

Consumer Awareness and Consumer Activism Among Adolescents: A Socialization Perspective

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Children are the most vulnerable segment of the market. They get easily influenced by the tactics used by the marketers. They should possess knowledge about their rights and duties as consumers, so that they do not fall into the trap of marketers. This study aims to examine the level of consumer affairs knowledge and consumer activism among adolescents. It also examines the influence of various socialization agents like parents, peers, mass media, school and demographic variables like age, gender and economic class of adolescents on consumer affairs knowledge and consumer activism. A questionnaire survey was conducted on 800 adolescents between the age of 10 and 17 years of different government and private schools in Punjab. Statistical techniques like t-test, correlation and regression analysis were used. The results suggest that male adolescents, older adolescents and adolescents belonging to upper economic class have more consumer affairs knowledge and perform consumer activism more frequently. As per regression analysis, mass media influences consumer affairs knowledge, while parents and TV have been found to be significant socialization agents for consumer activism.

Introduction

Socialization has been described as “a process that begins at birth, by which an individual learns the expectations of society and how to get along with others, and acquires sensitivity to the pressures and obligations of group life” (Melanie and Locke, 2007). This approach has been used by researchers in the field of consumer behavior.

Children’s consumer behavior as an area of research has been studied since the 1950s (John, 1999). But the work in this area of research gained momentum with the publication of an article by Scott Ward in the year 1974 entitled, “Consumer Socialization”, describing it as the “process by which young people acquire skills, knowledge and attitudes relevant to their functioning as consumers in the marketplace” (Ward, 1974). Studying consumer socialization of children is about determining what makes children learn the role of a consumer. Consumer socialization of children has been a topic of immense importance for researchers (Moschis, 1985; Moore-Shay and

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Berchmans, 1996; and John, 1999), marketers and consumer educators (Moschis and Churchill, 1978).

Several consumer groups have criticized marketers for their unethical practices and the effects of these on children, considering them the most vulnerable segment. Young consumers are a major market not only for snacks and sweets but also for expensive items (Halan, 2002). The Government of India, like responsible governments of other countries, aims to make the consumers aware of their rights and duties and to protect their interest. Despite many efforts to protect consumers by the government, the consumers, especially the children as consumers are being exploited by the marketers. Hence, there is a need to investigate this for the government and the consumer educators to frame the policies accordingly.

A number of studies related to consumer socialization have been conducted around the world (Ward, 1974; Moore and Stephens, 1975; Ward *et al.*, 1977; Moschis and Churchill, 1978; Moschis and Moore, 1978 and 1979; Churchill and Moschis, 1979; Moore and Moschis, 1980; Moschis, 1985; Shim, 1996; and Bush *et al.*, 1999), but not much research has been done from the Indian perspective. Since most of the studies in this area so far have concentrated on developed countries (Dotson and Hyatt, 2005), there is a need to understand the role of various agents in consumer socialization from adolescent's viewpoint in developing countries like India (Haq and Rahman, 2015). Also, not many studies have been undertaken recently to study consumer socialization, though the role and importance of different socialization agents have undergone many changes over the past times. This study strives to fill this void. Empirical investigation in the area of consumer socialization may also help the marketers in developing effective marketing strategies (Ward, 1974; and Moschis and Churchill, 1978).

In recent times, studies have been conducted to examine the various issues related to consumer affairs knowledge and consumer behavior like research on the knowledge about labels (Madhvapathy and Singh, 2014), impact of consumer awareness on effective consumer behavior (Ishak and Zabil, 2012), and challenges for consumer protection (Usman *et al.*, 2015). But environmental and social factors influencing their knowledge and behavior are not studied much. This study addresses this gap.

Hence, the purpose of the present study is to examine the level of consumer affairs knowledge and consumer activism among adolescents and also to examine the influence of various socialization agents on consumer affairs knowledge and consumer activism among adolescents in India.

