

Shopping with friends and teens' susceptibility to peer influence

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Abstract

While some retailers may discourage groups of teenagers from shopping in their stores, there is reason to believe that peer groups may affect teen behaviors and evaluations in ways that could benefit retailers. In this paper, we examine the phenomenon of teenagers' shopping with friends, and, in particular, whether shopping with friends might enhance teens' attitudes toward retailing and their tendency to spend more when shopping with friends. We also examine why teens shop with friends. Specifically, we relate friends' knowledge and teens' age to teenagers' susceptibility to informational and normative influence from friends. Susceptibility to peer influence is then related to various aspects of teen shopping, such as frequency and enjoyment of shopping with pals, which, in turn, are related to sentiment toward retailing and spending tendencies. With the exception of susceptibility to normative influence, results based on data from a sample of high school students generally supported the model.

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"Teen-agers... the very word may strike fear in the hearts of mall developers, managers and retailers worried about security and the impact teen-agers can have on their operations." (*Chain Store Age Executive*, 1994).

As evidenced by this quote, traditionally, many retailers have "looked down" on teenagers, viewing them as an "inconvenience" that can negatively impact security and operations (*Andreoli*, 1996; *Chain Store Age Executive*, 1994). In the past, heavy teen traffic and the many hours spent by teens at shopping centers was viewed unfavorably by retailing managers. However, with the teen population on the rise, retailers have recently seen the benefit to targeting teen shoppers and their large discretionary spending power (*Setlow*, 2000). For example, in 1998, teens spent approximately \$141 billion of their own and parents' money (*Brazil*, 1999). Although many retailers have recognized the benefit of targeting the teen segment, there is some evidence that teens do not hold particularly positive attitudes toward retailers. For example, *Mallalieu* (2000) reports that teens perceive that they are not always treated with respect as a consumer in

terms of service by retail salespeople and may feel somewhat isolated in retail establishments. While some retailers may discourage teen groups or "packs" from "hanging out" in their stores or malls for fear of shoplifting and the like, it may be that peer groups affect teens' retail attitudes and shopping behaviors in ways that could prove beneficial to retailers. Research on adult consumers suggests that adults who shop in groups may cover larger areas of stores, purchase more, and spend more money than when shopping alone (*Granbois*, 1968; *Sommer, Wynes, & Brinkley*, 1992; *Woodside & Sims*, 1976). Perhaps similar effects exist for teen consumers, such that the social context of shopping with friends produces positive results for retailers in terms of the sentiments teens have toward retailers and the amount teens spend when shopping with friends. Indeed, given the crucial role peer groups play in adolescent development, teens may be especially subject to peer influence and particularly prone to shop with friends. In fact, research has indicated that teens shop primarily with friends and that they like being with friends while they shop (*Tootelian & Gaedeke*, 1992). At issue, however, is *how* shopping with friends might affect retailing attitudes and behaviors. More importantly, from a theoretical context, *why* do teens (or, more generally, buyers) shop with friends? What processes underlie teens' ten-

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dency to shop with friends? The focus of our research is to address these important but under-researched questions.

We define peers as contemporaries in age cohort and social circle to the teen and friends as an important group of closer peers. Our basic premise is that teens' evaluations of retailing are an output of a social comparison process with co-oriented others. Specifically, we propose that shopping with co-oriented friends provides teens with information and normative standards by which teens may evaluate retailing phenomena. This susceptibility to interpersonal influence from friends, then, shapes the construction of retailing attitudes and behaviors.

In particular, we conceptualize teens' shopping attitudes and behaviors to be a function of how teens feel about their relationship with their friends, that is, how they are influenced by friends. Specifically, in our conceptual model, we relate friends' knowledge and teen's age to teen's susceptibility to informational and normative influence from friends. Susceptibility to friends' influence is then related to various aspects of teen shopping, such as frequency and enjoyment of shopping with friends, which in turn, are related to teen's sentiment toward retailing and their spending tendencies.

In sum, the purpose of our research is to examine how the social influence of friends is related to teens' retailing attitudes and behaviors. A greater understanding of the nature and scope of friends' influence on teens' retail attitudes and behaviors may help retailers to develop more effective strategies to appeal to this growing and increasingly financially powerful segment. By examining issues that have not been directly addressed in past research on teen consumers, this study also enriches our knowledge of teenage consumer behavior and addresses the more general question of *why* buyers might shop with friends. We develop a conceptual model incorporating these ideas and test it using data from a sample of high-school students. In developing the model, we review literatures related to teen consumer behavior, social influence, and adults' use of purchase pals and draw on social comparison theory to help integrate these ideas.

Literature review

Peer influence and teen behavior

Two competing perspectives offer explanations for how peer influence affects adolescents' behavior. On the one hand, much research has focused on the role of peer pressure in various detrimental and negative teenage behaviors, such as smoking and drug and alcohol use (see, e.g., Brown, Clasen, & Eicher, 1986; Halebsky, 1987; Melby et al., 1993). In marketing, peer effects have been studied in relation to adolescent shoplifting and consumption of harmful products (see, e.g., Cox, Cox, & Moschis, 1990; Rose, Bearden, & Teel, 1992).

An alternative view casts the role of peer influence on teenagers in a more positive light. Indeed, one of the primary

developmental tasks of adolescence is to establish an identity separate from parents (see, e.g., Gecas, 1981; Gecas & Seff, 1990; Youniss & Smollar, 1985). Because peer groups are voluntary in nature and peers are not directly responsible for monitoring teens' actions, peers may provide an early forum in which teens can try out various aspects of the social self (Gecas & Seff, 1990; Youniss & Smollar, 1985). As such, peers may be one of the earliest groups by which individuals learn to deal with the world outside the family. Indeed, early sociologists pointed to the primary nature of peer groups in socializing individuals, in addition to the important role played by the family (see, e.g., Cooley, 1909). And one of the most important peer groups is friends.

In marketing, studies have shown that consumption communication with peers positively affects teens' social motivations for consumption, materialistic values, and the tendency to use peer preferences in evaluating products (see, e.g., Churchill & Moschis, 1979; Moschis & Churchill, 1978; Moschis & Moore, 1979). In a consumer context, friends may help adolescents evaluate products, brands, and stores in ways that enhance a teen's sense of belonging, thereby helping teens to establish an identity separate from parents. For example, shopping with friends may help assure that teens make "appropriate" purchases, that is, products and brands that create favorable images among their friends. Peer groups may reward "appropriate" purchases with enhanced standing in the group. Susceptibility to friends' influence, then, may help teens to construct desirable social identities. The nature of social influence and teens' susceptibility to friends' influence are discussed in the following.

Social influence

Social influence has long been recognized as an important force shaping an individual's consumer behavior. Reference groups may exert influence in a number of ways: by providing information in ambiguous situations (i.e., informational influence), by setting normative standards of conduct, and/or by enhancing an individual's self-image (i.e., normative influence). These influences may occur before purchase (e.g., through word-of-mouth communication and patterns of information-seeking), during purchase (e.g., when others are present in purchase settings), and after purchase (e.g., when others are present in consumption contexts).

