

Socialization of Consumers: A Phenomenological Review

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ABSTRACT

In the field of marketing, the object, socialization of consumers subjected to the discussion made in this concept paper bears a timely significance due to the fact that now the time has come to make a commentary on the contradicting behavior of today's certain dynamic, complex and in certain cases irrational and impulsive individuals dealing in the arena of market. Having made a rigorous search of respective literature, the authors intended to select some more important conceptual implications given in respect of considering phenomenon. Therefore, this attempt may look like crossing certain respective scholars' threshold. Though some say existing studies relevant to socialization of consumers have focused on traditional antecedents and parties of the socialization, since those interpretations have somewhat valid nature in making a rigorous review of consumer decision making role, the review made here was extended to each indication of accepted studies. In introducing holistic and comprehensive perspectives relevant to considering phenomenon, one can base the implications given by prevailing body of knowledge as a corner stone. Based on this view, this paper was outlined to allege meaning of the socialization of consumers, fundamentals of socialization theory, different definitions relevant to socialization of consumers, deviant and compulsive consumer behavior, antecedents of socialization of consumers and different parties of consumer socialization etc. It was found here that social media, mass media, families and peer groups have become key platforms in getting consumers socialized. Furthermore, it was identified that demographics, personality traits and structural variables also play a vital role in socializing consumers. Of them a dominant influence is made by personality traits here.

Keywords: Aberrant, Antecedents, Compulsive, Deviant, Socialization

1. INTRODUCTION

From the beginning of birth, an infant tends to live as a natural being. Afterwards when he/she is growing gradually, he/she adds certain things extracted from parents, education or other members in the society to his/her life. And also growing man is transformed into social man resulting from adding social experience. Although after the birth of an infant he/she is internalized naturally by physiological nature, traits, attitudes, behavioral pattern and biological endowment, owing to deviating environment in which he/she lives the increase in inherent traits and attitude patterns might be distorted. This looks like a learning process which is termed as socialization including social mixture, being social man and socialistic principles (Pocket Dictionary, 1994 p. 886). Different definitions regarding the socialization can be extracted from sociology, psychology, social psychology, education and philosophy. To Walcott Parsons, a person is educated regarding the value judgments and attitudes by the socialization. George Herbet Mid has stated that socialization refers to a process by which children are given an illuminated mind set by letting them to internalize the norms accepted by parents.

More specifically say socialization is a life-long process via which an individual learns to follow social norms and standards. Under the socialization process an individual builds his/her personality and selfconcept. Parents ought to inculcate their children about their culture. Under socialization, children absorb basic attributes of socio-cultural atmosphere in which they live. In this scenario, children ought to be given an understanding of various status and roles of the persons living in the society. Social structure consists of these status and roles. Thus, the socialization has become an essential process in the social life. The concept of socialization is divided into major two segments namely primary socialization and secondary socialization. Primary socialization refers to a shaping process consistent with what an individual perceives at first about the society as well as his/her circulation. In this context, the family is the key institution for becoming socialized at initial level. A child initially receives understanding of the surrounding world from his/her family where sisters, brothers and other relatives contribute to socialization process. Here, via affiliation or love and belongingness and security, children shape their behavioural patterns. The habits, sexual behaviour and its mode, attitudes toward a man or lady, vision of life, mode of entertaining the satisfaction of life, roles of selecting foods and others are endowed by children through their families. This endowment takes place in accordance with the form of family. The second stage of socialization is secondary socialization through which a child enters the society and learn standards, customs and habits. In this case he/she has to maintain continuous relationships with different institutions, services and persons. Among them schools, universities, religious and cultural organizations are important (Malalasekara, 1991 p. 809).

In socializing individuals, peer groups become a vital factor. To increase the personality and skills peer groups may contribute largely. Those who are involved in peer groups may understand unity, sharing tasks, leadership, qualities, values, disciplinary rules etc. According to David Risemann the most

important institute for socializing a person is grouped person. It is the view of psychologists that peer groups' contribution is important in relation to that made by families.

A big role is played by the mass communication in socializing persons. In this regard radio, TV, newspapers, magazines, trade notices, films, stage dramas and street dramas etc. contribute largely. To eliminate curiosity regarding the surrounding world, new entrants coming to the society, highly utilize mass communication. Those who are not in a position to understand the many things from their parents and adults tend to depend upon mass communication and peer groups.