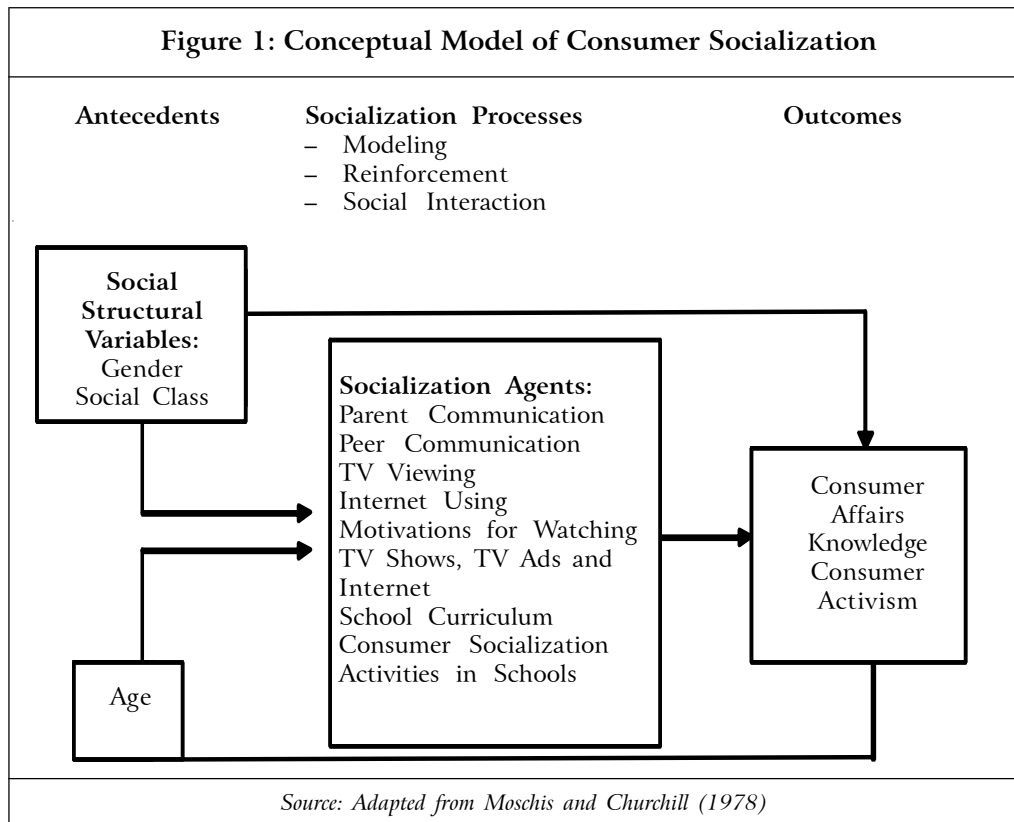
The existent literature reveals that research on this topic is lacking, particularly in India. Also, Internet and school as consumer socialization agents have not been studied much in India; though these are important socialization agents, especially for adolescents. Hence, it becomes important to study their influence on adolescents. Keeping this in mind, this study attempts to:

- Make gender-wise, age-wise and economic status-wise comparison of consumer affairs knowledge and consumer activism among adolescents.
- Study the influence of parents, peers, TV, Internet, school, gender, age and economic status on adolescents' consumer affairs knowledge and consumer activism.

Conceptual Framework

Consumer socialization is based on two models of learning, i.e., cognitive development model and social learning model (Moschis and Churchill, 1978). The cognitive development model advocates that socialization occurs because of the changes in the cognitive structure that takes place at different ages. The social learning theory emphasizes on environmental forces (Bandura, 1969). Moschis and Churchill (1978) in their study have explained the three elements of social learning theory. These are antecedents, socialization processes and outcomes. Antecedent variables are divided into two categories: social structural variable and age or lifecycle position. The social setting within which the interaction between the individual and socialization agent occurs is explained in terms of social structural variables like race, gender, social class and family size (Moschis and Churchill, 1978). Social structural variables used in the study are: socioeconomic status and gender. Adolescents between the age of 10 and 17 years have been studied in the present study. Socialization processes include socialization agent and type of learning. A socialization agent is "any person or organization directly involved in socialization because of frequency of contact with the learner, primacy over the individual, and control over rewards and punishments given to the person" (Brim, 1966). In the present study, the influence of parents, peers, mass media (TV and Internet) and school as socialization agents is investigated. They help the young consumer in learning the consumer behavior and acquire 'consumer skills' or 'outcomes' (Ward and Wackman, 1971; and Moore and Stephens, 1975). The skills examined in the study are consumer affairs knowledge and consumer activism (Moschis and Churchill, 1979). These skills were chosen because there is a lack of research on these relevant aspects from Indian perspective. These have been neglected from a socialization point of view. The consumer affairs knowledge has been defined as "Cognitions held with respect to basic terms in economics, insurance, finance, real estate, and marketing; knowledge of consumer legislation in the areas of unit pricing, bait advertising, code dating, and remedies available to consumers" (Moschis and Churchill, 1978). Consumer activism has been defined as "activities relating to socially desirable consumer behavior" (Moschis and Churchill, 1978).

Figure 1 shows the general conceptual model of consumer socialization. Work on the topic of consumer socialization states that social structural variables can affect the outcome or consumer skill directly or indirectly. Socialization agents also affect the individual's learning through modeling, reinforcement and social interaction (McLeod and O'Keefe, 1972). Although these processes are important, the purpose of this study was not to focus on these processes, but rather to determine which socialization variables might directly influence the consumer affairs knowledge and consumer activism.



Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Many research studies have been conducted to determine how young consumers learn what to consume (Ward, 1974; and Moschis and Churchill, 1978). John (1999) unified the theories of cognitive and social development and described the changes that occur as the child grows and matures. The socialization agents like family, peers, mass media, school, etc., and demographic variables like gender, age and social class influence the young people and help them become consumers.

Parents as a Socialization Agent

Parents as an agent of socialization have been considered to have most significant impact (Neeley, 2005). Parents play a very important role in making adolescents aware about their basic consumer rights (Mehta and Keng, 1985) and contributing to consumer activism (Moschis *et al.*, 1984), with their influence being strongest during early adolescence period (Biddle *et al.*, 1980; Shim, 1996; Lum, 2006; and Mittal and Royne, 2010). Moore and Stephens (1975) in their study revealed that parents influence adolescent's price knowledge. Researchers have postulated in many studies that parents help the children in learning the basic 'rational' aspects of consumption (Reisman and Roseborough, 1955). Generally, limited attempts are made by the parents to teach consumer skills to the children and parents try to be the role models to their

children and want that their children should observe them and learn consumer role from them (Ward *et al.*, 1977; and Moschis, 1985). Fathers and mothers as role models have been found to have more influence than athlete role models (Martin and Bush, 2000). Thus, it is expected that:

H₁: Parents positively influence (a) consumer affairs knowledge, and (b) consumer activism.

