





Peer-Influenced Purchases: An Exploration of Consumer Trends Among Adolescents in Croatia

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Abstract This research aimed at addressing questions about what consumer goods are trending among adolescents in Croatia and why they want to have the consumer goods their peers have. The research was conducted using the method of online focus groups with children. The sample consisted of 40 adolescents (20 boys, 20 girls; average age = 14). The analysis of statements suggests that the current trends are brand clothing items, followed by smartphones and other technology items. The research shows that the reasons for children wanting to buy material goods they see in their peers are: they can play and socialise; they can bond, connect, and feel a sense of unity; they can fit in, and/or because everybody has it; they are not excluded; and finally, to acquire social status. The findings of the work indicate that adolescents want material things that are like those of their peers because of the need for connection, belonging, and relationships, but educators and parents should provide different possibilities to satisfy those needs.

Keywords: 1. adolescents; 2. focus groups; 3. purchase wishes; 4. Peers

Posjedovanje pod utjecajem vršnjaka: Istraživanje trendova o materijalnim dobrima među adolescentima u Hrvatskoj

Sažetak Ovo istraživanje imalo je cilj odgovoriti na pitanja: koja su materijalna dobra u trendu među adolescentima u Hrvatskoj i zašto žele imati materijalna dobra koja imaju njihovi vršnjaci. Istraživanje je provedeno metodom *online* fokus grupa s djecom. Uzorak se sastojao od 40 djece (20 dječaka, 20 djevojčica; prosječna dob = 14 godina). Analiza iskaza pokazuje da su aktualni trend brendirani odjevni predmeti, a zatim slijede pametni telefoni i ostala tehnologija. Istraživanje pokazuje da su razlozi zbog kojih djeca žele imati ili kupiti materijalna dobra koja vide na svojim vršnjacima sljedeća: kako bi se mogli igrati i družiti, kako bi se mogli povezati i imati osjećaj zajedništva, kako bi se mogli uklopiti, i/ili zato što svi imaju nešto, kako ne bi bili isključeni i, konačno, kako bi stekli društveni status. Nalazi upućuju na to da adolescenti žele materijalna dobra koja su ista ili slična onima koje posjeduju njihovi vršnjaci zbog potrebe za pripadanjem i povezanosti, no nastavnici i roditelji trebaju pružiti različite mogućnosti za zadovoljenje potreba.

Ključne riječi: 1. adolescenti; 2. fokus grupe; 3. kupovne želje; 4. vršnjaci

1. Introduction

Recent research on adolescent consumer behaviour has focused on unhealthy food choices because they negatively impact adolescents' health (e.g., Sutinen, Luukkonen and Närvänen, 2023). Also, some have emphasised the importance of internet use since, the more time children spend online, the more they are targeted by ads that influence them (Al-Haifi, 2023). Soares and Reis (2023) confirmed the importance of digital influencers on adolescents' purchase choices. A multitude of factors, ranging from social to personal, play a role in shaping purchase decisions (Baia, 2021). For example, Isaksen and Roper (2008) argue that low-income adolescents are less clear in their self-concept and are more susceptible to interpersonal influence than their high-income counterparts. This inability to "keep up" with the latest trends may result in a damaged self-concept, which leads to heightened susceptibility to consumption pressures. Furthermore, research shows that clothing choices are closely linked to the identity of adolescents (Blanchard-Emmerson, 2021), and provide a platform for balancing personal aspirations with desires to conform to peer groups and social trends (Muratore, 2016). Brand attachment is often explained by the personal and social identity of adolescents who experience heightened identity issues while trying to find their place in society (Bidmon, 2017).