Two primary types of social influence have been identified in the literature: informational and normative social influence (see, e.g., Bearden & Etzel, 1982; Bearden, Netemeyer, & Teel, 1989, 1990; Burnkrant & Cousineau, 1975; Childers & Rao, 1992; Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Park & Lessig, 1977; Price & Feick, 1984). *Informational* social influence is "an influence to accept information obtained from another as evidence about reality" (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955, p. 629). Informational influence occurs through a process of internalization (see, e.g., Bearden & Etzel, 1982; Burnkrant & Cousineau, 1975; Kelman, 1961; Park & Lessig, 1977). Here, a social other has influence

to the extent that (s)he provides information that enhances another's understanding of some phenomenon.

The second type of influence is *normative* in nature. Normative social influence is "an influence to comply with the positive expectations of another" (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955, p. 629). In marketing, researchers have distinguished between two forms of normative influence: utilitarian and value-expressive influence (see, e.g., Bearden & Etzel, 1982; Childers & Rao, 1992; Park & Lessig, 1977; cf. Bearden et al., 1989, 1990; Burnkrant & Cousineau, 1975; Price & Feick, 1984). Utilitarian influence is operative when individuals conform to the expectations of others in order to receive rewards or avoid punishments. This type of influence occurs through a process of compliance, which is particularly likely if behavior can be observed by others and others have the ability to mediate rewards and punishments (see, e.g., Bearden & Etzel, 1982; Burnkrant & Cousineau, 1975; Childers & Rao, 1992; Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; Kelman, 1961; Park & Lessig, 1977).

The second form of normative influence is value-expressive influence, which arises when another has relevance for the consumer's self-concept (see, e.g., Bearden & Etzel, 1982; Childers & Rao, 1992; Kelman, 1961; Park & Lessig, 1977). Value-expressive influence occurs through a process of identification whereby individuals attempt to associate themselves with positively evaluated groups and distance themselves from negatively evaluated groups. Such actions serve to maintain or enhance the individual's self-concept (see, e.g., Bearden & Etzel, 1982; Burnkrant & Cousineau, 1975; Kelman, 1961; Park & Lessig, 1977).

On the basis of these considerations, teens may yield to friends' influence because the other (1) possesses relevant information, (2) can mediate rewards and punishments valued by the teen, and/or (3) is relevant to the teen's self-concept. Bearden et al. (1989, p. 474) term consumers' tendencies to yield to the influence of others "consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence," which is "the need to identify or enhance one's image with significant others through the acquisition and use of products and brands [value-expressive influence], the willingness to conform to the expectations of others regarding purchase decisions [utilitarian influence], and/or the tendency to learn about products and brands by observing others and/or seeking information from others [informational influence]." Therefore, the three manifestations of social influence (value-expressive, utilitarian, and informational) are embodied in the concept of consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence.

In attempting to measure consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence, however, Bearden et al. (1989, 1990) found that value-expressive and utilitarian influence were not measurably distinct. Consequently, they collapsed items measuring susceptibility to utilitarian and value-expressive influence into a single measure of susceptibility to "normative influence." There may be some conceptual justification for combining value-expressive and utilitarian influence in this manner. Perhaps an individual must identify with an-

other in order for the other to mediate rewards and punishments the individual values. Therefore, following the work of Bearden et al. (1989, 1990) and other researchers (e.g., Burnkrant & Cousineau, 1975; Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; Price & Feick, 1984), we conceptualize normative influence as composed of both value-expressive and utilitarian components. In sum, teens may be susceptible to influence from friends because such peers provide needed information and/or because friends can reward desirable behavior and help teens to construct positive self-identities. The role of such influences when individuals shop with others is discussed in the following.

Shopping with friends

One of the most direct examples of how others affect consumer behavior *during* purchase is shopping with friends. Some research has focused on adult consumers' shopping with friends. Purchase pals are "individuals who accompany buyers on their shopping trips in order to assist them with their on-site purchase decisions" (Hartman & Kiecker, 1991, p. 462). In general, previous studies of the shopper-purchase pal dyad have been exploratory or descriptive in nature and have focused on identifying the characteristics and motivations of adults who use purchase pals as a source of information. Research indicates that consumers who are inexperienced and/or who lack confidence in their ability to evaluate products and brands are more likely to take a pal along when they shop (see, e.g., Bell, 1967; Furse, Punj, & Stewart, 1984; Midgley, 1983; Solomon, 1987). Findings suggest that shopping with a friend or pal reduces perceptions of risk and uncertainty that buyers associate with a purchase decision (Kiecker & Hartman, 1993) and increases the buyer's confidence that a wise purchase decision was made (Kiecker & Hartman, 1994). Research on information search confirms that collecting information is an effective strategy for reducing perceived risk and uncertainty and that buyers often consult personal sources to acquire information (see, e.g., Locander & Hermann, 1979; Lutz & Reilly, 1973; Midgley, 1983; Price & Feick, 1984; Srinivasan, 1990).

Research on buyers' motivations for using purchase pals is consistent with the notion that purchase pals provide information that helps buyers reduce risk and uncertainty and increase confidence in their decisions. For example, Hartman and Kiecker (1991) identified motivations for purchase pal use that fall into two main categories: social motivations (e.g., for fun, enjoyment, or company) and assistance motivations (e.g., to provide moral support for decisions and product expertise/information). Moreover, Kiecker and Hartman (1993) found that over 75% of consumers using purchase pals for assistance reported some type of risk (e.g., social/psychological, financial, functional, time, or physical risk) reduction as a reason for shopping with a pal.

Taken together, these studies suggest that relatively inexperienced consumers who lack confidence in their ability to evaluate products and brands shop with purchase pals

who reduce perceived risk and uncertainty through provision of information. Presumably, it is the fact that pals possess greater knowledge of products, brands, stores, or other relevant marketing phenomena that contributes to their ability to reduce risk and increase a buyer's confidence in the purchase decision. And the social impact of a group of friends is likely to be even greater than that found in the previous pal literature that focused on the shopper–pal dyadic relationship (Latané & Nida, 1980). Thus, teens' shopping with purchase pals may serve important roles in providing information to teens and may also aid teens in defining positive self-identities.

Social comparison theory

In summary, past research suggests that peers are an important influence on teens and that peer influence can have positive effects on teens' self-development and consumer behavior. Also, two distinct forms of influence have been identified in the literature: informational and normative influence. Thus, teens may be susceptible to influence from friends because these peers may provide information to teens or because friends can reward positive behaviors and help teens to construct positive self-identities. Moreover, research on adults' use of purchase pals suggests that adults may shop with pals who are more knowledgeable than they are.

These ideas are consistent with and can be synthesized under social comparison theory (Festinger, 1950, 1954). According to social comparison theory, people have a basic need to evaluate themselves. In the absence of objective standards by which to evaluate one's own attitudes and behaviors, people will use social bases of comparison as evaluative standards. Moreover, in selecting social bases for comparison, the theory asserts that individuals will seek to compare themselves with others who are highly similar to themselves. Indeed, research on social comparison indicates that consumers compare themselves with co-oriented others (see, e.g., Feick, Price, & Higie, 1986; Moschis, 1976; Price & Feick, 1984).