Peers as a Socialization Agent

Peers are an important consumer socialization agent for adolescents (Campbell, 1969). Particularly during adolescence, the influence of peers is more important (Yang and Laroche, 2011). As indicated by Churchill and Moschis (1979), as the age increases, communication about consumption matters increases with peers and decreases with parents. So, the adolescents may rely more on peers for taking their buying decisions and seeking information related to consumption. This has also been supported by Vener (1957) and Saunders *et al.* (1973). Moschis *et al.* (1984) also found that with increase in age, adolescents interact more with peers and they are found to be important source of brand loyalty development. They get influenced by the brand preferences of their peers. While evaluating the products also, peer preferences matters for the teenage consumers (Moschis and Moore, 1979). Peers have been found to be the most significant source of market knowledge (Mehta and Keng, 1985). In a study conducted by Moschis and Moore (1978), communication with peers increased the legal knowledge of adolescents. Hence, the following hypothesis was framed:

H₂: Peers positively influence (a) consumer affairs knowledge, and (b) consumer activism.

Mass Media as a Socialization Agent

Television commercials increase product and brand knowledge of adolescents (Moschis and Moore, 1978). Social utility reasons for which adolescents watch TV shows were found to be related positively to consumer affairs knowledge (Moschis and Churchill, 1978). Internet has recently also emerged as an important agent of socialization. Singh *et al.* (2003) in their study revealed that across three ethnic groups, i.e., Asian American, Hispanic and African American young adults, Internet is the most used socialization agent and these people rely more on Internet for seeking information related to market. The best way of learning is interacting with the object of the study (Hodgkin, 1985; and Shih, 1998). Internet is an apt place for participating actively in the learning process and thus it promotes an 'active' process of socialization (Lee and Conroy, 2005). Internet hampers the development of skepticism to advertising (Moscardelli and Liston-Heyes, 2005). Hence, the growing use of Internet as the tool for communication makes it an important and powerful socialization agent (Barber, 2013). On the basis of these findings, it is expected that:

H₃: Television positively influences (a) consumer affairs knowledge, and (b) consumer activism.

H₄: Internet positively influences (a) consumer affairs knowledge, and (b) consumer activism.

School as a Socialization Agent

Schooling directly affects the children's acquisition of knowledge and behavior (Sylva, 1994). Stampfl *et al.* (1978) found that children who received formal structure teaching have better understanding of consumer concepts than those who received open structure teaching. Schools are responsible for "preparing the youth to function as adults by giving them the skill, attitude, and knowledge bases necessary for good citizenship and economic self-sufficiency" (Campbell, 1969). Hence, the following hypothesis was framed:

H₅: School positively influences (a) consumer affairs knowledge, and (b) consumer activism.

Socioeconomic Background

It may affect the consumer affairs knowledge and consumer activism. It has been argued that since the adolescents belonging to upper economic class may have more opportunities for consumption, hence they may be more aware of consumer concepts (Ward, 1974). These adolescents are more likely to obtain information before making consumer decisions and shop smartly (Moschis and Churchill, 1978). Therefore, on the basis of the previous findings, the following hypothesis was framed:

H₆: Upper class adolescents have more (a) consumer affairs knowledge, and (b) more frequently perform consumer activism.

Gender

The results of various previous studies like Moschis (1976), Moschis and Churchill (1978 and 1979), Moschis and Moore (1978), Moschis (1979) and Moschis *et al.* (1984) revealed that males have more consumer affairs knowledge as compared to female adolescents and perform consumer activism more frequently. Males were found to be more concerned about the environment and were ready to pay extra for environment-friendly products (Yadav and Pathak, 2014). On the basis of these research findings, the following hypothesis was constructed:

H₇: Male adolescents have more (a) consumer affairs knowledge, and (b) more frequently perform consumer activism.

Age

As children mature into adult consumers, there occurs cognitive and social development. Also, with the increased shopping experiences in the marketplace their ability to recognize products, understand the persuasive advertising intent and retail institutions increases. Their shopping and decision-making skills develop (John, 1999). In the previous studies like Moschis and Moore (1978), Moschis (1979), Moschis and Churchill (1979), and Moore and Moschis (1980), it has been found that older adolescents have more consumer affairs knowledge and perform socially desirable consumer behavior. Hence, the following hypothesis was framed:

H₈: (a) Consumer affairs knowledge, and (b) consumer activism are positively related to age.

Data and Methodology

The present study was conducted in a systematic manner. After reviewing the existent literature the Moschis and Churchill (1978) study was taken as the base for the present study. The questionnaire used by George P Moschis was adapted with a few modifications as per difference in the time frame and cultural differences in the Indian context.