Any individual living in our society has his/her own personal system consisting of four components namely goals, values, skills and beliefs. Since this personal system is a hidden one and born in the inner mind of an individual, it is called a black- box. As per the nature of this black- box, a person's behavioral pattern is shaped. In a society, different persons can be found with different black- boxes from which different actions and reactions are emerging. Certain behaviours are contradictory compared to those of others due to dissimilarities of components in the black-boxes. There are some prescribed social norms, standards, ethics, value- judgments, axioms, doctrines, philosophies, customs and habits in every society in the world. As human beings, we all ought to obey and respect them. These orders might be violated by the persons owing to pessimistic nature of their personal system. As we know in general, the society is uneven due to differences of their attitudes, feelings, perceptions, cognitions and beliefs etc. This climate is almost reflected from consumers too who are targeted by the marketers with the view to attract and retain them in their market place. In this context the marketers have to make a great endeavor in getting them to one strata. For blossoming this endeavor, the concept of socialization is highly required.

2. SOME PERSPECTIVES OF SOCIALIZATION OF CONSUMERS

To Hall (2001), socialization is a process of acquiring a certain culture. Shahzad, Khattak and Khattak also claimed this interpretation. To Moschis et. al (1978), consumer socialization refers to a process in which young fellows engage in enhancing their consumption related caliber. The very ultimate outcome of a person's socialization is his/her behavioral and thinking style. People may acquire some pessimistic or undesirable behavioral styles from the adverse process of socialization. The phenomenon of general socialization can also be applied to behavioral context of consumers. It has originated from the evolvement of consumers in the dawn of civilization. As per the views alleged by Moschis and Churchil (1978), socialization of consumers including the antecedents leads to young fellows to enhance their skills, knowledge and attitudes. So then it seems that this is not a sole phenomenon. Through this, it is possible to secure agent-learner relationships. To Leuge (2006), interactions between agent-learner can make an influence on the behavior. In respect of interpreting this behavioral learning process, two major theories namely social learning theory and cognitive learning theory (Kwon, 2013) are vital. As alleged

by Bandura (1977) and Bush et. al (1999), social learning theory holds the view that consumers attain and enhance their attitudes via interaction with agents. In this case consumers become passive learners (Bush, Smith & Martin, 1999). Shim, Barber and Serido (2011) stated that the social learning theory believes that consumers attain and improve their attitudes via interaction with agents. To Shim, Barber& Serido (2011), owing to daily transactions occurring between agents and learners cognitive and behavioral outcomes would take place. Cognitive learning theory says that learning takes place resulting from cognitive psychological process. To Lee, Salmon and Paek (2007), such a process makes adjustments to environment of a person in which personal and environmental factors interact each other. To pave the path to aggregate socialization of consumers, so-called two approaches can be amalgamated as another phenomenon called cognitive-psychological and social approach. The honour of identifying this phenomenon is going to Moschis and Churchil (1978); Rouse (1990), Salmon and Paek (2007). This phenomenon reveals critical role played by mass mediated communication compared to which modern mass mediated communication particularly social media acts as an agent in respect of socialization of consumers. In this context, the researchers such as Moschis et.al (1978, 1979), Leug et.al (2006) and him et.al (2011) have pointed out schools, universities, media, family and peer groups play a vital role as agents in case of socialization of consumers. As stated by Moschis (1989), the socialization of consumers has dysfunctional dimensions including coupon misredemption, shoplifting and product misuse. To the model of socialization of consumers discovered by Moschis et.al (1978), in shaping a person toward socialized condition, the antecedents, behavioral outcomes and socialization process must be joined together. In doing so, socialization of consumers must be reviewed with the aid of major three elements namely social structural agents, behavioural outcomes and consumer socialization agents. As per Lee et.al (2007) and Kwon and Jung (2013), via social learning and cognitive development the process of socialization ought to be clarified. In case of social learning, different views have been alleged by the authors cited under the interpretations made above. Piaget's theory of cognitive development (John,1999) has pointed out four stages including sensorimotor, concrete operational, formal operational and preoperational. The same author says through impression formation, moral development, altruism and prosaically development and social perspective taking reflect social learning/development, the social learning process includes the stages informational role taking stage, egocentric stage, self-reflective role taking stage, mutual role stage and social and conventional system role taking stage(Selmen, 1980). Having joined above two perspectives, Moschis et.al (1978) suggested that socialization of consumers can be identified as both social and cognitive process. Here, Moschis and Churchil (1978) stressed that an interaction of a consumer as a learner with others may take the shape of modeling, reinforcement and social interaction. Moschis (1989) has identified the phenomenon, deviant socialization of consumers. The term, "deviant" refers to the difference seen from a person that people do not expect as normal and acceptable. Such a person may diverge from norms. To Moschis (1989), such a person is expected to diverge customs, manners, rules and regulations. In response to this view, Wu (2015) noted an alternative consumer behaviour namely