Adolescents are highly influenced by their peers (Brown et al., 2008; Gifford-Smith et al., 2005). They may be more inclined to purchase products or brands that are popular among their friends to fit in or be seen as cool (Closson, 2009; Mangleburg and Bristol, 1998). This peer pressure can be a powerful motivator for their purchasing choices (Lu and Brown, 2022; Reddy, 2015). The impact of peers on adolescents' purchasing decisions corresponds with their developmental requirements for the development of social identity, a sense of belonging, and social knowledge acquisition (Mangleburg, Doney and Bristol, 2004). Adolescents frequently aim to establish their identities and experience a sense of belonging in their peer circles (Brown, 1986). Consequently, they might turn to their peers to obtain information concerning products and brands (Hawkins and Coney, 1974). In a study by Tanti et al. (2011), significant variations in social identity were observed among different adolescent groups, with particular significance noted during early and late adolescence when peer group identity takes precedence over gender identity. Chattaraman, Lennon and Rudd (2010) showed that social identity shaped their brand selection, meaning they will choose brands from their social group. In connection with this, Readdick et al. (1996) emphasised that adolescents often avoided taking risks in their choice of appearance-related products like clothing, given the importance of these products in their self-perception. However it is important to state that research has showed

negative effects of materialism on children's well-being. For example, children who are more attached to material possessions have lower life satisfaction, poorer social relations, poorer life quality, and low self-esteem (Dittmar and Isham 2022).

2. Theoretical background

Consumer socialisation theory serves as a foundational framework for comprehending consumer behaviour. It was introduced by Moschis and Churchill (1978) to elucidate the process through which children gain knowledge about markets and acquire consumer skills. The theory is based on the idea of social learning and the fact that children learn by observing, confirming, or imitating the behaviour of others (Grusec and Hastings, 2007). Research founded on this theory highlights a few main consumer socialisation agents for children: peers, parents, and the media (e.g., Milberg et al., 2023; Mishra and Maity, 2021). Parents play one of the roles in educating children about consumption. Children learn by observing parents when they talk about and choose products and brands (Bujizen and Valkenburg, 2003). Peers exert an impact on the attraction to brands, particularly in the adolescent phase, when peer pressure can be influential (Huang and Sarigöllü, 2012; Niu, 2013). When it comes to media, adolescents prefer to emulate brands endorsed by their favourite celebrities (Ali et al., 2012). According to the theory, products evoke certain images, like prestige, and are viewed as activating similar beliefs about the self, like higher status. Children develop a representation of self-concepts and brands, resulting in greater opportunities for self-brand connections. Adolescence brings an even greater appreciation of brand images along with an increased understanding of the role that brands play in defining the self for the outside world. This, combined with the need to belong to peer groups, leads adolescents to be more aware of the social implications of brands (Chaplin and Roedder John, 2005).

The theory of consumption values is another good base that explains why consumers make the choices they do. This theory has identified five consumption values: functional, social, emotional, epistemic, and conditional (Sheth, Newman, and Gross, 1991). Functional value is presumed to be the primary driver of consumer choice, reflecting the economic utility of purchases such as the relationship between a product's price and its quality. Social value is perceived utility acquired from an association with one or more specific social groups; for example, a person is perceived as a member of a certain group for owning a product. Emotional value represents the perceived benefit tied to the emotions experienced after making a purchase, often resulting in happiness. Epistemic value is perceived utility associated

with acquiring knowledge or fulfilling desires or curiosities about a product, as seen when purchasing new technology. Finally, the conditional value is the perceived utility acquired as the result of the specific situation or set of circumstances facing the choice maker, for example, buying a new piece of gear because the old one has broken down (Sheth, Newman, and Gross, 1991; Tanrikulu, 2021). A study by Hamari et al. (2017) found that reasons parents buy game upgrades for their children include; social interaction, competition, economic rationale, indulging the children, etc.

