be discussed below.
4) examination of the research outcome, in order to validate the theory or to indicate a reason for it to be modified.
5) lastly, if required, then to recommend future modifications and research to the existing theory.

3.5 Nature – Exploratory

Saunders et. al. (2009) explains that the researcher looks at the research project as a means to answer the research questions and the research objectives that are to be achieved. And the way the researcher wants that to be achieved denotes the nature and the purpose of the research. This could range from being descriptive, descriptive, explanatory or exploratory. However, Robson (2002) has opined that the purpose need not be carved in stone, because it is well acceptable that the purpose might shift as the research proceeds to its end.

The purpose and nature of this study being conducted on the peer group influence on consumer behaviour patterns is exploratory in nature. It is a means to see “what is happening; to seek new insights; to ask questions and to assess phenomena in a new light” (Robson, 2002). This is an appropriate nature for the study if the aim of the researcher is to clarify the understanding of the research problem (Saunders et. al., 2009). V.S. Naipaul (1989) and Adams and Schvaneveldt (1991) explain that if the researcher indulges in
exploratory study, then he must be open to new insights that might occur as the research advances.

As a part of exploring this concept of peer group influence, various authors have previously proposed various different factors that have varying implications on the extent of such influence. As a part of this exploratory research, those factors would be tested and validated. It is possible that the researcher would come across new insights from testing those factors and exploring them with the samples.

3.6 Research Strategy

There are different research strategies available at the researcher’s discretion. And all the strategies can be implanted for all different kind of researches such as exploratory, descriptive and explanatory (Yin, 2003). Some of the research strategies are better suited for deductive approaches and some for inductive approaches. However, nothing is carved in stone around it and any strategy could be implanted to any approach (Saunders et. al., 2009).

The researcher has a choice of adopting either a quantitative based strategy or a qualitative based strategy. Bryman and Bell (2003) state that however, in an ontologically oriented research philosophy, such as subjectivism in this case, a qualitative strategy fits well, because it gives the researcher the freedom to gain new insights during the course of the exploratory research.

A qualitative strategy can be conducted in various forms such as case studies, interviews, focus groups and so on and so forth (Saunders et. al., 2009). As a strategy for this particular research, the researcher shall conduct qualitative research by dint of interviews. The role of the qualitative research is to explore the interpretations and perceptions of the social actors involved in the research (Bryman, 1988). In regards to this particular research, it would involve exploring the perceptions and responses of the sample of consumers. The research style would be semi-structured and the relationship between the researchers and the subject would be close (Bryman, 1988).

As highlighted by Yeung (1995), qualitative semi-structured interviews in this research, would involve a ‘communicative’ interaction between the researcher and the subjects, through various communicative channels and sensitive to different perceptions and viewpoints that the subject may bring forward during the course of such communicative
discussion. He also states that ‘statistical formulae’ are irrelevant in such a strategy to analyse the understanding of the opinions of the social actors that is the customers in this case.

The strategy involves interviewing the subjects on various hypothesis that has been developed by the detailed analysis of the theory in the literature review and hence understanding their perception with regards to their behaviour in the social setting (that is the social process they go through while choosing the clothes that they buy, in this case). The subjects shall be exposed to open ended questions in a semi-structured way and their perceptions and opinions shall be sought on points that have been explored during the literature review.

At the end of such interviews, each subject would have given an insight into their experience in the social setting, which shall allow the researcher (or in this case the interviewer) the opportunity to either validate the theory explored or to present a different insight as a part of the exploration process.

3.7 Sample

Having established the that the research strategy being adopted is qualitative interviews, now the researcher is to provide the details of the sample being selected for such research conduction and the size of such sample. Saunders et. al. (2009) states that there are various methods for sampling available to the researcher such as probability sampling methods (Simple random sampling, systematic sampling, stratified sampling, cluster sampling) or the non-probability sampling (quota, purposive, snowball, self selection or the convenience sampling method).

For an exploratory study like this, with a subjectivism orientation and deductive approach, the researcher proposes to use a non-probability sampling method. Saunders et. al. (2009, p. 233) explains that in certain research studies, when it is not possible at the start of a research to specify the probability of a particular case to be a part of a sample, then the sampling has to be non-random and hence non-probability sampling is suitable. In this study of peer group influence, the various facets to this social phenomenon were discovered during the course of the research itself and hence the ideal sample could only be derived post the study of the literature and theory.
Out of the various methods as a part of the non-probability sampling method, the purposive method would be used. Unlike the other methods of non-probability sampling, this method gives the researcher the possibility to use his acumen and judgement to select cases that would be best suited to explore further the theory and the literature and hence put it to test. This gives the researcher the opportunity to choose a sample that is effectively “informative” as pointed out by Neuman (2005) (Saunders et. al. 2009). The most common types of purposive sampling techniques are extreme case sampling, heterogeneous sampling, homogenous sampling, critical case sampling and typical case sampling. The researcher has decided to use the homogenous sampling technique as it would provide a chance to focus and explore a sub-group where all the cases are similar in depth (Saunders et. al. 2009, p. 240).