"aberrant consumer behaviour" which contradicts to accepted norms and standards. It would cause to create an unpleasant condition between customers and business. Wu termed this behavior as "a negative customer behaviour". The reason to term so is that this behaviour consists of two aspects that cause adversely to other parties. The first aspect is that the behaviour of customer may bring pessimistic outcomes to other consumers and workers in an organization. In this context, violation of norms, interests of others and making harms to the personality of others may be appeared. Among these views, Saraso (1972) has attempted to distinguish between desirability and undesirability of a behaviour. The difference of these two aspects indicates something which is unique to a certain social stratum, culture, or period. Whatever, it is hard to allege a globally recognized interpretation in respect of deviant socialization of consumers which has antecedent variables that position an individual in a social setting and the agent learner relationships. (Moschips, 1989). Really say this concept is almost vague. A particular dimension of this concept is "compulsive buying behaviour" including antecedents, consequences and classifying compulsive consumers (Edwards, 1993; Roberts, 1998; Guo, & Cai, 2011; Grougiou, Moschis & Kapoustsis, 2015). This particular behavioural pattern is alternatively called "addictive buying" or "pathological buying" (Hubert et.al2012, Lin et.al 2013). Mainly under this sociocultural, environmental and contextual factors may affect its progress (Harvath, Adiguzel & Herk, 2013). They may cause an improvement in hedonic shopping value (Horvath, Adiguzel & Herk, 2013). This concept describes another one called "chronic repetitive buying" which makes a primary response to negative things or feelings (O' Guinn & Faber, 1989). The negative feelings come with societal, dismal psychological and financial consequence (Grougiou, Moschis & Kapoutsis, 2015). Here, the afflicted consumer possesses an overpowering, uncontrollable, chronic and repetitive urge in respect of shopping and spending. Compulsive consumers mostly tend to buy products that they do not need or cannot afford to purchase (Guo & Cal, 2011). That is of course a behavioural addiction. Here, the things bought are rarely utilized (Lejoyeux & Weinstein, 2010). In seeking the causes behind the compulsive purchasing, psychiatric and clinical perspectives are important. It emerges owing to specific manifestation of general psychiatric disorders (Dittmar, 2005). As per the views given by Edwards (1993), Guo & Cal (2011) and Moschis and Kapoutais (2015), the other reasons are social anxiety, glorifying consumption, deficits in self-control, depression, low self-control, money management issues, material orientation and psychological tension.

In speaking of socialization of consumers, it can be noted that the number of wage earners, brand differentiation, viewing network news, brand preferences and educational aims demonstrate considerable changes relying on the frequency of wage earners in households. Compared to children in dual income family, children in single parent family, tend to share the shopping skills and habits of their parents (Ali et. al, 2012). Dotson and Hyatt (2005) said in case of socialization of consumers, amount of disposable income and relative impact of the sources of social forces display considerable changes. To Barber and Sherido (2011), via socialization of consumers, consumers' outcomes are affected by

all of a person's age or life cycle position. As per the opinions of Moschis and Churchil (1979), socialization is a perpetual learning process from which an individual receives knowledge resulting from associating various agents. Hang & Smith (2010) stated when considering socialization of consumers, the environmental forces in different degrees make influence on persons pertaining to diverse age groups.