When it comes to the question of why adolescents want to possess things that are similar or same as that of their peers, the self-determination theory (SDT; Deci and Ryan, 2012; Ryan and Deci, 2017) can offer one explanation. According to the theory, there are three basic psychological needs; autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Autonomy, competence, and relatedness are the foundations of psychological well-being and optimal functioning, according to the Basic Psychological Requirements Theory, one of the six mini-theories in the SDT framework (Ryan and Deci, 2019; Vansteenkiste, Niemiec, and Soenens, 2010). Thus, environments that facilitate rather than obstruct these demands ought to inevitably affect well-being. According to the theory, there would be different functional costs if any of the three wants were not met. The sixth mini-theory, the Relationships Motivation Theory (Ryan and Deci, 2019), addresses close personal relationships such as best friends and romantic partners, as well as belonging to groups, and suggests that a certain amount of these interactions is not only desirable for most people but also necessary for their adjustment and overall well-being, as these relationships satisfy the need for relatedness. Thus, by possessing similar things, adolescents may feel close or similar to their friends and peers thus satisfying the need for relatedness, which consequently makes them feel better.

3. Current study

This research aims to address the following questions: which consumer goods are trending among adolescents in Croatia, and why they want to have the consumer goods their peers have. This study focuses specifically on adolescence since there is a lack of knowledge related to peers' influence on adolescent consumer practices in Croatia and because trends and consumer practices change due to social, technological, and historical changes. The impact of peers on adolescents' purchasing decisions aligns with their developmental needs for social identity, belonging, and social learning, as studies show (Mangleburg, Doney and Bristol,

2004). Most of the research conducted so far has been based on quantitative approaches, assessments, and self-assessments by adolescents (Baia, 2021) thus we used a qualitative approach. Qualitative research allows for in-depth exploration of individuals' experiences, perceptions, and behaviours. It enables researchers immersing in the everyday lives of children. Focus groups are flexible and adaptable, allowing researchers to modify their approaches in response to emerging findings and new insights (Clark and Jack, 1998).

Furthermore, the findings of this research can have an impact by supporting initiatives to enhance consumer literacy. By recognizing and addressing peer influences, educators and parents can empower adolescents to resist peer pressure and model consumer behaviour among adolescents. Educators and parents need to understand the factors that influence the consumer behaviour of adolescents. This understanding will aid in fostering consumer habits and assisting adolescents in their journey of self-discovery and finding a place of belonging among their peers. Such knowledge plays a role in guiding adolescents towards making consumer choices while also tackling any negative influences from their peers.

4. Materials and methods

4.1 Design

This study is a qualitative study carried out as part of the project "Happiness is not in material things: the role of the media, parents, and peers in shaping materialism in children", funded by the Catholic University of Croatia. Focus groups with children were done online. For this paper, we shall focus only on children's statements about the consumer goods they desired and the reasons why they desired them. This research aimed at addressing questions about what consumer goods are trending among adolescents in Croatia and why they wanted to have the consumer goods that their peers have. This study was exploratory in nature, therefore the study findings cannot be generalised. The set of structured questions for the children's group discussions was developed by the project research team. The questions, regarding the topic of the paper, were: Can you describe a situation where one of your friends and school colleagues had something you wanted to have, and has the situation ended? Did you buy it? Can you describe a situation where your friends urged you to buy something, and how did it end? Can you describe situations where you went shopping with friends? What consumer goods are important for you to have? What is in fashion that everyone must have?

4.2 *Recruitment, procedure, and sample*

The recruitment process started on February 13, 2023, with emails sent to all primary schools in Croatia. The last participant contacted the researchers by email on June 1, 2023. The recruitment package sent by email consisted of the permission of the Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Croatia to conduct the research; the permission of the Ethics Committee of the Catholic University of Croatia to conduct research; an example of participant consent for parents and children; and an invitation to participate in the research for school websites. The invitation was published on various social media pages of the members of the research project. Also, students at the Catholic University of Croatia were asked to help with the recruitment process through personal contacts. The goal was for the recruit 60 children from the 5th to 8th grade of elementary school, or approximately aged 10 to 15. The recruitment ended with sample of 40 children due to time schedule of the research. Most of the children were from Zagreb, Imotski, and Dubrovnik.