The following sampling criteria for the research has been used that denote the homogeneity among the cases:

- **Indian** – Research states that the impact of conformity and the role of the peer influence tend to be relatively profound and magnified in societies that follow a collectivist pattern. Various researches in the past have been conducted with regards to the collectivist nature of the Indian society (Khare, 2014; Banerjee, 2008; Mourali et. al., 2005).

- **Women** – The theory and the literature suggests that statistically women tend to be more involved in the purchase of clothes and fashion apparels than men (Hansen and Jensen, 2009; O’Cass, 2004; Goldsmith et. al., 1999; Zaichkowsky, 1985). Also, past literature is suggestive of the fact that women tend to be more influenced by their peers than the opposite sex (Santee and Jackson, 1982; Hansson et. al., 1980). Therefore, in order to test the theory, the sample cases would consist of women.

- **Young** – From the literature review in the previous chapter, it has been coined that young people tend to adopt the “cool” culture and have a higher need to conform to their peer group (Rodkin et. al., 2006; Gladwell, 1997). Therefore, the sample cases would include young women.

- **Mid 20s age group (23-25) and Working (occupation)** – The literature and theory has established that women share different roles throughout their life stage cycle and that has a different impact on their fashion apparels and clothes purchase decisions (Green, 2001). Also, researchers like Biswas (2013), Vishwanathan (2010) and Technopak Advisors (2010) have found out that with the increase of women in the working sector, the role of the Indian woman has changed, which has impacted the apparel purchase
category in the country. Therefore an age group of mid 20s would imply that the researcher could target cases that are well within the role of a working women.

- In order to further aggravate the degree of homogeneity in the selected sample, the researcher has decided to limit the cases to the only those women who have graduated from the *Shri Ram College of Commerce, University of Delhi from the course Bachelors of Commerce in the year 2012*. Hence all the interviewees are based out of *New Delhi, India*.

- A total of *five interviewees* would be interviewed.

### 3.8 Data Collection

The sample for this research exploratory studies encompasses interviewees who are based out of New Delhi, India. The researcher is based out of Dublin, Republic of Ireland. Therefore the mode of such interviews would be ‘electronic interviews’, that would be held using the internet. However as far as the nature of such electronic interviews is concerned, the interviews would be ‘synchronous’ in nature (Saunders *et. al.*, 2009).

The process of the interview involves the researcher contacting the interviewees over the internet using audio - video conferencing messenger such as Skype. The interviews went on from a range of 20-25 minutes on an average with each of the interviewees.

The researcher or the interviewer was involved in the audio recording of all the interviews and such audiotapes could be furnished if required. At the same time, during the interview was being conducted, the interviewer was also involved in making notes about the specific points being put forward by the interviewees.

### 3.9 Data Analysis

Once the data was accumulated and collected, the next steps that were involved included the data analysis. The researcher was involved in a three stage process of data analysis as suggested by Saunders *et. al.* (2009). These three processes were as follows:

- **Summarising the interview data:** Once the interview was conducted and the audio recordings were in place. The interviewer or the researcher was involved in preparing a list of key point from the interview conducted that would summarise all the findings from a particular research interview that would be beneficial for the purpose of this exploratory study. This process involved condensing the entire length of interview into
small fewer words so that it could be used for the purpose of a detailed analysis. This was extremely useful for the purpose of the research because it allowed the researcher to underline the different relationships between peer group influence and the factors that make it come to effect, as per the responses of the interviewees.

- **Categorising the data:** This process involved the researcher to categorise data into different categories of information collected and thereby deriving specific meanings and findings for each of such set of data chunk computed. The different categories that were developed as a part of this research study were as follows: Background Information, Personality Related Questions, Peer Group Based Questions and Group Membership Related Questions. Refer Appendix B.

- **Unitising the data:** This process involved the researcher to attach particular units of data from the interview summarisation sheets to the chunks where the data information was categorised. This helped the researcher to bring upon deeper and further meaning to each category of the information.

Therefore to conclude, a combination of content and narrative analysis was adopted for this research. The primary task was to summarise the large amount of information collected in the one-to-one interviews into a more organised and manageable quantity. Even though the narrative answers from the interviewees were subjective, it gave the researcher a deep insight into the consumer’s perspective of the given subject. According to Blumberg *et. al.* (2011, p.298), it is the most appropriate technique to be used in a research, which is exploratory in nature.

### 3.10 Ethics

“Researchers have a moral responsibility to explain and find answers to their questions honestly and accurately” (Ghauri and Grohaung, 2005, p. 20). The role of ethics is not debatable in every fact of any business or management research and not just that, it is also non-negotiable in every aspect of human interactions and actions (Partington, 2002, p. 22).

As far as the research ethics are concerned, it relates to the clarity with which the researchers clear the research topic, the questions, the designs, strategies, conduct sampling, collect data and hence analyse such data (Saunders *et. al.*, 2009).