On the basis of social comparison theory, then, the friends with whom teens shop are likely to be similar to teens (co-orientation), but may be perceived to have slightly more knowledge than the teen does (given that the purchase pal literature suggests that people tend to shop with others who they believe are more knowledgeable and can therefore reduce buyers' risk perceptions). Also, given that peer evaluations of purchases help teens to enhance their standing in the group and to construct social identities, shopping with friends provides a unique opportunity for teens to make direct comparisons with similar others; thus, teens may be especially likely to shop with friends and particularly subject to the influence of the co-oriented others with whom they shop. Indeed, teens may be susceptible to informational influence from friends thought to possess relevant information about products, brands, stores, and other marketing phenomena. In addition, teens may be susceptible to norma-

tive influence because they identify with friends and care about friends' evaluations of their behavior. In short, consistent with social comparison theory, we assume that teens shop with co-oriented others who are very similar to themselves but who are likely to be perceived as slightly more knowledgeable. Through the process of comparing themselves with these co-oriented others by yielding to their informational and normative influence and shopping with these slightly more knowledgeable peers (frequency and enjoyment of shopping with friends), teens' attitudes toward retailers and their retail behaviors are shaped (sentiment toward retailing and spending tendencies).

Model development

On the basis of the considerations outlined above, we developed a conceptual model for the role of friends' influence in teen shopping behavior (see Fig. 1). The logic underlying our theoretical model is detailed in the following sections.

Friends' knowledge

To the extent that teens perceive their friends to have greater knowledge of products, brands, and stores, one might expect teens to be susceptible to both normative and informational influence from these friends. On the one hand, friends may possess knowledge of the social or symbolic aspects of marketing phenomena, such as what products, brands, and stores would impress the teen's membership peer groups or cliques to which the teen would like to belong. On the other hand, friends may possess knowledge of the technical or performance aspects of products, brands, and stores. In the first instance, the influence of friends would have normative implications and, in the second, the influence would be informational in nature. On the basis of these considerations, we hypothesize that:

H1:. The greater the perception of a friend's knowledge of marketing phenomena relative to the teen, the more susceptible the teen will be to a friend's normative influence.

H2:. The greater the perception of a friend's knowledge of marketing phenomena relative to the teen, the more susceptible the teen will be to a friend's informational influence.

Friends' greater relative knowledge may also have implications for teens' enjoyment of shopping with friends. Hartman and Kiecker (1991) found that one reason people shopped with purchase pals was because they enjoyed the shopping experience more when a pal accompanied them. To the extent that friends know more about shopping-related factors (e.g., products, stores, etc.), they may facilitate the process of shopping for teens, which may enhance teens' enjoyment of shopping with friends. Shopping with a knowledgeable friend may also increase teens' confidence in their

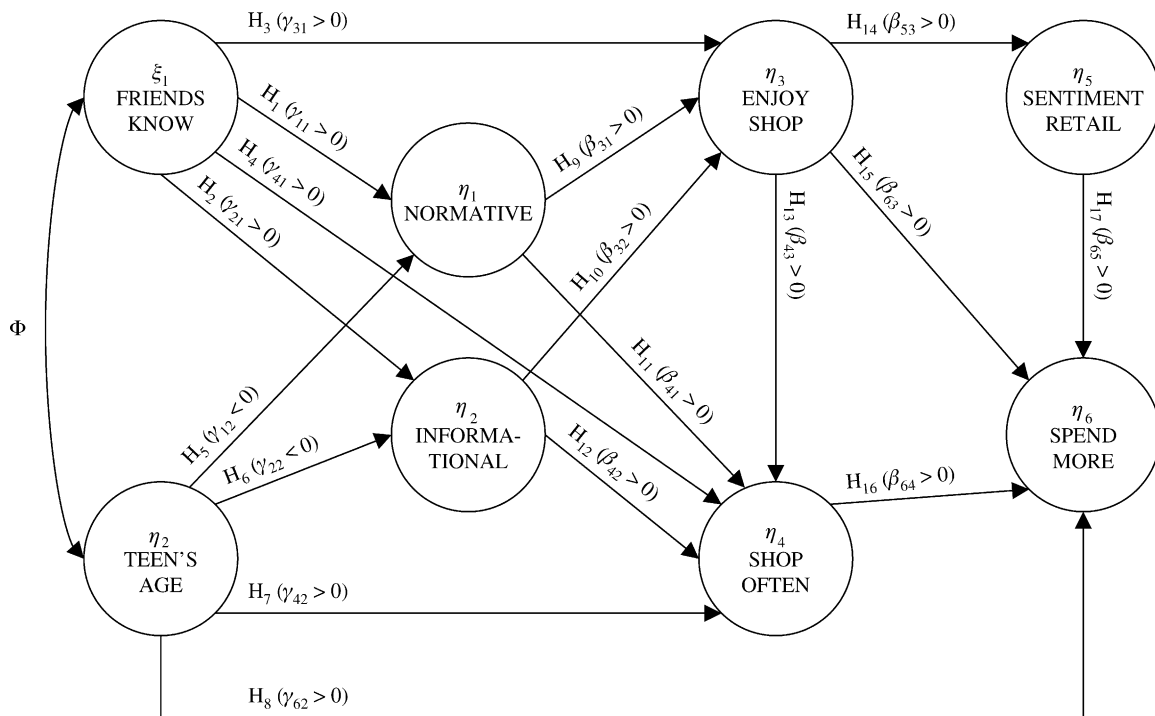


Fig. 1. Conceptual model.

purchase decisions and, hence, their enjoyment of this experience. Enjoyment of shopping with a slightly more knowledgeable friend is also consistent with the “unidirectional upward pressure to enhance performance” hypothesis of social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954), according to which individuals look for ways to improve performance and so may use others of slightly greater ability as comparison points for improving their own behavior. This opportunity to enhance performance by comparison with more knowledgeable friends is likely to be enjoyable for teens. Therefore, we expect that:

H3: Friends’ greater knowledge of marketing phenomena relative to the teen will be positively associated with teens’ enjoyment of shopping with friends.

Finally, to the extent that their friends possess greater knowledge of marketing phenomena, it is to a teen’s advantage to shop with a friend. Having a knowledgeable source readily available in the purchase setting has a number of advantages for buyers, such as reducing the effort associated with acquiring information and evaluating products, brands, and stores (see, e.g., Price & Feick, 1984). Therefore,

H4: Friend’s greater knowledge of marketing phenomena relative to the teen will be positively associated with teens’ tendency to shop often with friends.

Teens’ age

In marketing, age has been shown to be related to differences in many aspects of teens’ consumer behavior,

such as adolescents’ influence in purchase decisions and acquisition of various consumer skills (see, e.g., Beatty & Talpade, 1994; Moschis & Churchill, 1978; Moschis, Moore, & Stephens, 1977). Given that teen shopping behavior may be similarly related to age differences, we felt it was important to systematically examine age in the context of teen shopping. In particular, research in developmental psychology suggests that peer conformity may vary across adolescence. Some evidence indicates that peer conformity dispositions exhibit an inverted U-shaped pattern from preadolescence to late adolescence (see, e.g., Berndt, 1979; Brown, Clasen, & Eicher, 1986; cf. Gavin & Furman, 1989). These findings suggest that preadolescents and late adolescents are less likely to conform to friends than are early or middle adolescents. Preadolescents are still dependent on their parents, whereas, by late adolescence, a greater sense of self-identity and maturity reduces susceptibility to peer pressure.

In sum, findings on peer conformity suggest that susceptibility to interpersonal influence varies across adolescence. Given that our sample is confined to adolescents (i.e., we do not include preadolescents in this research), we hypothesize that:

H5: Teens’ age will be negatively associated with susceptibility to normative influence from friends.

H6: Teens’ age will be negatively associated with susceptibility to informational influence from friends.