Parents who contacted the researchers via email or social media were emailed the consent forms, which they signed and returned. In the next step, parents were contacted to schedule a time when their children would be available to participate in the discussion groups. Before the session began, participants were informed about their rights and that the session would be recorded, that the recorded material would be transcribed and destroyed after transcription, and that their personal names would be coded in the transcript. All participants in the sessions interacted frequently with each other. Nine focus groups were conducted with children from April 22 to May 5, 2023 via _Zoom. The discussion groups had 3-6 participants. Participants received a voucher to visit a museum in Croatia. The sample consisted of 40 children (20 boys and 20 girls; mean age = 14). The focus groups had the following schedule: 1 (boy 12, girl 12, girl, 13, boy 14), 2 (4 x girl 11, boy 11, girl 14), 3 (girl 13, 3 x girl 14), 4 (boy 12, girl 13, boy 13, 2 x boy 14, girl 14), 5 (2 x boy 11, boy 12, girl 13), 6 (girl 14, 2 x boy 14), 7 (boy 12, boy 13, 2 x girl 13), 8 (boy 11, boy 12, girl 13, boy 14, boy 15) and 9 (2 x girl 13, boy 13, boy 14). They were conducted and transcribed by 9 moderators.

4.3 *Data analysis*

The unit of the thematic analysis was a participant's general statement. The analysis was done by two coders. The codes were determined after reading the transcripts. Two coders came up with their own proposals for codes. After the discussions, the thematic units, that is, the codes that the researchers agreed upon,

were defined,. Then, each of them entered the statements of the participants in an Excel table according to the defined codes, and the third researcher determined the agreement after combining the data from the two tables. To examine what consumer goods adolescents wished for, those were (1) clothes and shoes, (2) smartphones and other technology, (3) toys, and (4) cosmetics and make-up. A total of 58 statements were presented in one merged Excel table. Coders agreed on all the statements and their code numbers (100% agreement).

To examine the children's reasons for possession of the consumer goods their friends had, two coders also extracted all the statements in the transcripts in which the children mention the reasons they wanted the consumer goods they saw their peers had. Each coder organised the statements in an Excel table and added their own explanation, motivation, or reason to the statement. After a discussion, the coders formed a few codes that were repeated. Those were: (1) they can play and socialise; (2) they can bond, connect, and have a sense of unity; (3) they can fit in and/or because everybody has it; (4) they are not excluded; and (5) to acquire status. A total of 45 statements were presented in the merged table. The coders then separately added code numbers to statements. Coders agreed on 38 statements that were used in this paper. The agreement percentage is 84.44%.

Tablica 1: Codeing process

Question	Statement	Coder 1	Coder 2	Intercoder
What do kids want?	When someone buys Jordan's, that person is in the centre of attention ...	Clothes and shoes	Clothes and shoes	Agreement
Why do kids want?	It doesn't matter to me that it is the most popular, it is only enough for me that it works well.	Popularity	No proposal	No agreement

Source: author

5. Results and discussion

In this part we present both results and discussion. For the results we provide examples of statements. Firstly, we present results related to the question about what consumer goods are trending among adolescents. Secondly, we present results about adolescents' motives or reasons for possessing material goods their peers have.

5.1 *What do kids want?*

A large majority of statements (38) showed that adolescents mostly wanted clothes, and shoes. They mentioned specific brands that are currently in style like Nike, Jordan's, Yeezy, and Adidas. One girl (14 years old, F43) stated, "At our school, it is important that it is the most expensive and branded. When someone buys Jordan's, that person is in the centre of attention ...". Adolescents were explicit about brands of clothes and shoes they wanted or which were popular in their surroundings. One girl (13 years old, F16) stated, "Well, most people in my school wear Adidas, Nike, and such; that's what they wear the most."