There are two ethical grounds on which the researcher can base his research. The first is the concept of what is right is right and what is wrong is wrong and is referred to as the
deontological stance (Partington, 2002). This stance argues that the research results can never be able to justify the ethical behaviour of researcher (Saunders et. al., 2007).

The second ethical ground that is available is referred to as the teleological stance, which claims that the research results have the ability to justify the behaviour of the researcher. It creates a problem for the researcher to identify if the benefits to one group create any harm to the other group (Saunders et. al., 2009).

Saunders et. al. (2009) has further discussed that the ethical dilemmas are faced by the researcher throughout the research process and some of the ethics, that was taken care of by the researcher during the entire process of conducting this exploratory study were as follows:

- The privacy of the participants has been duly maintained.
- The participants were given the entire right to withdraw their participation at any stage if they require to do so.
- The personal data provided by the participants would be absolutely confidential.
- Avoid any deception of the consent of the participants or the data provided by them during the interviews.
- Any thing that was objectionable to the participants was not included in the interview process.

Refer Appendix A for the Information Sheet to Participants.

Apart from the above mentioned stances, the researcher has also abide by all the clauses of the Dublin Business School Code of Ethics and guaranteed them during and after the data collection and analysis process:

- Privacy of the people involved in research would not be violated at any given point in time or due to any circumstance.
- The participants to this research study were not deceived about any aspect of the research or its purpose.
- All data that has been obtained from the research participants (interviewees) will remain confidential and not be used for any purpose outside the scope of this research.
- All the data that has been kept in the electronic form complies with the legislations of data protection.

All the elements of the process of research methodology and data collection comply with the laws around copyright issues.
3.11 Limitations to the Methodology

The limitation to the research conducted by the researcher in this regard is owing to the limitation of time and access. This research could have been longitudinal and not cross sectional because owing to the exploratory nature of the research topic, it is a social study and could be conducted over a longer length in time so as to gain even a deeper insight into the subject. Secondly, the research could have included a larger sample, such as women across different age groups, and also those across different lifestyle roles. However, given the word restraint and the time constraint, a few of the cases who first agreed to be interviewed backed out at the nick of the time, and hence the researcher had to restrict the scope of the research to a smaller and more confined sample. Also, for an exploratory study like this, a confined and focused sample as this was considered the best for qualitative analysis.
Chapter 4: Analysis

4.1 Introduction

Qualitative interviews were conducted as per the methodology laid down in the chapter above and this section will be analysing in a reasonably descriptive manner, the findings and information collected during the course of such interviews. This chapter is structured according to the structure of the questions that were asked in the interview (Refer Appendix B). This is done in order to provide an in depth discussion in the following chapter.

4.2 Interviewee’s

The total interviews conducted were five in number. All the interviewees, as indicated by the sample description in the previous chapter, conducted of young Indian women, who are working with different positions in different companies, are settled in New Delhi, India and graduated from Bachelors of Commerce (Honours) course at Shri Ram College of Commerce, University of Delhi in the year 2009. This was done in order to bring about a homogeneity in the sample selected and other aspects as discussed in the previous chapter. Below is a snap shot of the interviewees involved in this research:

Figure 5: List of Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee No.</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Educational Qualification</th>
<th>Current Role</th>
<th>Company</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>New Delhi, India</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>Bachelors Degree</td>
<td>Staff Accountant</td>
<td>KPMG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>New Delhi, India</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>Bachelors Degree</td>
<td>Senior Analyst</td>
<td>Towers Watson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 3</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>New Delhi, India</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>Masters Degree</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>TacFab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 4</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>New Delhi, India</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>Masters Degree</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>Coupardiunia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>New Delhi, India</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>Bachelors Degree</td>
<td>Intern</td>
<td>JWT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Self-Representation

4.3 Background and Consumer Behaviour

In these set of questions, the interviewees were asked to give a brief overview of how they feel that the role of Indian women as a consumer is, how often would they go out with their peers for fashion clothing purchases and how much importance would they place to their interactions with their peers in such a social setting.
Interviewee 1 said that she believes that with the changing face of the fashion industry in the country, and the Indian women becoming more career oriented, the role of the Indian women as a consumer is changing. She would always go out shopping with her peers and thought they had a better fashion sense than she herself does. Consequently she places a lot of significance on what her peers suggest and advice her in terms of picking up apparels.

Interviewee 2 and 3 believed that even though the fashion industry in the country is growing, the collectivist nature and herd culture is still quite prevalent. Where as interviewee 2 said that she would go out shopping with her peers, but never places too much importance to her peer’s suggestions and made her own choices; on the other hand, interviewee 3 said that she would go out shopping with her peers and get influenced by her friends choices but still take the final call on her own.

Interviewee 4 and 5 had similar opinions about the growing fashion industry in India and the nature of young women consumers as the Interviewee 1. They admitted to going out purchasing apparels mostly with their friends and considering their opinions because they believed their friends to have a considerably good sense of what is “in”.