Age is also likely to affect the extent to which teens shop with friends. Relative to their younger counterparts, older

teens' may have greater independence and freedom, and consequently more opportunities to shop with friends. For example, older teens may be able to drive to stores themselves. Therefore, we expect that:

H7:. Teens' age will be positively associated with teens' tendency to shop often with friends.

Finally, age is likely to have implications for how much teens spend when they shop with friends. Mangleburg and Brown (1995) found that older teens were more likely to have jobs, whereas younger teens were more likely to receive allowances. Moreover, teens who worked earned more money than teens who received allowances. Because older teens are more likely to work and, therefore, to have more money at their disposal, we expect that:

H8:. Teens' age will be positively associated with teens' tendencies to spend more money when they shop with friends.

Susceptibility to friends' Influence

Being susceptible to influence from another implies that others' opinions and evaluations are important. Whether others' opinions provide evidence about reality or serve to maintain or enhance the individual's self-esteem, the consumer has significant others along who can help meet his/her informational and social (normative) needs. Consistent with social comparison theory, shopping with co-oriented others facilitates the process of social comparison, whether the co-oriented others provide information about marketing phenomena or serve to support positively valued group norms. Indeed, shopping with friends is a social activity, and, to the extent that friends' opinions are valued, buyers are likely to evaluate social situations in which such important individuals are present more positively, in large part because co-shopping facilitates direct comparisons with these co-oriented others and makes it easier for teens to evaluate their own behaviors and opinions as a result. Therefore,

H9:. Teens' susceptibility to normative influence from friends will be positively associated with teens' enjoyment of shopping with friends.

H10:. Teens' susceptibility to informational influence from friends will be positively associated with teens' enjoyment of shopping with friends.

Susceptibility to influence from friends is also likely to affect the extent to which teens shop with friends. As stated previously, friends may help reduce uncertainty by providing information that helps buyers make wiser purchase decisions (informational influence). Friends may also provide feedback that helps buyers construct desirable social identities (normative influence). In either case, taking friends along when shopping benefits the buyer because it permits

buyers to make direct comparisons with others and to draw directly on others' knowledge. Therefore, we expect that:

H11:. Teens' susceptibility to normative influence from friends will be positively associated with teens' tendencies to shop often with friends.

H12:. Teens' susceptibility to informational influence from friends will be positively associated with teens' tendencies to shop often with friends.

Shopping with friends

One might expect that the more teens enjoy shopping with friends, the more likely they will be to do so. This follows from the fact that positive affect toward the experience of shopping with friends is likely to increase the frequency with which teens shop with friends.

H13:. Teens' enjoyment of shopping with friends will be positively associated with teens' tendencies to shop often with friends.

Similarly, enjoyment of shopping with friends is likely to affect favorably teens' sentiment toward retailing, defined as consumers' attitude toward the distribution/retailing component of marketing practice (Gaski & Etzel, 1986). When teens enjoy shopping with friends, there may be a halo or spillover effect on sentiment toward retailing based on teens' positive evaluations of their direct experience of shopping with friends. In other words, positive evaluations of the shopping experience are likely to generalize to evaluations of retailing in general. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

H14:. Teens' enjoyment of shopping with friends will be positively associated with teens' sentiments toward retailing.

Teens who enjoy shopping with friends and teens who frequently shop with friends are also likely to spend more money. For example, Woodside and Sims (1976) found that consumers who shopped with a friend were more likely to purchase an eight-track tape cleaner than were consumers who shopped alone. Similarly, Granbois (1968) suggested that, when consumers shop with others, they spend more and make more unplanned purchases. Finally, Sommer, Wynes, and Brinkley (1992) found that consumers who shop in groups spend more time in stores and purchase more goods than do those who shop alone. These results support prior findings that purchase pals provide information that reduces uncertainty, thereby increasing the likelihood of purchase. These findings may also reflect the fact that teens wish to avoid appearing "cheap" in the eyes of friends and therefore purchase more when shopping with friends. There may also be some degree of competition or comparison in spending between teens and the friends with whom they shop (i.e.,

whoever has the most shopping bags “wins”). Finally, the enjoyment of shopping with friends and the positive mood engendered may result in more favorable evaluations of products and, thus, result in teens’ spending more when shopping with friends. By similar logic, favorable sentiments toward retailing will likely translate into increased teen spending when shopping with friends. Therefore, we expect that:

H15.: Teens’ enjoyment of shopping with friends will be positively associated with teens’ tendencies to spend more when shopping with friends.

H16.: Teens’ tendency to shop often with friends will be positively associated with the tendency to spend more money when shopping with friends.

H17.: Teens’ sentiment toward retailing will be positively associated with the tendency to spend more when shopping with friends.

Method

Data for this study were collected via a survey of adolescents attending a public high school in a Southeastern city. An urban-area school was selected to ensure adequate representation across various background characteristics (e.g., race/ethnicity, family type, etc.). Surveys were administered to students in class. Respondents were informed that the purpose of the research was to “learn what teenagers like yourself think about consumer-related issues and how you act as consumers.” Students were asked not to discuss their responses with classmates while completing the survey. Finally, respondents were told that their responses would remain anonymous and confidential. To provide an incentive for participation, the school was paid \$2 for each completed questionnaire. Students, however, were unaware of this incentive.

Sample

Three-hundred and fifty-four students participated in the study. However, due to missing data, useable responses were obtained from 315 individuals. Analysis of cases with missing data indicated that data were missing on a random basis. Therefore, incomplete responses were deleted from the sample. Analyses reported here, then, are based on an effective sample of 315 students.

The average age of students was 16 years. The sample was 55% female. With respect to race/ethnicity, 73% were white, 18% were black, not of Hispanic origin, and nine percent were members of other ethnic groups. For family type, 29% of respondents were from single-parent families, 16% were from step-families, and 47% were from intact families, which compares favorably with census estimates of 30, 20, and 50% of families with children, respectively (US

Bureau of the Census, 1994). Thus, the sample, appeared to be representative across select background characteristics.

Measures

Items used to measure constructs and item characteristics are presented in Table 1. Quality of the measures was evaluated using procedures outlined by Gerbing and Anderson (1988) and is discussed in the results section. Except where noted, items were measured on seven-point scales ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.”

Teens’ susceptibility to normative influence was measured by three of eight items developed by Bearden et al. (1989). Only a subset of normative influence items was included to reduce the length of the survey and to simplify respondents’ tasks. Teens’ susceptibility to informational influence was measured by all four items developed by Bearden et al. (1989). Items were modified slightly to focus on influence from friends. Sentiment toward retailing was measured by three items developed by Gaski and Etzel (1986) for the retailing subscale of the consumer sentiment toward marketing scale.

Although past research on purchase pals suggested that friends’ knowledge of marketing phenomena, teens’ enjoyment of shopping with friends, and the frequency with which teens shop with friends were likely to be important in understanding consumers’ use of purchase pals (see, e.g., Hartman & Kiecker, 1991; Kiecker & Hartman, 1993), these constructs had not been specifically measured or tested. As described subsequently, these scales were developed specifically for this research.

We define friends’ relative knowledge as the extent to which teens perceive that the friends with whom they shop have greater knowledge of marketing phenomena relative to themselves. We developed three items to measure this construct. Three items were developed to measure enjoyment of shopping, which we define as the extent to which teens positively evaluate the experience of shopping with friends as compared with shopping alone. Frequency of shopping with friends, defined as the extent to which teens engage in the behavior of shopping with friends, was measured by three items, rated on five-point, “never”/“very often” scales. We used a frequency measure to tap this construct, because shopping with friends is a behavior. Finally, single items were used to measure the extent to which teens spend more money when shopping with friends and their age.