Data Collection

A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect information about frequency of interaction with parents and peers, consumer socialization activities in schools, topics related to consumer socialization in school curriculum, frequency of viewing TV and using Internet, motivations for watching TV advertisements, TV shows and Internet, consumer affairs knowledge, consumer activism and the personal characteristics of the respondents, namely, age, economic status and gender. Before going for final data collection, the questionnaire was pre-tested for its reliability on a non-sampled population (The statements used in the questionnaire are appended). The reliability coefficients ranged from 0.803 to 0.911. The coefficients were found to be significant and hence the questionnaire was taken to be reliable for data collection.

Sample

The questionnaires were distributed to the school going 800 adolescents between the age of 10 and 17 years. World Health Organization (WHO) has defined adolescence “as the period in human growth and development that occurs after childhood and before adulthood, from the ages 10 to 19.”¹ Thus, in the present study, the term ‘adolescents’ has been used for the school-going children between the age of 10 and 17 years. Adolescents were taken as sample for this study because during adolescence, several developmental changes occur not only physically but also socially. It is the time when children learn several skills to carry out their role in society. Preferences for different brands and products are also formed during adolescence (Reynolds and Wells, 1977; and Moore and Moschis, 1981). The young person becomes a knowledgeable consumer by acquiring various skills related to consumption during adolescence (Moschis and Moore, 1979).

The adolescents studying in two different kinds of schools, i.e., government school (lower economic class adolescents) and private school (upper/middle economic class adolescents) were taken. The schools have been selected from three geographical belts of Punjab, i.e., Majha (Amritsar and Gurdaspur), Doaba (Jalandhar) and Malwa (Ludhiana). These three regions have different socio-cultural backgrounds making them distinct from each other, thus making the sample truly representative of the region. The schools have been selected on convenience basis. School authorities were requested to cooperate and data was collected from those schools where permission was granted. The self-administered questionnaires were filled by the students during their regular class periods. It took about 30-40 minutes to get the questionnaires filled from one class.

¹ http://www.who.int/maternal_child_adolescent/topics/adolescence/dev/en/

The time period of the study ranges from April 2015 to September 2015. *t*-test, correlation and regression analysis were used to analyze the data with the help of the statistical software SPSS 20.

Measures

Dependent Variables

1. Consumer Affairs Knowledge

It is the basic knowledge regarding the product, available consumer services and remedies, consumer rights and duties, and various consumer protection measures. It has been measured using 11 statements relating to consumer affairs with “true/false/don’t know” response categories. The number of correct responses given by each respondent was calculated and used as the individual’s score.

2. Consumer Activism

It is defined as “activities relating to socially desirable consumer behavior” (Moschis and Churchill, 1978). It is measured on a 5-point scale ranging from very often to never as used by Moschis and Churchill (1978) consisting of 13 items slightly different from the items as used in their 1978 study. Items such as “I check MRP” were used.

Independent Variables

1. Family Communication About Consumption

It refers to ‘overt interaction between parents and adolescents about goods and services’ (Moschis and Churchill, 1978). A 5-point scale ranging from very often to never as used by Moschis and Churchill (1978) has been used with 12 same items, such as “My parents and I talk about buying things.”

2. Peer Communication About Consumption

It refers to ‘overt peer-adolescent interactions about goods and services’ (Moschis and Churchill, 1978). Moschis and Churchill’s (1978) 5-point scale ranging from very often to never has been used with six same statements as used in their study such as “My friends and I talk about buying things.”

3. Mass Media

In the current study, influence of TV and Internet was examined. Since TV shows and advertisements both influence consumer learning (Moschis and Churchill, 1978), so both have been considered. To study the influence of TV and Internet, frequency and motivations for using both mediums were used to measure mass media construct. This measure has been suggested by previous researchers.

TV Viewing: This was measured using the following scales:

Frequency of Television Viewing: It refers to ‘Frequency of viewing specific program categories by adolescents’. The responses were measured using a 5-point scale ranging

from everyday to never and summed to analyze the frequency. Nine categories such as 'reality shows', 'news', 'sports', etc. were included.

Motivations for Watching TV Shows: It refers to the 'motivation to watch TV shows as a means of gathering information about products having an impact on consumer decision making as well as information about lifestyles and behavior associated with consumer products' (Moschis and Moore, 1982). A 7-point scale has been used representing positive responses to TV show viewing for reasons such as "To find out how good a product is", "To find out how people of different personalities use products that go with their personality."

Motivations for Watching TV Ads: It refers to the 'motivation to watch TV ads as a means of gathering information for consumer decision making as well as information about lifestyles and behavior associated with consumer products' (Moschis and Moore, 1982). A 7-point scale has been used for representing positive responses to TV ads viewing for reasons such as "To find out how good a product is", "To find out how people of different personalities use products that go with their personality".

Internet Usage: This was measured using the following scales:

Frequency of Internet Viewing: It refers to the 'Frequency of using Internet for specific activities by adolescents'. The responses were measured using a 5-point scale ranging from everyday to never and summed to analyze frequency. Nine categories such as 'social networking', 'shopping online', 'watching movies', etc. were included.

Motivations for Using Internet

It refers to the 'motivation to watch Internet as a means of gathering information for consumer decision making as well as information about lifestyles and behavior associated with consumer products'. A 7-point scale has been used for representing positive responses to Internet viewing for reasons such as "To find out how good a product is", "To find out how people of different personalities use products that go with their personality".