4.4 Personality Related Questions

In this section, the interviewees were asked to define how significant is their social identity to them, how much importance they would place to their peer’s opinion in case of a dilemma, how the influence of their peers have grown/ declined over the last few years and how is social media an influencing factor to them.

Interviewee 1: According to her, because she lives in North India, the social identity is of high importance, because people are more judgemental there. And hence when she has to choose her apparels, she has to be sure that it would be seen in a positive light by her peers and would conform to the group dynamics. As far as facing complex situations is concerned, she would definitely consider her peer’s opinion but would not just go by it. She would have her own final call. Also, she believes that since she has moved out of her parent’s home and have started to live by herself, the influence of her peers in her lifestyle clothing choices has increased over the last few years. However, she is not influenced by the social media reviews by her peers or people she looks up to, because she is not very involved on social media portals.
Interviewee 2: She believes that she looks at her social identity and her personal identity in a similar light because they tend to be quite the same, and hence her social identity has no particularly different effect on her lifestyle clothing choices. When she has a difficult choice to make while purchasing lifestyle apparel, she does not consider her peers opinion because it only makes her choice difficult. She agreed with Interviewee 1 that since she moved out of her parents home and have become independent, she feels that her peers involvement in her purchase decisions have now superseded her family’s involvement. As far as the social media is concerned, she does indulge in a lot of online shopping and hence is very observant and critical of the reviews by her peers.

Interviewee 3: The interviewee was very confused about her social identity because to her it means insignificant. She is an independent person and does not believe in standing out of the crowd. When faced in the middle of complex apparel choices while shopping, she would usually pick up all the choices available and not look for someone to decide for her. This is also because she is a Director at her own apparel designing company and hence does not mind having extra pair of clothes. The interviewee stated that she still lives with her parents and feels that there has been no change in the involvement of her peers in her purchase decisions over the number of years. As far as the social media based peer influence was concerned, the interviewee was absolutely unperturbed by social media reviews because she believes they are all “made up”.

Interviewee 4: According to her, her social identity is keenly important because she is at a managerial level and is concerned about how she is “looked up to”. Hence, she does involve in buying only “appropriate” apparels. In case she faces a complex choice situation, she would simply go by her peer’s opinion, because that is an “exterior” opinion. The influence of her peers in her fashion clothing choices has increased because of her becoming more “public” and “out” in the open in the growing years. The interviewee said that she is highly involved in online shopping and would definitely regard the online reviews by her peers as a “prescription”.

Interviewee 5: Because this interviewee works in the marketing communications sector, she said that her social identity is of “utmost” importance because she is concerned about how people see her. In case she is unsure of what to choose, she would definitely look for a “second opinion” from her peers and would go by it. She agreed with interviewee 1 and 2, that moving out of home and living by herself has increased the involvement of her peers in her purchase decisions. She believes that the social media reviews are a good way to
understand what is “trendy” and has a considerably good subconscious effect of creating a “bias” in her head about a particular choice decision.

4.5 Peer Group Based Questions

In this section, the discussion with the interviewees involved giving them four situations and seeing how they would respond in such situations. These situations are listed below. These situations were used to understand how peer group membership needs affect the consumer’s behaviour.

Situation 1: Say for instance, you are shopping with your peers and they all like a particular piece of apparel, which according to them is a good specimen of the latest fashion. You do not really like it, but would you still agree with them and what would be your reasons?

Situation 2: In another case, you are shopping with your peers and you like a particular piece of fashion apparel, where as your peers do not approve of it being fashionable enough. How would it affect your choice versus if you were shopping alone?

Situation 3: You are to purchase a particular fashion apparel that you personally like and would wear ‘privately’ and not ‘publicly’. However you know your peers would disapprove of it. How would it affect your choice?

Situation 4: You were informed about a particular style of apparel by your peers, who all had either good or bad reviews about it. How would it affect your approach to reviewing the same piece of apparel?

Interviewee 1: With respect to the first situation, the interviewee said that she personally likes wearing comfortable clothes but in one instance, her peers suggested that she should buy a gown dress that looks good on her and she decided to give in to their opinion. In situation 2, the interviewee feels that her peers have a good sense of fashion and going against them would only mean that she is not fashionable enough. Therefore, when shopping with them, she wouldn’t go against their view. In situation 3, the interview further stated that she privately would wear comfortable apparels that she personally likes, however, when going out with her peers, she would avoid wearing them so as to not be the “odd one out”. Also, situation 4, would lead the interviewee to look at the concerned piece of product in a opinionated and biased way.
Interviewee 2: In situation 1 and situation 2, the interviewee would not buy that piece of apparel because she would rather settle for something that she and her peers both like, than settle with something that one of them do not. However, in situation 2, if she strongly has a liking for a particular piece of apparel, she would definitely purchase it. In situation 3, the interviewee is not perturbed by the consumption being “private” or “public” because she would dress up the way she would find it comfortable and “appealing”. The interviewee said that in situation 4, she would definitely be looking at that apparel in a biased way, however she would not be very firm about her preconceived opinion.