Data analysis and results

The conceptual model depicted in Fig. 1 was tested using LISREL 8 (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1996). All analyses used maximum likelihood estimation and the observed covariance matrix. Results are reported in the form of the completely standardized solution. The correlation matrix with standard errors is provided in Table 2.

Table 1
Constructs and associated questionnaire items

Construct indicator	Survey item	Mean	SD
Normative^a			
y ₁	When buying products, I usually buy the ones that I think my friends will approve of.	2.97	1.73
y ₂	I like to know what products and brands make a good impression on my friends.	3.38	1.75
y ₃	It is important that my friends like the products and brands I buy.	3.14	1.59
Informational^a			
y ₄	If I don't have a lot of experience with a product, I often ask my friends about it.	4.40	1.71
y ₅	I often ask my friends to help me choose the best product.	4.15	1.55
y ₆	I often get information about a product from friends before I buy.	4.06	1.52
y ₇	To make sure that I buy the right product or brand, I often look at what my friends are buying and using.	3.72	1.63
Enjoy shop^a			
y ₈	I do not like to shop with friends. (R)	5.69	1.47
y ₉	I do not like to shop by myself.	4.50	1.94
y ₁₀	It's more fun to shop with friends than it is to shop by myself.	5.27	1.78
Shop often^b			
y ₁₁	How often do you go to the mall with friends?	2.21	1.08
y ₁₂	How often do you shop with friends when making a purchase for yourself?	2.06	0.95
y ₁₃	How often do you go to the store with your friends?	2.18	0.97
Sentiment retail^a			
y ₁₄	Most stores provide adequate service.	4.50	1.32
y ₁₅	Most stores serve their customers well.	4.53	1.40
y ₁₆	I find most retail salespeople to be very helpful.	4.17	1.39
Spend more^a			
y ₁₇	I spend more money when I shop with friends than when I shop alone.	4.38	1.92
Friends know^a			
x ₁	The friends with whom I shop know more about products than I do.	3.55	1.23
x ₂	The friends with whom I shop know more about shopping than I do.	3.43	1.35
x ₃	The friends with whom I shop know more about stores than I do.	3.57	1.31
Teens' age			
x ₄	What is your age in years?	16.1	1.40

^a Items were measured on seven-point scales ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."

^b Items were measured on five-point scales ranging from "never" to "very often."

Measurement model

Following the paradigm of scale development advocated by Gerbing and Anderson (1988), we developed a measurement model before estimating the structural paths to test hypothesized relationships. First, item–total correlations were examined for each construct. Items with low correlations were deleted if they tapped no additional domain of interest. Then the purified scales were estimated simultaneously in a multiple-factor model as recommended by Gerbing and Anderson (1988). Specifically, a measurement model was estimated in which each item was restricted to load on its a priori factor, and the factors themselves were allowed to correlate. The measurement model was evaluated for unidimensionality, reliability, and convergent and discriminant validity. Table 3 summarizes the LISREL confirmatory factor analysis results for the measurement model.

Hypothesis testing

Given that our conceptualization of the constructs was supported empirically by the measurement model, we pro-

ceeded to evaluate the hypothesized structural relationships. Fig. 2 shows standardized parameter estimates and corresponding *t*-values. All factor loadings (lambda coefficients, not shown) were similar to those reported for the measurement model and statistically significant.

Although the chi square value was statistically significant ($\chi^2_{(172)} = 317, p = .00$), the normed chi square ($\chi^2/df = 1.84$) fell below 2.0. Other fit measures—GFI (.91), AGFI (.89), CFI (.93), NNFI (.91), and RMSR (.06)—suggest that the model fit reasonably well. Though parsimonious in terms of the number of predictors, the a priori model explained 58% of the variance in teens' frequency of shopping with friends (SHOP OFTEN) and 40% of the variance in their enjoyment of shopping with friends (ENJOY SHOP). Additionally, the predictors accounted for a substantial proportion of the variance in susceptibility to NORMATIVE ($R^2 = .26$) and INFORMATIONAL influence ($R^2 = .28$) and teen willingness to spend more (SPEND MORE) when shopping with friends ($R^2 = .25$). Twelve percent of the variance in teens' sentiment toward retailing (SENTIMENT RETAIL) was explained by the model. Taken together, these results suggest that the

Table 2
Correlation matrix and standard deviations

	y1	y2	y3	y4	y5	y6	y7	y8	y9	y10	y11	y12	y13	y14	y15	y16	y17	x1	x2	x3	x4
y1	1.00																				
y2	0.64	1.00																			
y3	0.61	0.64	1.00																		
y4	0.26	0.31	0.21	1.00																	
y5	0.30	0.34	0.38	0.39	1.00																
y6	0.31	0.40	0.35	0.45	0.56	1.00															
y7	0.55	0.57	0.58	0.38	0.37	0.47	1.00														
y8	−0.03	−0.09	0.00	−0.21	−0.25	−0.11	−0.17	1.00													
y9	0.13	0.24	0.19	0.25	0.32	0.16	0.19	−0.40	1.00												
y10	0.16	0.24	0.19	0.31	0.37	0.30	0.24	−0.42	0.56	1.00											
y11	0.08	0.05	0.13	0.32	0.34	0.28	0.21	−0.31	0.15	0.33	1.00										
y12	0.19	0.22	0.22	0.30	0.42	0.45	0.20	−0.36	0.30	0.44	0.54	1.00									
y13	0.09	0.06	0.14	0.27	0.33	0.34	0.11	−0.40	0.27	0.38	0.55	0.69	1.00								
y14	0.00	0.14	0.15	0.12	0.14	0.13	0.09	−0.04	0.15	0.19	0.06	0.16	0.09	1.00							
y15	0.02	0.11	0.01	0.13	0.12	0.10	0.08	−0.13	0.13	0.21	0.06	0.12	0.12	0.58	1.00						
y16	0.15	0.17	0.12	0.14	0.24	0.09	0.12	−0.13	0.22	0.26	0.13	0.22	0.12	0.42	0.42	1.00					
y17	0.14	0.19	0.31	0.19	0.32	0.30	0.40	−0.14	0.19	0.34	0.30	0.39	0.31	0.09	0.02	0.05	1.00				
x1	0.26	0.27	0.28	0.20	0.32	0.24	0.31	−0.02	0.19	0.31	0.04	0.12	−0.04	0.03	−0.02	0.12	0.14	1.00			
x2	0.30	0.34	0.42	0.21	0.26	0.25	0.31	0.09	0.23	0.19	−0.07	0.07	−0.05	0.01	−0.02	0.09	0.11	0.63	1.00		
x3	0.22	0.27	0.35	0.11	0.21	0.25	0.26	0.07	0.17	0.15	−0.09	0.06	−0.06	0.02	−0.01	0.06	0.15	0.52	0.59	1.00	
x4	−0.14	−0.15	−0.16	−0.10	−0.15	−0.13	−0.15	0.15	−0.19	−0.13	−0.10	−0.09	−0.12	−0.13	−0.04	−0.14	−0.04	−0.04	−0.06	−0.05	1.00
SD	1.73	1.75	1.59	1.71	1.55	1.52	1.63	1.47	1.94	1.78	1.08	0.95	0.97	1.32	1.40	1.39	1.92	1.23	1.35	1.31	1.40

model is a reasonable basis upon which to test our research hypotheses.¹

Results

As expected, friends' greater knowledge about marketing phenomena relative to teen shoppers is positively related to teens' susceptibility to normative ($\gamma_{11} = .67$; $t = 6.5$) and informational ($\gamma_{21} = .48$; $t = 5.7$) influence. Our results indicate that an important source of teens' susceptibility to friends' influence is the perception that friends have greater knowledge of marketing phenomena relative to the teen shopper. Friends' greater knowledge of marketing phenomena appears to help teens construct desirable social identities and/or avoid potentially embarrassing or negative social consequences (H1). Also previous research has suggested the positive linkage between friends' greater knowledge of marketing phenomena relative to teens and teens' susceptibility to informational influence (H2); however, this study is among the first to measure and test this idea specifically.