Another frequent mention were smartphones and other technology items. Those were mentioned in 14 statements. They tended to mention a specific brand, iPhone smartphone. One girl (13 years old, F47) stated, "iPhone and Air Force". Again, adolescents were clear about the brand. One boy (14 years old, F22) stated "Well, let's say the most popular is maybe the iPhone, Jordan's, or something like that." The third most mentioned in 4 statements were toys. One boy (14 years old, F11) stated, "Slimes were popular before, a year or two ago, and I saw my friend get a slime, and I really wanted it too.". Finally, make-up and cosmetics were mentioned in 2 statements, most probably due to the adolescents' age. One girl (11 years old, F7) stated "In our class, mostly clothes, but for some girls also makeup."

There are some reasons why adolescents seek out branded items (Chaplin and Roedder John, 2005). Wearing popular or fashionable brands can be a way to signal social status and gain acceptance among peers. Brands are associated with a certain image or lifestyle, and adolescents may want to align themselves with these perceived qualities. Secondly, clothing choices are a powerful form of self-expression. Adolescents may use branded items to communicate their identity and interests (Rhee and Johnson, 2012). One study with adolescents from Hong Kong showed that frequent engagement in upward social comparison with friends and classmates was based on branded public goods that can be used to communicate ideal social self-image (Chan, 2008). Also, in Chinese children certain brands like

Nike, Adidas or Reebok are a representation of power, sports starts and are as such popular with children (Rodhain, 2006). Adolescents often want to stay up to date with the latest fashion trends. Brands are often at the forefront of setting these trends, and adolescents may feel a desire to be part of the “in” by wearing what’s considered fashionable now. Also, wearing the same brands as their peers can provide adolescents with a sense of belonging (Brereton, 2019). It’s important to state that individual motivations can vary, and not all adolescents prioritise branded items in the same way. One study done with adolescents from Croatia showed that boys were more interested in clothing brands than girls and that adolescents with higher family income gained more pleasure from shopping than adolescents with an average or lower family income (Justinić and Kuterovac Jagodić, 2010).

Adolescents’ desire for technology, including smartphones, can be attributed to a combination of factors. They are at a stage in life where social relationships are crucial, and smartphones provide a constant means of staying in touch with friends and peers (Varga and Kotrla Topić, 2022). Secondly, if their friends and peers have smartphones, there may be a desire to fit in and be part of the social group. The use of technology is often a shared experience among adolescents. Thirdly, adolescents use smartphones as a portable source of entertainment, especially in leisure time (Allaby and Shannon, 2020). Fourthly, owning a smartphone can provide adolescents with a sense of independence and autonomy. It allows them to make decisions, communicate with others without parental supervision (Matthes et al., 2021). Sixthly, in some cases, owning a smartphone is seen as a status symbol. Certain brands and models are associated with prestige, and adolescents may desire these devices as a way of expressing their identity and social standing (Chaplin and Roedder John, 2005). The same interest in smartphones is seen in UK and US children (Powell and Wicken, 2002). Adolescents grow up in a digital age, and smartphones are widely accepted as essential tools for communication and information access. It’s essential to recognize that the motivations for wanting technology, including smartphones, can vary among adolescents. Some adolescents may be more focused on the social aspects, while others may prioritise the practical benefits.

5.2 *Why do kids want consumer goods their peers have?*

5.2.1 *Reason: So, they can play and socialise*

This reason is mentioned in 8 of the 38 statements. Socialisation with peers is important for adolescent development and growth, and adolescents want to engage with their peers in discussions and activities that are common in their age group. It seems this reason is more present among boys and often relates to games. They talk about how they purchased certain items, such as a PlayStation, to be able to play with friends. For example, one boy (14 years old, F11) stated, “My friend was persuading me to buy PlayStation Plus; it’s a monthly subscription, and you can play everything online. (...) My friends really pushed me to get it, but I didn’t want to. I was stubborn, and then the day after, I regretted it, and that’s it. Then, a week later, it was my birthday, and I got a PlayStation card, so I used that to pay for it.”