Interviewee 3: The interviewee stated that in situation 1 and 2, she would only purchase an apparel if it appeals to her and would not be too carried away by how her peers feel about it. She is quite independent about her choices. Also, in situation 3, she does not think that the idea of wearing a piece of clothing “publicly” or “privately” would affect her. Lastly, coming to situation 4, she agreed that she would proceed to scrutinizing the piece of clothing being discussed, with a pre biased notion, however would still have a “clean slate” for inspection.

Interviewee 4: In situation 1 and 2, the interviewee said that she would stick to what according to her peers is “right” because she is a public figure, especially in the workplace and hence would not like to be perceived as being “odd” or “different”. In situation 3, however, she felt that she does like wearing “loose fitting” clothes in private, however would not wear it out anytime because she thinks it would not be compatible with how people are “used to seeing” her. As far as situation 4 is concerned, she gave an example that recently her friends criticised the summer collection of an apparel brand she likes, and she has now dropped the plans to go and look at their collection.

Interviewee 5: In situation 1, the interviewee said that she would definitely purchase the pair of clothes that her peers think looks good on her, because they can “judge” it better. However in situation 2, she would definitely not buy that piece of apparel because she wont be “comfortable” wearing it when she’s out because she would know “subconsciously” that people around her do not like it. In situation 3, she agreed that she is comfortable wearing anything indoors, because she does not have to “look the way others want me to look”. In the last situation, the interviewee was of the opinion that she has a tendency to look at things negatively if her peers have an ill opinion of it. She stated that last year she did not end up buying a particular dress from a brand for her birthday because her friends had bad reviews of the brand.
4.6 Group Membership Questions

In this section of the discussion, the interviewees were again given three situations and their reactions were recorded to such situations. The situations were designed in order to understand how important group memberships are to consumers. The situations were as follows:

Situation 5: There is a group of people you wish not to be associated with, however you do like the fashion apparels that they wear. How would that affect your choice and purchase decision, if you were to engage in buying similar apparels?

Situation 6: There is a group of people you wish to be associated with, however you do not like the fashion apparels that they wear. Would you still like to engage in wearing similar apparels so as to ‘fit in’ among them? Please give reasons.

Situation 7: You have a peer who has a great sense of fashion. How would his or her opinion affect you?

Interviewee 1: The interviewee narrated that she loves to shop at the flea markets, however her peers are extremely “brand conscious” and do not approve of such shopping. Therefore, because she wouldn’t want to be associated with those who shop at flea markets, she would not mention it to her peer group. In case of situation 6, the interviewee had a clear opinion that she has done it in the past when she purchased something because she thought it would be considered “fashionable” enough by her peers. As far as the last situation is concerned, the interviewee mentioned that her peers do have a more comprehensive sense of fashion as compared to her and she would always take their “second opinion”.

Interviewee 2: In situation 5 and 6, the interview said that if she personally thinks that some pair of apparel appeals to her, she’d buy it and it would not change her mind if that item of clothing would “tag” her into a peer group specifically. As far as the last situation is concerned, the interview stated that she considers herself to be an “opinion leader” in her group and hence most her peers seek her advice.

Interviewee 3: In case of situation 5 and 6, the interviewee said that she does not believe in “stereotyping” and “labelling”, therefore, her purchase decisions are not based upon the fear of being associated to a particular group of people. As far as the last situation is concerned,
because she works in a clothing manufacturing company, she is influenced in her personal life by opinion leaders around her because there is no harm in seeking “expert opinion”.

Interviewee 4: The interviewee said that it is important to her that what “social image” of her is being projected, because of the work environment and the position she is involved in. She said that it is important to be associated with the “right people” so that she appears to be “networking right”. Therefore, in situation 5 and 6, she would never go against the “book”. At the same time, as far as situation 7 is concerned, she was of the opinion that sometimes the advice of an opinion leader could also be against the others, so she would only go with a peer’s suggestion if it confirms with the rest as well.

Interviewee 5: The interview stated that she would not mind purchasing a piece of apparel if it relates her to a group of peers she admires (in case of situation 6). This is because there are no “setbacks” involved with such a behaviour. However, in situation 5, she would restrict engaging in such a purchase decision, because it would not only associate her with people she wants to “avoid” but also make her own peers “question” her. In the last situation, she believes that “opinion leaders can be of good help” when she is confused about her choice decision. She also said that not just her peers but even public figures and celebrities influence her that way.

4.7 Conclusion

Therefore, at the end of this chapter, the researcher has summarised, categorised as well as unitised the information collected, as it was mentioned in the data collection section in the previous chapter. Now in the next chapter, the researcher will compare the findings from this chapter against the theory from the literature review chapter.
Chapter 5: Discussion

Having conducted the primary research and analysed its findings, the researcher is now in a position to validate the literature using the results and the information gathered via the qualitative interviews.