The effects of friends' knowledge on teens' enjoyment of shopping with friends, although positive, was not statistically significant (H3: $\gamma_{31} = .03$; $t = 0.5$). Also contrary to expectations, friends' knowledge had a statistically significant *negative* effect on the frequency with which teens shop with friends (H4: $\gamma_{41} = -.23$; $t = -3.7$). These findings will be discussed more in depth in the following.

As expected, teens' age had a statistically significant negative effect on teens' susceptibility to normative ($\gamma_{12} = -.14$; $t = -2.6$) and informational ($\gamma_{22} = -.13$; $t = -3.2$) influence. These findings suggest that susceptibility to normative (H5) and informational (H6) influence changes over time, perhaps depending on the extent to which the influence of others is adaptive for the individual. These findings are consistent with previous findings indicating that peer conformity dispositions diminish over the course of the teenage years and also with the idea that individual differences in personality develop throughout the teenage years and may not reach stasis until well into adulthood (Caspi & Roberts, 2001).

¹ Although we did not expect the social influence process to differ among male and female adolescents, before testing research hypotheses, we examined whether any information was lost by estimating a single set of parameters for males and females. To test the hypothesis that the gammas were equal across groups, we used a chi square difference test. The first model (H_{FORM}) specified the same model form for each group (same parameter matrices with the same dimensions and the same location of fixed, free, and constrained parameters). This model was compared to a nested model in which gamma coefficients were constrained to be equal (H_{Γ}). The chi square difference between H_{FORM} and H_{Γ} is a joint significance test of the equality of all coefficients in Γ . When the equality constraint was added, the increase in chi square was not statistically significant ($\Delta\chi^2_{(8)} = 12$). This suggests that the hypothesis of equal gamma values is tenable. We obtained similar findings when we constrained the beta coefficients to be equal ($\Delta\chi^2_{(9)} = 14$). These findings suggest that social influence and shopping behavior is quite similar among male and female adolescents.

Although the relationships between teens' age and frequency of shopping with friends ($\gamma_{42} = +.02$; $t = 0.6$) and increased expenditures when shopping with friends ($\gamma_{62} = .05$; $t = 0.7$) were positive as expected, they were not statistically significant. Although older teens may have greater independence, our findings suggest that this factor did not directly enhance their tendency to shop with others (H7) nor the amount they spend when doing so (H8). Rather, the effects of teens' age were for the most part, indirect.

Within the context of a significant positive correlation between the two dimensions of social influence, normative influence had a negative, though not statistically significant, influence on teens' enjoyment of shopping with friends (H9: $\beta_{31} = -.12$; $t = -1.7$) and a statistically significant negative influence on teens' frequency of shopping with friends (H11: $\beta_{41} = -.14$; $t = -2.2$). These findings were contrary to expectations. However, as expected, susceptibility to informational influence had a statistically significant positive influence on both teens' enjoyment of shopping (H10: $\beta_{32} = .55$; $t = 4.3$) and frequency of shopping (H12: $\beta_{42} = .58$; $t = 4.1$) with friends.

Also as expected, teens' enjoyment of shopping with friends was positively related to their frequency of shopping with friends ($\beta_{43} = .33$; $t = 2.9$). This finding (H13) is consistent with those from previous research on purchase pals indicating that shopping with pals is a fun and enjoyable activity and that fun is one important motivation for shopping with others (see, e.g., Hartman & Kiecker, 1991). Because shopping with friends is enjoyable, teens may shop with friends more often. And, teens who enjoyed shopping with friends were more favorably disposed toward retailing, suggesting that positive evaluations of the direct experience of shopping with friends generalizes to more positive sentiments toward retailing (H14: $\beta_{53} = .50$; $t = 4.0$). Thus, shopping with friends may have long-term implications for evaluations of retailing and may actually help reduce the unfavorable attitudes teens may have towards retailers.

Consistent with previous research on adult shoppers (e.g., see Granbois, 1968; Sommer, Wynes, & Brinkley, 1992; Woodside & Sims, 1976), enjoyment of shopping with friends favorably disposes teens toward spending more money with those friends than they would spend when shopping alone (H15: $\beta_{63} = .64$; $t = 2.4$). Perhaps because the amount spent is visible to friends, teens may spend more when others are present to avoid appearing cheap. Or, there may be some type of synergy or snowballing spending effect that occurs when one shops with others. The frequency with which teens shop with friends also positively affects their propensity to spend more when shopping with friends (H16: $\beta_{64} = .85$; $t = 3.7$), as expected. Taken together, these findings suggest that shopping with friends may offset or make less salient a teen's concern over spending money, and that retailers may gain some tangible benefits when teens shop in groups. The path between teens' sentiment toward retailing and the amount teens spend when shopping with friends, however, was not statistically significant (H17:

Table 3
Measurement model results

Construct	Items	Completely standardized factor loading	t-value						
Normative	y ₁	.73	13.8						
	y ₂	.79	15.3						
	y ₃	.79	15.2						
Informational	y ₄	.53	9.3						
	y ₅	.68	12.6						
	y ₆	.68	12.7						
	y ₇	.67	12.4						
Enjoy shop	y ₈	.47	7.7						
	y ₉	.63	10.6						
	y ₁₀	.79	13.6						
Shop often	y ₁₁	.65	11.8						
	y ₁₂	.81	15.5						
	y ₁₃	.76	14.1						
Sentiment retail	y ₁₄	.75	12.0						
	y ₁₅	.73	11.8						
	y ₁₆	.56	9.2						
Spend more	y ₁₇	1.00	N/A						
Friends know	x ₁	.74	13.7						
	x ₂	.82	15.5						
	x ₃	.69	12.5						
Teens' age	x ₄	1.00	N/A						
Factor intercorrelations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
1. Normative	1.00								
2. Informational	.72	1.00							
3. Enjoy shop	.31	.58	1.00						
4. Shop often	.22	.59	.60	1.00					
5. Sentiment retail	.17	.27	.34	.20	1.00				
6. Spend more	.26	.46	.35	.42	.07	1.00			
7. Friends know	.49	.48	.30	.02	.04	.17	1.00		
8. Teens' age	-.18	-.20	-.20	-.13	-.12	-.04	-.05	1.00	

$\beta_{65} = -.13$; $t = -1.0$). This pattern of results suggests that teens' evaluations of their direct experience of shopping with friends increases relative spending, but general evaluations of retailing do not.