5.2.2 *Reason: So, they can bond, connect, and feel a sense of unity*

This reason is mentioned in 5 of the 38 statements. It seems that more girls compared to boys expressed their need to have or buy similar things to their friends to have a “matching” style. One girl (14 years old, F43) stated, “I buy similar things to my friend. Similar models and colours, so we match.” Another girl added (14 years old, F13) that “I also buy matching things with my friends.” Or, one more example statement from a girl (11 years old, F32): “For example, some cosmetics that all the girls in school now have.” This can be a way of obtaining a sense of connection with and similarity to their friends. Although some mention that they sometimes refrain from buying the same things to avoid having the same clothes as their friends, this indicates a desire to stand out or be different. One girl (13 years old, F14) stated, “I, for example, when I ask for something, but I do not ask if other people have, I look at what I want ...” However, the statements made by adolescents suggest that they enjoy coordinating their outfits with their friends, whether it’s by choice or through similar shopping preferences. Matching clothing can be a way for close friends to express their closeness and create a sense of unity.

5.2.3 Reason: *So, they can fit in, and/or because everybody has it*

This reason is mentioned in 16 of the 38 statements. Adolescents want and buy certain products, such as clothes, for their group membership to be seen, or so others do not see them as being different from a certain group. One of the common descriptions they gave was fitting in, and that everybody had it. One girl (13 years old, F47) stated, "Well, it certainly doesn't affect our happiness in life, but some people would like to be like the others, so it's important in that matter." Another girl (13 years old, F16) also explained, "It's like pressing and stuff. And that's what one girl had, and I wanted to have it because most of the kids in my class had it back then. And I asked my mom if she could buy it, and she let me." It is especially related to their class or group of peers from their class or school. One girl (14 years old, F4) explained, "Yes, a few years ago I wanted to get a PlayStation 4 because almost everyone in my class had one. They all played games together; I was one of those who didn't have it, so I asked my parents to buy me one summer, so one summer I got a PlayStation."

5.2.4 Reason: *So they are not excluded*

This reason is explicitly mentioned in 4 of the 38 statements. Adolescents are fully aware that not possessing a certain thing can mean that you are not a part of the group, but they also stated that it can be a reason for exclusion or mockery. One boy (11 years old, F23) stated, "Well, that doesn't happen in my class, but in the sixth, for example, if you don't buy something, they'll make fun of you or something like that." However, there is another side to this. They don't want others to feel excluded, and they will do anything to keep their peers from feeling that way. One girl (14 years old, F33) explained, "Most of the time, the same things are worn here. But it's not quite the case that if you don't wear branded clothing, you're miserable now. It doesn't matter who wears what; it's mostly like that in our class, and it doesn't matter to me either. If someone doesn't have it, it doesn't mean that they can't hang out with us. I'd rather help him buy something if he can't buy it himself or buy it for his birthday. We don't judge each other for it. When I see someone in something new, I'm happy for them."

5.2.5 Reason: To acquire social status

This reason is mentioned in 5 of the 38 statements. Adolescents are aware that having something their peers have means signalling that they belong to a specific peer group, and this shows social status related to this group. One girl (13 years old, F47) explained “Well, it’s important to them in order to achieve social status and show off as important and powerful.” One girl (14 years old, F13) explained in more detail the significance of social status: “I think so, yes. Here in Dubrovnik, this is quite pronounced. If, for example, you are now completely in Nike, then everyone else knows that you paid at least one thousand, fifteen hundred kuna for it. That’s how they know right away that you’re wealthy. Most often, they come to hang out with that person just because they are wealthy. Then they know that they will not have to spend, but that person will then spend for them. So, in my opinion, it is quite popular but quite pronounced in Dubrovnik. For example, when a person wants to fit into a group, he will buy a pair of clothes to fit into that group. So, then he is fulfilled and happy because he is in that company.”