Coming to the first set of information analysed, authors have argued that a lower level of self esteem augments greater importance to social identity because they tend to make the subjects more prone to succumb to peer influence (Schmid et. al., 2009; Batra et. al., 2001). From the findings of the research, the researcher found out that three interviewees agreed to placing great importance to social identity because they felt a need to conform. However, interviewee 2 found her social identity to be same as her personal identity. Therefore it could be said that if there was a gap in there, the interviewee could have a different stance. On the other hand, interviewee 3 did not give any importance to social identity.

At the same time, Hollingworth (2014) deduced that when consumers were subjected to complexity and calculative choices, they would more often give in to peer advice. From the findings, it was revealed that only Interview 4 and 5 agreed to do that, where as the rest would not give in. At the same time, apart from Interviewee 3, all other respondents agreed that the involvement of their peers in their fashion clothing decisions have increased as they have grown up, therefore validating the theories put forward by Sahay and Sharma (2010), Singh et. al. (2003), Auty and Elliot (2001) and Isler et. al. (1987). Also in line with the proponents of the literature, Interviewee 3 had a different opinion because she still lived with her parents.

Lastly, as per the Influentials theory proposed by Macdonald (2010) as well as the propositions made by Nielsen (2012), Keller and Berry (2003) and Gladwell (2000) that social media has aggravated the peer influence on consumers, Interview 2, 4 and 5’s responses did justify it. However, Interview 1 and 3 had a different stance because of them not being extensively involved in social media.

Coming to the situational based discussion, the researcher has compared the various hypothesis proposed by different authors with what the interviewees have answered. According to the propositions by Ajzen (1991) about the Theory of Planned Behaviour, Dubois’s (2000) theory of consumers desire to conform as well as Hawkes (1975) proposition about the peer influence being a “prescription” for consumer behaviour, in situation 1 and situation 2 (refer previous chapter), consumers should have given in to their
peer’s choices. Other similar stances have been put forward by White and Simpson (2013), Cialdini et. al. (2013), Rimal et. al. (2005) and Kollat and Willett (1967). However, even though all other interviewees justified these theoretical stances, Interviewee 2 and 3 had a different opinion.

Similarly, various authors have placed their hypothesis on the ground that if the consumers were to consume product “publicly” instead of privately, the degree of peer influence tends to be higher and more significant (Linehan, 2008; Childers and Rao, 1992; Bearden and Etzel, 1982). Apart from Interviewee 2 and 3, all other interviewees agreed to having different stands on private and public consumption. Interviewee 2 and 3 stated that the nature of consumption would not affect their purchase decision, however only the nature of product shall have an impact. It was clear that Interviewee 2 and 3 placed more emphasis on the “informational” needs.

According to Linehan (2008) and Ward (1974), the concept of consumer socialisation also has a key role to play in peer group influence. This concept was discussed by giving the interviewees situation 4 (refer previous chapter). To such a situation, all the interviewees agreed that it would lead to a “biased” way of approaching the fashion apparels by them. This could be well justified by the concept of socialisation because it refers to the first point of information that the customer attains that becomes pertinent when it comes to execution.

This brings us to the discussion of the concept of peer group memberships. Authors have argued and discussed various forms of groups consumers wish or wish not to be affiliated with. These groups can be associative in nature or dissociative that the consumers want to avoid (White and Dahl, 2006; Banister and Hogg, 2004; Lowrey et. al., 2001; Markus and Nurius, 1986). Having discussed these points with the interviewees, the researcher finds out that apart from Interview 2 and 3, all other interviewees didn’t want to be stereotyped with an avoidance group as well as didn’t want to be left out of a desired group. The neutrality of Interview 2 and 3 can be interpreted so, owing to their independent lifestyle or also the concept of high self esteem leading to lower effect of peer influence as drawn out by Batra et. al. (2001) and Schmid et. al. (2009).

The researcher also pointed out the role of opinion leaders as proposed by various authors, which is also related to the Influentials Theory (Shoham and Ruvio, 2008; Tanner et. al., 2008; Forsyth, 2000; Lockwood and Kunda, 1997, 2000; Tripp et. al., 1994; Kamins, 1990; Latane, 1981; Latane and Nida, 1980). The findings from the interviews validated the
existence and the influence of such opinion leaders by 100% agreement by all the interviewees.

Having discussed the findings against the literature, the researcher by the end of this discussion, is now clear about the various research questions that were laid down at the start of this exploratory study. The researcher has been able to draw out conclusions from the literature about the understanding of the concept of peer group influence, which was validated by the qualitative interviews. The various factors that contribute to such influence on consumer behaviour were pinned down from a critical analysis of the literature and then a qualitative analysis on the young Indian women participants in the primary research. The theoretical concepts were studied with respect to the purchase decisions made by women in fashion apparels sector and it was validated that the concept of peer influence is equally amplified and effective in this sector as well, as it is in other product categories. Also, as a research question to find out if Indian women found it difficult to negate the effect of peer influence in making their apparel purchase decisions, the researcher was able to find out that Indian women are effectively susceptible to peer influence.