Discussion

The basic premise of our research was that teens' evaluations of retailing are an output of the social comparison process. The pattern of findings generally supports this premise: susceptibility to interpersonal influence from friends was significantly related to teens' enjoyment and frequency of shopping with friends, which, in turn, were generally related to sentiments toward retailing and spending tendencies. However, the pattern of findings suggests that informational influence may be a more important basis in shaping retailing attitudes and behavior, while normative influence is not and may even have negative effects.

Our results provide strong evidence that teens' susceptibility to informational influence is positively associated with

teens' enjoyment of shopping with friends (H10) and their tendencies to do so (H12). However, the results also seem to indicate that teens perceive that, to the extent that they are susceptible to friends' normative influence, they would be *less likely* to shop with friends (H11) and may enjoy the experience less (although H9 was not statistically significant, the effect was negative in direction). Considering these relationships in light of social comparison theory, it may be that informational influence is valuable in evaluations of ability and normative influence is valuable in evaluations of opinion. If this is the case, then this pattern of results is consistent with Festinger's (1954) hypothesis that the "unidirectional upward pressure" to improve applies to abilities (which informational influence is likely to affect by improving knowledge and performance) but not to opinions (which are likely to be shaped by normative rather than informational influence). Susceptibility to informational influence may help teens to improve their ability and performance with respect to shopping and evaluating retailing phenomena; thus, co-shopping with others who are more knowledgeable about marketing phenomena may be espe-

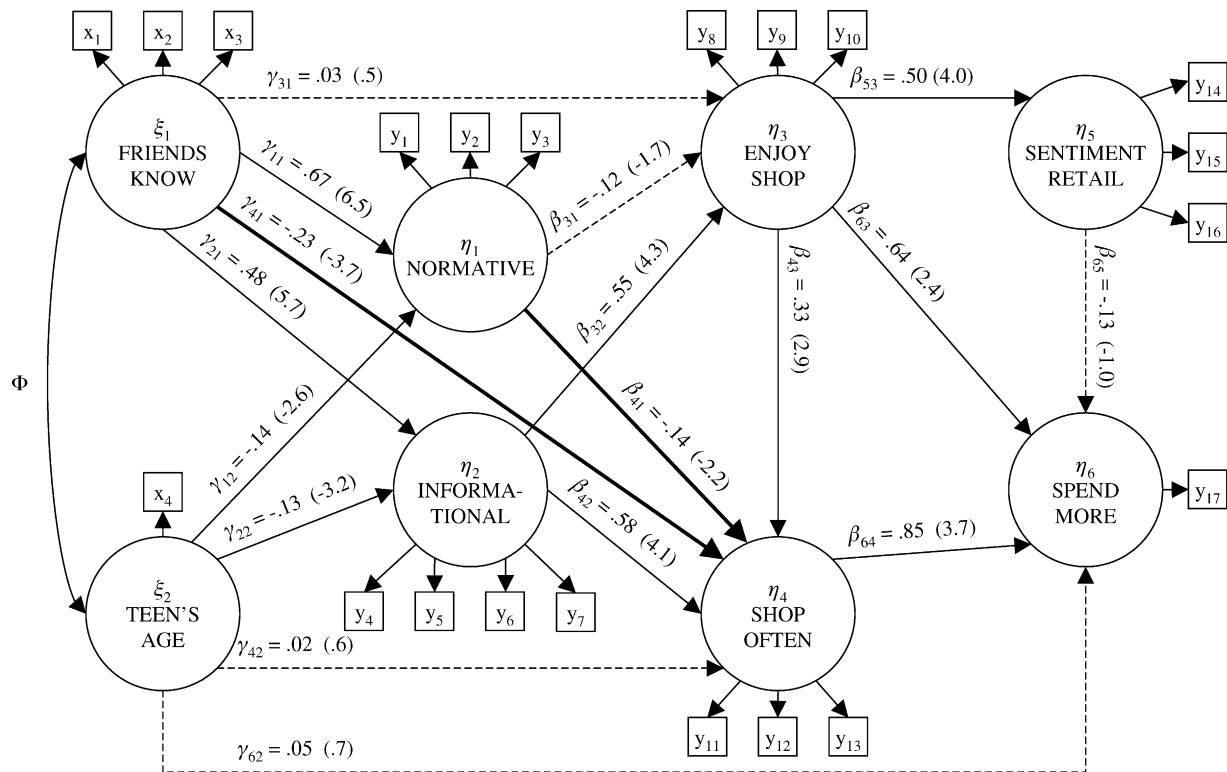


Fig. 2. Structural model results. Standardized estimates with *t*-values in parentheses. Errors in equation and variables are omitted for clarity. Significant paths consistent with hypotheses indicated by solid line. Significant paths inconsistent with hypotheses indicated by bold line. Nonsignificant paths indicated by dashed line.

cially beneficial and favorably viewed by teens. However, when friends are viewed as being more “in the know” about what’s “hot” or popular in peer groups such that the teen is susceptible to normative influence, teens may be less likely to shop with those friends who have dissimilar views. Social comparison theory indicates that individuals seek out others whose opinions are similar to themselves and are less likely to make comparisons with others whose opinions are dissimilar to their own.

In addition, previous research on purchase pals indicated that one of the primary functions of such pals is to reduce buyers’ perceptions of risk. Kiecker and Hartman (1993) found that when buyers perceive functional risks with regard to the likelihood that the product will perform as expected, the pals they shopped with were more likely to consist of nonfamily members, such as friends. On the other hand, when buyers perceive social/psychological risks with regard to concerns about social embarrassment or bruising of ego, the pals they shopped with were less likely to be friends. Combined with those of Kiecker and Hartman (1993), our results suggest that teens may shop with friends more often and enjoy doing so when the teen is susceptible to informational influence and/or when they perceive risk that friends may reduce by providing information. However, teens that are susceptible to normative influence from friends and/or who perceive risk of social embarrassment tend to shop less often with friends than they do alone, and in fact, may be

more likely to shop with other types of pals, such as family members. Although shopping with friends may actually reduce the uncertainty and risk associated with making a wise purchase by choosing the best product and brand, doing so may also be perceived as threatening the teen’s social identity because of an increase in the social/psychological risk of social disapproval or embarrassment, particularly to the extent that the teen is more susceptible to this normative influence by friends. For such teens, the likelihood of risk and reward may be asymmetrically evaluated such that the risk of disapproval is more heavily weighted or viewed as more likely, than is the chance of approval by friends while shopping. So, teens more susceptible to normative influence by friends may shop less often with them to avoid the downside risks associated with the normative reactions they may offer during shopping. Future research should look further into the relationships between susceptibility to social influence, perceived risks, and subsequent behaviors. Regardless, our finding that teens’ susceptibility to informational influence from friends has more impact on shopping attitudes and behaviors than does normative influence is consistent with the results from other studies indicating that people are influenced more by the information that groups provide rather than by group pressures to conform (see, e.g., Burnkrant & Cousineau, 1975; Kaplan & Miller, 1987; Park & Lessig, 1977; Ward & Reingen 1990).