4. School

The two following measures were used to measure the influence of school:

Consumer Socialization Activities in School

It refers to the 'activities in schools related to consumer socialization'. A 5-point scale ranging from very often to never has been used with five items such as "My School arrange shopping trips", "Companies visit our school to distribute free samples of their products", etc.

School Curriculum

It refers to the specific concepts related to consumer socialization covered in the school curriculum directly or indirectly through any of the subjects taught in the school. It was measured using a 3-point scale ranging from not at all to a great extent.

In the schools of Punjab, as such there is no separate subject concerning consumer socialization or other concepts related to it in the curriculum. But schools play a crucial

role in child's learning and contribute in many ways. So, to measure the contribution of schools in socialization of children as consumers, adolescents were asked to indicate whether the specified eight topics such as 'advertising', 'consumer protection', 'brands', etc. are included in their curriculum through different subjects that they study. These topics were chosen because of their relevance in the literature related to consumer socialization.

5. Demographic Variables

The impact of gender, age and economic status has also been examined as these directly or indirectly influence their consumer learning. Adolescents from the age of 10 to 17 years have been included in the study. To study adolescents from different economic backgrounds, two types of schools have been taken, i.e., government and private schools. In Punjab, families belonging to lower economic class send their children to government schools. These families cannot afford to send their children to private schools. The education in these schools is free up to 8th grade and from 9th to 12th grade the school fee is minimal. Families belonging to middle/upper economic class send their children to private schools. It is commonly observed that the economic status of parents decide the kind of school they will educate their wards in. Also, it is a general observation and belief that private schools deliver a better quality of education. Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the respondents. It can be seen from the table that in the sample of 800 adolescents, 42% (338) of the adolescents were below the age of 14 years, 53% (426) were males and 52% (417) were from lower economic background.

Table 1: Demographic Profile		
Demographics	Number of Respondents	
Age	Below 14 years	14 years and above
	338 (42)	462 (58)
Gender	Male	Female
	426 (53)	374 (47)
Economic Status	Lower economic class adolescents	Middle/Upper economic class adolescents
	417 (52)	383 (48)
Note: The figures in parentheses represent percentages.		

Results and Discussion

Age, Gender and Economic Status Differences and Consumer Affairs Knowledge and Consumer Activism

The first concern of the study was to compare the level of consumer affairs knowledge and consumer activism among adolescents belonging to different age groups, economic

status and gender. For comparison purpose, age was divided into two groups, i.e., below 14 years and 14 years and above. Table 2 shows the economic status-wise, gender-wise and age-wise mean values of consumer affairs knowledge.

Table 2 reveals that adolescents belonging to upper/middle economic background (mean = 7.34) have significantly more consumer affairs knowledge as compared to adolescents belonging to lower economic background (mean = 6.13). Also, male adolescents (mean = 7.53) appear to possess greater knowledge about consumer matters as compared to females (mean = 5.77). The data further indicates that older adolescents scored significantly higher on consumer affairs knowledge (mean = 7.10) than younger adolescents (mean = 6.17). All these differences are significant at 1% level of significance. Thus, hypotheses H_6 (a), H_7 (a) and H_8 (a) are accepted.

Table 2: Mean Values of Demographic Variables – Consumer Affairs Knowledge		
Lower Economic Class	Middle/Upper Economic Class	t-Value
6.13 (2.91)	7.34 (2.10)	6.75**
Male	Female	
7.53 (2.12)	5.77 (2.83)	9.83**
Below 14 years	14 years and Above	
6.17 (2.53)	7.10 (2.63)	5.02**
Note: ** Significant at 1% level; and standard deviations are in parentheses.		

Table 3 reveals that adolescents belonging to middle/ upper economic class (mean = 3.05) show significantly higher consumer activism as compared to adolescents belonging to lower economic class (mean = 2.91). The difference is statistically significant at 5% level of significance. Also, male adolescents (mean = 3.23) appear to have socially desirable behavior significantly more frequently as compared to the females (mean = 2.69) and older adolescents (mean = 3.09) shop more smartly and consciously than younger adolescents (mean = 2.83). These differences are statistically significant at 1% level of significance. Thus, hypotheses H_6 (b), H_7 (b) and H_8 (b) are accepted.

Table 3: Mean Values of Demographic Variables – Consumer Activism		
Lower Economic Class	Middle/Upper Economic Class	t-Value
2.91 (0.99)	3.05 (0.61)	2.44*
Male	Female	
3.23 (0.48)	2.69 (1.04)	9.24**
Below 14 years	14 years and Above	
2.83 (0.98)	3.09 (0.69)	4.23**
Note: * Significant at 5% level; ** Significant at 1% level; and standard deviations are in parentheses.		

Correlates of Consumer Affairs Knowledge and Consumer Activism

Next, the study examines the influence of various socialization agents and demographic variables on consumer affairs knowledge and consumer activism. To achieve this objective, correlation and regression analyses were used. Correlation coefficients between various independent variables and consumer affairs knowledge and consumer activism are presented in Table 4.