The research could have had further profound findings and observations if the scope of the research was not restricted by the sample criteria and the concept being tested. The research could have been more insightful if women across different age groups were considered, or if women who were still students and were not working were also involved in the research. At the same time, if the concept of peer influence was studied in light of the conservative culture and societal norms present in the Indian society, the research could have had different implications. However, given the time constraint and the nature of the research, the research had to be conducted within the given criterions. Nevertheless, this research could be used as a stepping-stone to further study the nature of peer influence on young Indian women with broader and different perspectives as mentioned above.
Chapter 6: Conclusion

The fashion clothing involvement of the young Indian women is not only affected by the latest fashion trends prevalent, but also by the consciousness of their group identity or the social identity. As far as the group membership needs are concerned, they also have a subconscious effect on the purchase decisions that these women make. The researcher by means of qualitative interviews got a subjective inkling and insight into how the young Indian women make their apparel purchase decisions. Then these findings were pitted against the various hypotheses that were generated from a detailed literature review. At the end, the researcher concluded that even though not all the interviews were subjected to peer influence, the influence did exist and various factors determining it were argued in the previous chapter.

The researcher explored the concept of peer influence as a wholesome concept in depth, confined it further to the product category of fashion clothing, extended the concept further to the Indian context and then chose a sample of young Indian women, owing to the literature review that justified how young people associated more with peers as well as how women were more prone to peer influence than men. The interviews conducted were then applied to the theory that validated the various elements that were explored from the literature review.

As a future recommendation, the researcher suggests that further research could be conducted to study the influence on peers on young Indian women, if a broader age group is studied and various cultural and sub cultural factors that form a part of the collectivist Indian society is also considered. However, this research gives the future researchers a good stepping ground for further exploration. Further research would only broaden the scope of the study and provide marketers with a broader insight and a more holistic idea of the dynamically evolving consumer behaviour.
Chapter 7: Reflective Analysis

This section of the paper gives me an opportunity to throw light upon and reflect that how the entire process of writing this thesis, as well as the wholesome experience of being a part of the Masters of Business Administration (Marketing) program has imparted me with the knowledge that I initially intended to gain.

Prior to commencing my MBA programme in January 2014, I already had a bachelor’s degree with a dual major in finance and marketing. Post that, I was working as a business consultant with one of the financial firms for different multinational clients and had reviewed various different processes. My rationale for undertaking a master’s degree in business was to broaden my knowledge in the field and at the same time streamline it into the field of marketing.

During my MBA programme, through modules like International Management and Business Strategy, I was bestowed with a broader sense of global business. However, it was with modules like Integrated Marketing Communications, Performance Driven Marketing and Marketing Innovations, that I got a deep insight into the field of Marketing. This happened by means of various case analysis, business plan and marketing plan assignments and projects. During the course of my programme, I had understood that I wanted to study further about ‘people’ and yet remain restricted to the field of marketing. This is the rationale behind me choosing the topic of ‘peer group influence’ for my dissertation.

As a part of my learning in modules such as ‘Research Methods 1’ and ‘Research Methods 2’ it was clear that a mere interest in a topic is not enough for conducting a thesis. The access to resources and informational was equally pivotal. Therefore, one of the biggest challenges that I faced initially, that turned out to be my strength by the end of this course was doing the right kind of research.

Some of the challenges that I faced and have overcome during my MBA programme and primarily during the dissertation phase were as follows:

• Research: Prior to the start of my programme, I had minimal knowledge of using research based software and tools and hence I lacked an experience of conducting detailed research and at the same time be weary of plagiarism. However, having done so many assignments during my programme, and undertaken tutorials from the library
staff, I was able to hone my research skills while writing my thesis in an amplified way. I feel confident now about my research skills by the end of this dissertation phase.

- Problem Handling: Having worked in the corporate field earlier, I was used to having assigned different delegated tasks in a team and hence everyone was best at doing what they do. A dissertation involved me handling all aspects of a project, such as research work, writing, IT skills, networking and so on. Therefore, there were times when I found myself entangled in a lot of tasks. However, with the knowledge that I gained from my Personal and Professional Development module in the first semester, I finally tried to solve the issues that I kept facing over the course of the thesis and did sail through.

- Working with People: As a part of group projects during the modules as well as when I had to deal with participants to the dissertation research, I did realise that I was facing challenges when I had to deal with people. It was during this trial and test phase of actually having to be in the situation, that I did tend to develop my people skills and I feel very confident about doing so in future. There have been problems during the course of conducting interviews with my interviewees because of the geographic time zone differences. It was then that I realised that I had to accommodate their schedule with mine in order to get the work done, and not just compromise on anyone’s time alone.

- Leadership skills: Over the various group projects that I have been engaged in during the duration of my programme, I realised that there has to be a leader in every group to pilot the course of work. Also, during the dissertation phase, I happen to realise that sometimes it is important to lead the different voices within you. During this entire phase, I have seen myself taking up the role of leading my group mates as well as myself to carry out the work efficiently, compiling the work and presenting the final draft. I am glad that I am able to partly learn the skills of being a leader.