Another factor to be considered in speaking of socialization of consumers is social structure. In the social stratum in which consumers are involved in learning process, different structural variables such as social class, gender and family size can be identified (Moschis & Churchil, 1979). Moschis and Churchil (1979). They further stated that in analyzing the outcomes of social class, it can be noted that there is a direct influence of some consumers' skills. Here, those who come from higher socio-economic climate possess more chance for consumption and socializing quickly. They entertain better consumption pattern too. According to Kamaruddin and Mokhils (2003), social class appears as a significant predictor of receptivity to school education and as a result a negative relationship emerges in between so-called two variables. Gender is an antecedent of the socialization of consumers. Compared to the male adolescents, the female adolescents like to satisfy socially desirable consumers (Moschis & Churchil, 1979). A major thing to be cited here is that through TV advertisements, compared to girl's boys are severely vulnerable for information they receive. The irrational social forces as peer pressure mostly affect girls (Moschis & Churchil, 1979). And also, parents are more receptive for girls than boys.

Socialization of consumers is affected by personality traits. Personality can be referred as a composition of inner psychological attributes that specify and reflect how an individual respond to the environment faced by him/her (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2007). According to Haugvedt, Petty and Cacioppo (1992), there is a contradiction between personality traits and consumer behaviour. The factors in the Big five model constitute persons' personality (Thurstone, 1934). This idea was proven by the scholars namely Costa and McCrae (1985), Fiske (1949), Tupes and Christal (1961), Goldberg (1992), Wiggins (1996) and John (1999). Accordingly, as stated by Costa and McCare (1992), extravert persons demonstrate a social, active and a propensity to experience and positive emotions. As per the opinions of Watson and Clark, extraversion personality traits consist of energy, affiliation, ascendance, positive affectivity and ambition. Those who gather low in extraversion are regarded as shy, silent, reserved, quiet, retiring and withdrawn. Next factor explained by Costa and McCare (1992) is agreeableness which demonstrates a trusting, sympathetic and co-operative behavioural style. To Rothmann and Coetzer (2003), an agreeable individual is sympathetic, altruistic, and ready to cater others and ready to believe that others are also helpful as same as he/she thinks. Rothmann and Coetzer (2003) further stated disagreeable or antagonistic persons demonstrate a competitive reaction instead of being helpful or co-operative and thus they are merely egocentric and doubtful regarding others intentions. Next trait is conscientiousness

under which as stated by Costa and McCare (1992) persons become well-organized meticulous, more self-controlled and occupied in planning, organizing and carrying out their activities. To Rothmann and Coetzer (2003), conscientious individuals who are hardworking, persistent, careful, responsible, planned and well-organized show strong enthusiasm, purposefulness and determination. They further added that conscientious individuals may have compulsive neatness, annoying fastidiousness or workaholic behavioural style.

To Costa and McCare (1992), intellects indicate a behavioural pattern showing individuals are more open to recent experiences, imaginative and intellectually curious. Rothmann and Coetzer (2003) expressed intellects consist of the traits like intellectual curiosity, aesthetic sensitivity, active imagination, attentiveness to inner feelings, independence of judgment and preference for variety. Those who reap high weight for this trait are having enthusiasm to question authority, unconventional and prepared to act with social, ethical and political opinions. As said by Costa and McCare (1992), neuroticism shows a propensity to experience psychological distress and emotional instability. In this particular case different types of psychiatric disorders are appeared. Those who gather high score for it exercise chronic negative effects. To McCare and John (1985 &1999), there are certain attributes of neuroticism such as self-consciousness, recurrent nervous tension, depression, frustration and guilt which cause to somatic complaints, irrational thinking, ineffective coping, cravings, low self-esteem and poor control of impulses.

3. FACTORS AFFECTING SOCIALIZATION OF CONSUMERS

According to John (1999), these parties might be persons or organizations engaged in inculcating and orientating children as consumers. Moschis and Churchil (1979) have stated that an organization can involve in socialization due to the fact that it often interacts with individuals. While Moschis et.al (1978) stated the parties of socialization of consumers may directly act in getting individuals socialized, Yang et.al (2013) expressed that there is a sound relationship between parties of the socialization (such as school education, television, printed media, family and peer groups) and learner and modes of learning. Kamaruddin and Mockhil (2003) have identified that these agents claim important place as they contribute to continuous interactions with individuals. In socializing consumers, mainly the parties such as social media, mass media, family and peers bear a significant place.