Our findings suggest some intriguing possibilities for how co-shopping with friends affects teens' shopping behavior. Friends' greater knowledge was positively associated with enjoyment of shopping (H3), although this result was not statistically significant. Indeed, the pattern of results with regard to relative knowledge, susceptibility to influence, and shopping with friends suggests that having greater knowledge, in and of itself, is not sufficient to fully understand how sources' knowledge affects the buyer's behavior. Rather, as evidenced by the indirect effects, how susceptible buyers are to being influenced also affects how often teens' shop with friends. In other words, the extent to which buyers value this knowledge and are willing to use it affects shopping behavior. Specifically, our results suggest that friends' greater relative knowledge deters teens from shopping with pals (H4) *unless* teens are susceptible to informational influence from friends. In this latter case, friends' greater relative knowledge positively affects frequency of shopping with friends indirectly through its positive relationship with susceptibility to informational influence.

Finally, while retailers may discourage teen groups from shopping together because it is thought that such groups may cause trouble or be more likely to shoplift, our results indicate that teens' shopping with friends offers potential benefits to retailers. Specifically teens who shop with friends and who enjoy co-shopping are likely to spend more money with those friends than they do alone and to have more positive sentiments toward retailing in general. Thus, rather than discouraging teen groups from shopping in their stores, our results imply that retailers should encourage teens to shop with friends. Perhaps "bring a friend with you" promotions, special events, and other techniques could be used to encourage more teen group shopping. Not only may there be short-term gains in profitability by doing so, but retailers who actively court teen co-shoppers may create long-term positive sentiments toward their stores.

Limitations and directions for future research

Conclusions based on these results should be tempered by the study's limitations. Future research should investigate whether the relationships we detected hold beyond our single sample of teens. And we acknowledge the limitations inherent in our choice of measures. For example, the strength of the relationships with regard to the relative spending measure may be somewhat overstated to the extent that the actual reliability of that single item was lower than that we assumed.

More specifically, the relationships we detected were limited to teens' friends as purchase pals. When adolescents use the term "friends" they are referring to other adolescents, "an aggregate that includes one's best friends, close friends, and good friends." (Hartup, 1993, p. 4). However, "friends" are not necessarily the same as the dyadic "close friend" that was used in the previous purchase pal studies

(cf. Kiecker & Hartman, 1994) and social influence from the former may not be commensurate with the latter (Hartup, 1993). Specifically, social impact theory (Latané & Nida, 1980) and persuasive arguments theory (Burnstein & Vinokur, 1977) would suggest that influence (normative and/or informational) would increase from the dyadic to group context. Although our research extends beyond purchase pals as dyadic relationships, additional research should investigate whether our specific findings hold in those one-on-one situations where the roles of the purchase pal – as expert or as social evaluator – are likely to be more distinct and clearly defined. Our focal purpose was to examine teens' shopping with friends but other types of purchase pals are possible for teen shoppers, including parents, siblings, and mere acquaintances (Kiecker & Hartman, 1994). Kiecker and Hartman (1994) found that the nature of influence varies by the strength of tie between the purchase pals, where strength of tie is indicated by type and length of relationship. Based on those findings we would expect that the relationships we detected may be moderated by the type of pal. Factors related to degree of contact with, attraction to, and membership in peer-oriented reference groups may further enlighten our understanding of teens shopping with friends.

In light of the above discussion, it is important to note that we did not measure influence, but rather susceptibility to influence from friends or influenceability, that is, the tendency to change as a function of social pressure—either normative or informational (McGuire, 1968). As such, all of the above assumes that the tendency to yield to influence can change with context, such as the number and type of social others (friends vs. close friend vs. parent) and the strength of relational tie (or co-orientation) with others. However, we did not examine *when* or with *whom* teens are more or less likely to yield to influence. Rather, we focused on why teens are more or less susceptible to influence from friends: because they feel that they are more or less knowledgeable than their friends. It would be interesting to compare susceptibility to influence across different social others or sources of influence.

The focus of our study was on teens' general retailing attitudes and behaviors and thus, types of products or stores were not specified. However, Kiecker and Hartman's (1993) findings suggest that the type of risk perceived by the buyer varies by product category, and that the type of purchase pal used is determined, in part, by these risk perceptions. Given that the type of purchase pal used may impact the nature of influence operating on the buyer, future research should examine whether variables such as perceived risk or product involvement, which may vary by product category, moderate the relationships we detected.

While we found that susceptibility to informational influence increased teens' tendencies to shop with friends, susceptibility to normative influence was negatively related to frequency of shopping with friends. On the surface, this seems to suggest that teens responded to the survey in a socially desirable manner. In other words, teens may think it

is more desirable to attribute their behavior to receiving information rather than conforming to others. However, the fact that positive relationships were found between friends' relative knowledge and teens' susceptibility to both informational and normative influence argues against this social desirability explanation. If teens responded in a socially desirable manner, we would expect them to say that friends had less knowledge relative to themselves. Because it is unlikely that social desirability would affect responses to indicators for one construct (susceptibility to normative influence) while not affecting another (friends' relative knowledge), social desirability is not a likely explanation for the negative effect of susceptibility to normative influence on frequency of shopping with friends.² Moreover, the hypothesized negative relationship between teens' age and normative influence was obtained, which further suggests that social desirability was not responsible for the normative influence results.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research adds to our understanding of teens' attitudes toward retailers and their shopping behaviors. Specifically, attitudes toward retailers are related to how much teens enjoy shopping with friends. And the more that teens enjoy shopping with friends, as opposed to shopping alone, the more they like to shop often with those friends. Each of these in turn leads teenagers to spend relatively more when shopping with friends than when alone. So, retailers should engage in marketing activities and tactics that make shopping with friends even more enjoyable for teens. Doing so may result in attitudes and behaviors that retailers seek: even more positive attitudes on the part of teens towards retailers in general, perhaps overcoming some of the negative attitudes that teens have toward retailers, and their spending relatively more when shopping with these friends. This research also adds to our understanding of why teens shop with friends. Specifically, friends appear to provide teens with standards by which they may judge retailing and shop-

ping stimuli and tasks. Teens enjoy shopping with friends to the extent that the teen is more susceptible to informational influence from their friends, perhaps to reduce risk. And teens are more likely to shop often with friends when more susceptible to informational influence and less susceptible to normative influence from their friends. As such, susceptibility to friends' influence appears to be an adaptive part of the process of developing an identity that is a significant part of the teenage years. Finally, susceptibility to friends' influence appears to be partly a function of how teens assess friends' knowledge relative to their own and also teens' age.

Given that the teen market is substantial and likely to grow in the future, efforts to understand teenagers' consumer behavior are likely to become especially important. Also, teens' learning of consumption values and behavior in early years may have implications for later life. This study has provided a first step toward better understanding teen shopping behavior, but there is a need for future research focusing on this substantial and under-researched consumer population.

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² To further rule out the social desirability explanation, we conducted a regression of the frequency with which teens discuss marketing phenomena with friends on susceptibility to normative influence. Teens were asked to rate on five-point "never" to "very often" scales how often they talked with friends about (a) where to buy things, (b) how much things cost, (c) buying things, and (d) prices (Cronbach's alpha = .79). Frequency of talking with friends about these issues is not likely to be (negatively) affected by social desirability. Moreover, frequency of such communication is likely to be positively affected by susceptibility to normative influence. Therefore, if normative influence is found to positively affect such communication, there is increasing confidence that social desirability is not a likely explanation for the normative influence results. As expected, the regression indicated that susceptibility to normative influence positively affected the frequency of talking to friends about marketing phenomena ($F(1,303) = 20.23$, $p < .001$; $\beta = .14$). This analysis provides another piece of evidence that social desirability was not responsible for the negative effects of normative influence on the frequency of shopping with friends.

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