- Time and Task Management: The dissertation phase of my programme, involved a lot of tasks that too in a given frame of time. The restrictions imposed on every task by the deadlines in place, required me to manage my time well. Having done the thesis in the given time frame, gives me a sense of accomplishment to have managed by time well.

Out of the different learning styles that I have read about and all the experiences that I have had during the process of writing my thesis, I have come to a realisation that I would be an ‘assimilator’ as per the different learners that Kolb’s model states. I learn more by concrete experiences and logic and then after by reflectively thinking about it. I personally feel that
this self-realisation would help me go a long way going forward in my futuristic career endeavours.

This entire MBA programme as well as the dissertation phase has been a thoroughly engaging and enriching process for me. I have developed deep knowledge of about my topic that is the peer group influence. My future goal is to pursue a second master’s degree in a few years time in the field of psychology so that I could further develop my people skills and knowledge about the consumer behaviour. All the research that I have conducted as a part of this thesis and all the knowledge that I have gained during the process has given me the additional urge to pursue this field of study in the future.
Chapter 8: Bibliography

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Appendix A: Information Sheet for Participants

**Project Title:** An exploratory study of Peer Group Influence: How young Indian women choose the clothes that they buy.

You are being asked to take part in a research study on Peer Group Influence, which aims to explore to concept in great depth and test the theoretical stances by dint of qualitative interviews on Young Indian Women.

I am Abishek Marwaha, an MBA (Marketing) candidate from Dublin Business School, Ireland and am conducting this research as a part of my program. My supervisor for this research study is Mr. John Staunton.

**The Process**

As a part of this research, you will take part in an qualitative one-to-one interview with the researcher. The researcher will ask you questions about your shopping experience with your peers, certain personality based questions and peer group related questions.

The questions will be open ended and discussion oriented, and at the same time certain hypothetical situations would be given in order to learn your responses to such situations.

Owing to the different geographical locations of the interviewer and the interviewee, the interviews would be conducted online over Skype Messenger, at a convenient for both the members in the interview.

**The Time**

The interview would consist of approximately 15 open ended questions and would last from 20-25 minutes. However the actual time would also depend upon the course and the nature of the discussion.

**Participant Rights**

You may decide to terminate your participation from this research study at any time without any explanation required. You could also ask for any information provided to be withdrawn. You may also choose to not respond to any particular topic during the interview.
You have the right to ask any questions about the procedure of this research interview, unless answering that could interfere with the outcome of the research. You can contact the researcher, if you have any query with regards to points in this information sheet.

**Confidentiality**

The data collected will not contain any personal information about you, apart from your age, sex, nationality, geographic location and your working status.

**Further Information**

I or/ and my supervisor Mr. John Staunton would be glad to answer your questions, if you have any further query. You can contact me on marwaha.abishek@gmail.com and my supervisor on john.staunton@dbs.ie.

Thank You.
Abishek Marwaha
Appendix B: Interview Questions

Basic Background

1. Please give a basic background of your age, ethnicity, and your work profile.
2. What would you briefly say about the growing fashion apparel industry in India and how has it affected the collectivist culture when it comes to Indian Women?
3. How would you describe a shopping experience with your peers, in terms of the interactions with them?
4. Would you say that your peers do have a good knowledge of the fashion trends prevalent in your time and how much importance would you place to their opinions?

Personality Related Questions

5. How important is your social identity to you and how does it affect you in terms of choosing the clothes that you buy?
6. How would you say you deal with complex choices and in case of a dilemma, how much important would you place on your peer’s opinion?
7. How would you say that the influence of your peers over your lifestyle clothing choices have changed as you have grown over the years?
8. How would you say that the social media reviews of peers you admire and look up to, influences you?

Peer Group Based Questions

9. Say for instance, you are shopping with your peers and they all like a particular piece of apparel, which according to them is a good specimen of the latest fashion. You do not really like it, but would you still agree with them and what would be your reasons?
10. In another case, you are shopping with your peers and you like a particular piece of fashion apparel, where as your peers do not approve of it being fashionable enough. How would it affect your choice versus if you were shopping alone?
11. You are to purchase a particular fashion apparel that you personally like and would wear ‘privately’ and not ‘publicly’. However you know your peers would disapprove of it. How would it affect your choice?
12. You were informed about a particular style of apparel by your peers, who all had either good or bad reviews about it. How would it affect your approach to reviewing the same piece of apparel?
13. There is a group of people you wish not to be associated with, however you do like the fashion apparels that they wear. How would that affect your choice and purchase decision, if you were to engage in buying similar apparels?

14. There is a group of people you wish to be associated with, however you do not like the fashion apparels that they wear. Would you still like to engage in wearing similar apparels so as to ‘fit in’ among them? Please give reasons.

15. You have a peer who has a great sense of fashion. How would his or her opinion affect you?