In case of socialization of consumers, the digital technology plays a vital role. So it bears a rapidly growing interest in the field of marketing today. To Heinomen (2011), in particular digital interactivity related to activities of consumers has taken a great place at present. Social media sites including Twitter, Hi5 and Linkedln touch mobile and web-based technologies in attaining more interactive platforms from which persons and social groups modify user generated content, co create, share and discuss. According to Shahzad, Khattak and Khattak (2013), face book and Twitter are the common social media

platforms where it needs social involvement, perceived risks and personal readiness expected benefits. In respect of consumer input in social media, consumption tasks cover the salient zone (Heinonen, 2011). Mangold and Faulds (2009) stated that other than sponsored communications, social media can be regarded as a trustworthy source of information. Moschis and Churchil (19780 have pointed out that mass media play a vital role via programmes and advertisements in socializing consumers of which advertisements have become the most influential force in respect of socialization of consumers. To Macdonald and Sharp (2003) and Shobri et. al (2012), advertisements made via TV make great influence on shaping behavioural pattern of consumers. In the year 2010, Haq and Rehman pointed out that media play a vital role in acquiring culture, and transmitting ideas, values and tastes, Especially, to Moschis and Churchill (1978), the expressive dimensions of consumption stand due to social motivations towards consumption and materialistic attitudes. As pointed out by Roberts (1998), many TV viewers believe that the reality is identical to the world portrayed by the television. Further, Guo and Cal (2011) stated compulsive purchasing behaviour is also influenced by TV viewing. They have further said that individuals tend to buy things in order to move towards an ideal identity which leads to compulsive purchasing behaviour too.

Another factor to be concentrated is family which plays a vital role in socializing consumers. Ali et. al (2012) stated that parents give their values including dress and grooming standards, moral and religious principles, appropriate manners, interpersonal skills, selection of suitable and occupational or career goals and speech to the behaviour of their children.

Moschis and Churchil (1978) have shown that there is a strong positive relationship between family communication and the adolescent's frequency of satisfying socially desirable consumer acts. Family makes a considerable impact on children's' acquisition of consumption related skills. Parents are very primary party of socialization (Grusec & Davidov, 2007). It is known that children have different social demands supported by biosocial system by which parents and children are biologically linked to socialize their children regarding understanding and being consensus. In this particular case children ought to be inculcated regarding desirable and undesirable things like negative consumer behavioural consequences emerged from compulsive consumption and materialism. Moschis et. al (2013) pointed out that making confirmation in respect of social norms and the judgments of consumption habits is stressed by family communication. To Moschis and Churchil (1978), other than rational consumption, expressive consumption is influenced by the dimensions of patterns and moods of consumption via which peer groups make a prominent impact on adolescent hood during which consumers tend to buy things demanded and approved by peers. Guo and Cal (2011) have also proven this tendency. Roberts (1998) viewed that peers are the parties of possible deviant consumer socialization. He further viewed that these parties pave the path to compulsive consumption too. To Kwon and Jung (2013), peer communication can be described as a conversation taken place among peers in respect of consumption

related objects. Iqbal and Ismail (2011) stated that having considered the experience and evaluation of peer group's persons might collect information of issues or new things. As said by Grougiou, Moschis and Kapoutsis (2015), adolescent consumers might be more vulnerable towards peer pressure. Thus, as stated by above three scholars, those consumers show a great dependence, take great risks and make a search of attention etc.

4. CONCLUSION

Through this concept paper, the authors made an attempt to make a search of the most important views given in respect of socialization of consumers. For this purpose, certain prevailing conceptual views felt as more important were associated. In this context, to the identified body of knowledge, it was understood that a considerable place is taken by social structural variables, behavioral outcomes and different parties of socialization of consumers in getting consumers socialized. And also the cognitive development and social learning stages largely make influence on socialization of consumers. In reviewing the phenomenological views, it was identified that many opinions alleged in respect of socialization process have mainly focused on its optimistic outcomes. It was further noted that some important dimensions of antecedents and the parties of the socialization process have not been touched in alleging conceptual explanations. Whatever, social structural variables, demographics and personality traits are vital in socializing consumers. Of them, a dominant role is played by personality traits. Further, the factors represented in the Big five model play a significant role in the socialization process. It was further understood that social media, mass media, family and peer groups have to be cared as very important agents in respect of socialization process. The authors of this paper identified that compulsive purchasing behaviour as an outcome of deviant consumer socialization is mainly geared by social media which can tackle many consumer interactions. It is viewed here that the existing conventional phenomenological views are not much more adequate to postulate the phenomenon, socialization of consumers and they ought to be extended by filling the theoretical vacuum with some potential pessimistic outcomes and some other important dimensions of antecedents and agents of socialization process.

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