There are some reasons why adolescents may be motivated to acquire what their peers have (Daddis, 2011). Adolescents are in a phase of identity development where they are trying to understand who they are and where they fit in society (Steinberg, 2014). Social comparison plays a significant role during this time, and adolescents may compare themselves to their peers in terms of possessions, appearance, and achievements. Acquiring what their peers have can be a way to measure their own worth and status. Furthermore, conformity to peer norms is central during adolescence (Steinberg, 2014). Adolescents may seek to have what their peers have, to be able to gain acceptance and fit in with their social group. Possessing similar items helps create a sense of belonging. Also, adolescents are seeking greater autonomy and independence from their parents (Fleming, 2005). Acquiring possessions that are popular among peers can be a way for them to assert their independence and make choices that reflect their own preferences. Also, it can be a way for them to express a particular identity or to align themselves with a certain subculture or lifestyle. Peers play a significant role in influencing the preferences and behaviours of adolescents (Steinberg, 2014). If a particular item becomes popular or trendy among a peer group, the desire to have the same item can be intensified due to the influence of friends. In addition, owning items that are valued by their peers can provide a sense of validation and boost self-esteem. The approval and admiration of peers can contribute to a positive self-image, reinforcing the desire to have what others consider desirable. Furthermore, possessing similar items as peers can enhance communication and connection. Shared possessions

can become conversation starters and facilitate bonding among adolescents. It's important to note that the desire for what peers want has been a common aspect of adolescent development, and it doesn't necessarily indicate a negative or superficial mindset. It is often a natural part of the process of forming identity, building social connections, and navigating the complex social dynamics of adolescence.

In summary, in the adolescents' statements, five reasons for wanting to have and possessing things their peers have were identified: they can play and socialise; they can bond, connect, and feel a sense of unity; they can fit in, and/or because everybody has it; they are not excluded; and to acquire social status. The first two reasons are basically psychological needs for connection or relatedness, according to the self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan, 2012). Adolescents have a need to experience a sense of belonging and attachment to their peers. They can fulfil this need by possessing similar things as peers, like clothes, which clearly mark the connection. Adolescents need to feel connection or relatedness to achieve psychological growth, according to the theory. The other three reasons are related to popularity in peer groups during adolescence. More than ever during one's lifetime, one has a need to be a part of the group, be popular, and have status. In this way, adolescents develop and explore their identity, acquire a sense of self-worth, and learn about themselves. However, fulfilling needs in this way can have a negative side since materialism impairs individuals' satisfaction of psychological needs, and in turn decreases subjective well-being and increases depression (Wang, Liu, and Song, 2017). For example, it was shown that being extrinsically motivated to achieve consumer culture ideals predicts their internalisation, which negatively predicts well-being among children aged 8 to 15 years (Easterbook et al., 2014). Moreover, some studies indicated a culturally universal relationship between a materialistic value orientation and ill-being (Unanue et al., 2014).

5. Limitations

While focus groups can be valuable for understanding adolescent perspectives, they also have limitations. Adolescents may feel pressure to conform to social norms. This can lead to responses that are influenced by what they think is socially acceptable. This research has encountered situations when children were unable or reluctant to remember specific situations and have often, in some cases, discussed others rather than themselves. Adolescents may have been hesitant to openly discuss certain issues related to peer pressure and consumer behaviour.

6. Conclusion

The results showed that the current trend among adolescents is brand clothing items, followed by smartphones and other technology items. The research also shows that the reasons or motives for children wanting to have or buy consumer goods they see in their peers are: they can play and socialise; they can bond, connect, and feel a sense of unity; they can fit in; and/or because everybody has it; they are not excluded; and finally, to acquire social status. The findings may imply that adolescents can fulfil their need for belonging and relationships by acquiring consumer goods that are the same or like those their peers possess, but educators and parents should provide different activities and contexts to satisfy this need. Future studies should be aimed at the constant tracking of trends among adolescents and their materialistic values because not all values are good and materialism can develop, leading to lower well-being. Future studies should explore which adolescents are more vulnerable to trendy items and peer influences, so interventions can be targeted at them. The reasons identified in this study should be validated using different samples of adolescents and different methodologies.

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Conflict of interest statement

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