It is observed from Table 4 that frequency of using Internet and motivations for using Internet are positively correlated with consumer affairs knowledge. This supports hypothesis H_4 (a). This indicates that not only the frequency, but also the uses the adolescent makes of Internet influence their consumer affairs knowledge. Further, the results reveal that male adolescents, adolescents with high economic status (private school), and older adolescents are likely to have more consumer affairs knowledge and show more consumer activism. It is also seen that communication with parents, peers and frequency of using Internet are positively related to consumer activism. Thus, hypotheses H_1 (b), H_2 (b) and H_4 (b) are supported.

Correlation	Consumer Affairs Knowledge	Consumer Activism
Interaction with Parents	-0.02	0.10**
Interaction with Peers	0.01	0.08*
Consumer Socialization Activities in Schools	0.04	0.06
School Curriculum	0.01	0.01
Motivations for Watching TV Ads	0.02	0.06
Motivations for Using Internet	0.07*	0.00
Motivations for Watching TV Shows	0.04	0.06
Frequency of Using Internet	0.14**	0.08*
Frequency of Viewing TV	0.01	0.01
Age	0.18**	0.13**
Gender	0.33**	0.32**
Economic Status	-0.23**	-0.08*
Note: * Significant at 5% level; ** Significant at 1% level.		

Determinants of Consumer Affairs Knowledge and Consumer Activism

The determinants of consumer affairs knowledge and consumer activism were found using step-wise regression. The regression analysis was performed to see the combined effect of several variables on consumer affairs knowledge and consumer activism.

The model is:

$$Y = a + b_1x_1 + b_2x_2 + b_3x_3 + b_4x_4 + b_5x_5 + b_6x_6 + b_7x_7 + b_8x_8 + b_9x_9 + b_{10}x_{10} + b_{11}x_{11} + b_{12}x_{12} + \mu$$

where

a = Constant Term

Y = Dependent variables, Y_1 = Consumer Affairs Knowledge; Y_2 = Consumer Activism

x_1 = Age (in years)

x_2 = Gender (Male = 1; otherwise 0)

x_3 = Economic Status (Lower Economic Status = 1; Otherwise 0)

x_4 = Interaction with Parents

x_5 = Interaction with Peers

x_6 = Consumer Socialization Activities in School

x_7 = School Curriculum

x_8 = Frequency of TV Viewing

x_9 = Frequency of Using Internet

x_{10} = Motivations for Watching TV Shows

x_{11} = Motivations for Watching TV Ads

x_{12} = Motivations for Using Internet

μ = Random Error Term

Consumer Affairs Knowledge

The results shown in Table 5 reveal that six factors emerge as contributing significantly to the dependent variable, i.e., consumer affairs knowledge. These variables together correlate with the dependent variable ($R = 0.44$), explaining 19.8% of the variation. It is be noted that motivations for watching TV shows, motivations for using Internet, frequency of using Internet and age are positively related to consumer affairs knowledge. Also, the males as compared to females have more knowledge about consumer affairs. The adolescents belonging to middle/upper economic class have more knowledge than adolescents belonging to weaker economic class. It is observed from the results that mass media as socialization agent has emerged as an important factor, especially the Internet usage proves to be a very important factor. It may be concluded from the results shown in Table 5 that the more the adolescents use the Internet, the more they become aware about the consumer concepts. Perhaps, Internet provides adolescents large amount of information that helps them to play their consumer role effectively in the marketplace. Besides, the frequency of using Internet, motivations for using it and the reasons for watching TV shows also emerged as other important factors. Hence, it may be concluded that the more the adolescents watch TV shows and use Internet for gathering information related to consumer decision making (like what to buy, from where to buy, whether a product is good or not, etc.), the more their consumer affairs

Table 5: Results of Regression Analysis – Consumer Affairs Knowledge				
Independent Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t-Value
	B	Std. Error	Beta	
Constant	1.398	0.672		2.08*
Motivations for Watching TV Shows	0.105	0.050	0.073	2.12*
Motivations for Using Internet	0.094	0.041	0.079	2.27*
Frequency of Using Internet	0.165	0.084	0.065	1.97*
Age	0.273	0.043	0.207	6.34**
Gender	1.640	0.174	0.311	9.45**
Economic Status	-0.850	0.173	-0.161	4.91**
Note: * Significant at 5% level; ** Significant at 1% level; $R = 0.44$; $R\text{-Square} = 0.198$; $F = 32.55^{**}$.				

knowledge gets increased. Therefore, mass media stands out as an important source of dispensing consumer affairs knowledge which can be used judiciously by the government, social organizations and corporate sector.

Table 6: Regression Coefficients Between Independent Variables and Consumer Activism				
Independent Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t-Value
	B	Std. Error	Beta	
Constant	1.116	0.256		4.36**
Parents	0.142	0.042	0.111	3.38**
Motivations for Watching TV Ads	0.035	0.016	0.070	2.13*
Age	0.073	0.014	0.174	5.27**
Gender	0.570	0.055	0.339	10.32**
Note: * Significant at 5% level; ** Significant at 1% level, $R = 0.39$, $R^2 = 0.15$, $F = 34.80^{**}$.				

Consumer Activism

The results shown in Table 6 reveal that only four factors prove to be the significant predictors of consumer activism. These variables together correlate with the dependent variable ($R = 0.39$), explaining 15% of the variation. It is observed from the results that parents and motivation for watching TV emerged as significant socialization agents for consumer activism. More the adolescents interact with their parents about consumption and more they make use of TV ads for gathering information related to product and information required for making consumer decisions, more consumer activism do they show. Also, it is revealed that older adolescents and males are more likely to show consumer activism.

Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to make a gender-wise, age-wise and economic status-wise comparison of consumer affairs knowledge and consumer activism among adolescents and also to examine the influence of parents, peers, mass media and school as socialization agents on the consumer affairs knowledge and consumer activism of the adolescents. The results revealed that older adolescents have more consumer affairs knowledge and show more consumer activism as compared to the younger ones. This finding is consistent with those of Moschis and Moore (1978), Moschis (1979), Moschis and Churchill (1979), and Moore and Moschis (1980). Thus, it may be concluded that with the increase in age, there is cognitive maturity of a child that may help him or her gain more knowledge. The adolescents apply this knowledge in the marketplace and make intelligent consumer decisions and perform desirable or intelligent consumer activities.

Gender-wise comparison revealed that males are more aware about consumer affairs as compared to females. The finding is contrary to the result found in the study conducted by Makela and Peters (2004) in which females were found to be more aware as consumers, but is consistent with the results of various previous studies like Moschis (1976), Moschis and Churchill (1978 and 1979), Moschis and Moore (1978), Moschis (1979) and Moschis *et al.* (1984). It is also seen that males show more consumer activism. The results suggest that consumer affairs knowledge and consumer activism may also vary according to economic status, with adolescents of higher economic class possessing more knowledge. Similar results were found in earlier studies (Moschis and Moore, 1978; and Moschis, 1979). Also, in a study by Moschis and Churchill (1978), it was found that upper class adolescents managed finance better. But in a study conducted by Makela and Peters (2004), it was seen that rural students were more aware of their consumer rights as compared to urban students.

As far as the influence of socialization agents is concerned, it can be seen that mass media, i.e., Internet and television, is the significant predictor of consumer affairs knowledge among adolescents. Nowadays, Internet is the favorite after-school activity of children and adolescents. Internet has become a knowledge hub for all. A study conducted by Nielsen on behalf of Google India, reported that out of 10, 7 respondents said that online research helps them to know the brand and model they want to buy.

Also, 40% said that for making purchasing decisions they use online information. They check for the prices of the products and their specifications² (*The Hindu*, 2012).

In the present study, it is also seen that motivations for watching TV influence consumer affairs knowledge. This result is similar to the findings of Moschis and Churchill (1978) and Mehta and Keng (1985) – “Television shares a significant relation with the product knowledge of adolescents”. There are some TV shows related to consumer awareness that have been launched in India like Pehredaar, Brand Bazaar, Tech Guru, etc. which raise the issues related to consumer protection, compare products of different brands and give information essential to make consumer decisions. TV shows were also considered a credible source of food safety information in earlier research (Bruhn and Schutz, 1999).

Parents and TV advertisements are the predictors of consumer activism. It means the more the adolescents interact with their parents about consumption matters, the more they show socially-desirable consumer behavior. This finding is consistent with the findings of Moschis *et al.* (1984). To empower the consumer, the Government of India has implemented consumer awareness campaigns like, *Jago Grahak Jago* (meaning ‘wake up consumer’). The Department of Consumer Affairs is trying to reach the masses through advertisements in different media like TV, newspaper, radio, etc. TV has come out to be the most influential medium. Through TV ads the government is trying to make people conscious about their rights and duties as a consumer. Under the campaign, different TV ads highlight different consumer-related issues like MRP, ISI mark, labeling, hallmark, misleading advertisements, etc. So, it may be concluded that the more the adolescents watch TV ads for gathering information relevant to decision making, the more aware they become and hence show more consumer activism. In previous studies, the role of peers (Moschis and Moore, 1978) and consumer education in schools (Langrehr and Mason, 1978; Stampfl *et al.*, 1978; and Makela and Peters, 2004) have been found to be significant predictors of consumer knowledge and awareness. But it seems that the role of socialization agents has changed over the time. The present study reveals that nowadays the role of mass media and parents has become more dominant.

Consumer affairs knowledge imparts skills required to function effectively in the market place. It is very essential to provide such knowledge to adolescents. Previous research proves that whatsoever a young consumer experiences in his early life, will have an effect on cognition and behavior in his later life (Ward, 1974). As the findings revealed that the concepts related to consumer socialization in school curriculum and consumer socialization activities in schools are not effective in inculcating consumer knowledge in adolescents, there is a need to introduce consumer education as a separate subject in school curriculum. Consumer clubs should be formed in schools to strengthen the consumer movement in the country. Students should be taken to shopping trips as they will be able to learn about the life skills in general and consumer socialization skills in particular through a practical experience.

² <http://www.rediff.com/money/report/tech-internet-is-making-consumer-behavior-change20121120.htm>

The present study offers implications for government authorities. As it is found that the Internet and TV help adolescents to learn about the various consumer concepts and make them aware about the rights and duties as consumer, the government should use this media to reach the masses to create consumer awareness among people. Messages related to consumer protection should be placed on various Internet sites. Adolescents watch TV shows and use Internet to learn about consumer-related concepts. The government should launch TV shows related to consumers, their rights and duties, protection available to them and live TV shows addressing the complaints of the consumers. The government should also organize consumer awareness campaigns in different parts of the country, as this will help in increasing the consumer knowledge of adolescents.

Marketers should also understand that conducting business in a socially responsible way will enhance the reputation of their companies. Mass media should be used as a platform to create awareness about the products of their company, build their brand and grab larger market share, and not to cheat consumers through misleading advertisements. Parents can play a more significant role by discussing consumption matters with their children more often. Young consumers usually accompany their parents on shopping trips and the frequency at which they go to shop with their parents, influences their own shopping behavior too (Vohra and Soni, 2015). Consumer Protection Act, 1986, established by the Government of India, represents rights available to consumers. Besides enjoying various rights, consumers should also realize their responsibility to exercise these rights. Hence, they should bring any kind of violation of their rights to the attention of the concerned authorities.

Limitations and Direction for Future Research: The present study is limited to the state of Punjab, India. Research in future can be conducted in other states to make interstate comparison. More number of consumer skills can be taken as dependent variables. In this study, the combined impact of all socialization agents has been measured. Individual impact of every socialization agent can be examined in future studies. The role of some other socialization agent like siblings can also be explored in future studies. The role of school can be studied in more detail. The questionnaires were filled by the adolescents in this study. In future, parents' opinion can also be included.

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Appendix

A(1) Consumer Affairs Knowledge

1. ISI mark on the product assures the quality, safety and reliability of the product.
2. Right to safety, Right to be informed, Right to choose, Right to be heard, Right to seek redressal, Right to consumer education are the six consumer rights.
3. MRP means Maximum Retail Price inclusive of all taxes.
4. A green color filled circle inside the square with green outline indicates the product is vegetarian.
5. Consumer Protection Act, 1986 is the Indian Law to protect consumers.
6. MRP is the final price and we cannot bargain on this price.
7. Jan Aushadhi medical store is a chain of medical stores initiated by the central government to offer quality generic medicines at much lower prices.
8. Gold hallmarking assures us about weight of gold.
9. If I have any complaint against any product or service I can go to the consumer court.
10. Packaged food label must contain name of manufacturer, year of manufacturing, expiry date, ingredients and nutritional information.
11. Taking bill/receipt for the purchase of goods or services is of no use.

A(2) Consumer Activism

1. I plan how to spend my money.
2. I plan to buy things according to my budget.
3. I carefully read most of the things they write on packages or labels. e.g., expiry date, manufacturing date, nutritional value, etc.
4. I shop around and compare prices and brands before buying something that costs a lot of money.
5. I try to buy products/ brands that are environment-friendly.
6. I check MRP.
7. I bargain on MRP.
8. I avoid taking polythene bags from the stores.
9. I check guarantee/warranty of the product.

Appendix (Cont.)

10. I take bill from the shopkeeper before leaving the shop.
11. Before buying certain products I check whether it is certified (Hallmark, ISI, etc).
12. I make sure that all the electronic equipments are switched off when they are not being used.
13. I try to save money wherever possible during shopping.

A(3) Interaction with Parents and Peers

1. My parents tell me what things I should or should not buy.
2. I ask my friends for advice regarding buying things.
3. My parents want to know what I do with my money.
4. I help my parents buy things for the family.
5. My friends and I talk about buying things.
6. My parents complain when they do not like something that I bought for myself.
7. My parents ask me what I think about things they buy for themselves.
8. My friends and I talk about things we see or that are advertised.
9. My parents and I talk about things we see or that are advertised.
10. I ask my parents for advice about buying things.
11. My parents tell me why they buy some things for themselves.
12. My friends ask me for advice about buying things.
13. I go shopping with my parents.
14. My friends tell me what things I should or should not buy.
15. My parents and I talk about buying things.
16. My parents tell me I should decide about things I should or should not buy.
17. I go shopping with my friends.

A(4) Consumer Socialization Activities in Schools

1. My school arranges shopping trips.
2. Companies visit our school to distribute free samples of their product.

Appendix (Cont.)

3. My school conducts seminars on consumer awareness.
4. Companies distribute pamphlets in our schools.
5. Companies arrange different contests in our school.

A(5) Topics in School Curriculum

1. Advertising
2. Consumer Protection
3. Shopping
4. Rights and Duties of the Consumer
5. Brands
6. Prices of the Products
7. Stores
8. Salespeople

A(6) Motivations for Watching TV Shows, TV Ads and Internet

A(7) Frequency of Using Internet

1. Social Networking
2. Sports
3. News

		TV Shows	TV Ads	Internet
1.	To learn what things to buy to make good impression on others.			
2.	To find out where I can buy some things I want.			
3.	To find out how good a product is.			
4.	To learn about the 'in' things to buy (things that are in trend).			
5.	To tell others something they do not know about new ideas or products.			
6.	To find out what kind of products to buy to become/feel like those people I wish I were.			
7.	To help me decide what things to buy.			

Appendix (Cont.)

4. Advertisements
5. Movies
6. Listening to Songs
7. Shop Online
8. TV Shows
9. Play Games

A(8) Frequency of Viewing TV

1. Sports
2. News
3. Cartoon
4. Movies
5. Comedy Shows
6. Crime Reporting Shows
7. Reality Shows
8. Teleshopping
9. Educational Channel (Discovery)

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