CHAPTER-I

INTRODUCTION

Socialization is a psychological process that determines the way in which a person behaves. Brim (1966) has described it as “the process by which individuals acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that enables them to participate as more or less effective members of groups and the society”. Socialization is “a broad term for the whole process by which an individual develops, through transaction with other people, his specific patterns of socially relevant behaviors and experience” (Zigler and Child, 1969). It is a lifelong process that assumes that the behavior of an individual changes continuously. In simple words, it can be said that this process describes the way in which an individual learns the behavior apt to his position in the society.

In the previous research, the conceptual framework of socialization has been used to investigate the consumer behavior of young people (Ward, 1974). Since 1950’s, consumer behavior of young people has been an area of interest to the researchers, but it was in mid-1970s, when the research in this area flourished (John, 1999). In the year 1974, an article entitled “Consumer Socialization” was published in which Scott Ward emphasized on studying the socialization of young people into the consumer role. Consumer Socialization is defined as “the processes by which young people acquire skills, knowledge, and attitudes relevant to their functioning as consumers in the marketplace” (Ward, 1974, p.2). Shim and Gehrt (1996) defined consumer socialization “as the process where the child learns the knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and incentive factors related to consumption behavior as a result of his/her interaction with the socialization agents which include various social institutions and persons such as family, fellows, media and school”.

John (1999) integrated the theories of cognitive and social development and described through three stages that how a child acquires the role of a consumer. The first stage is the ‘perceptual stage’ (ages 3-7 years) in which although children are somewhat familiar with the marketplace concepts but they do not understand them. The second stage is the ‘analytical stage’ (ages 7-11 years) in which children develop a deeper understanding of the various marketplace concepts such as brands, advertising, stores etc. They consider functional aspects of the products before buying them. The third
stage is the ‘reflective stage’ (ages 11-16 years) in which the knowledge about marketplace concepts becomes more nuanced. Adolescents adopt strategic decision making during this stage.

In the present study, the young people among the age group of 10 and 16 years are included. Young people in this age category have been selected as by this age, they develop knowledge about marketplace concepts (John, 1999). In the previous research the terms ‘children’ and ‘adolescents’ have been used interchangeably for the young people of the age category of 10-16 years. World Health Organization (WHO) defines adolescence “as the period in human growth and development that occurs after childhood and before adulthood, from the ages 10 to 19” (www.who.int/maternal_child_adolescent/topics/adolescence/dev/en). Therefore, in the present study, the definition given by World Health Organization (WHO) has been followed. Henceforth, the term “adolescent” has been used for referring the young people among the age group of 10 and 16 years.

The process by which adolescents learn to become consumers is known as ‘Consumer Socialization of Adolescents’. Adolescence is a period during which young people learn various roles in the society. One such role is that of a ‘Consumer’. It is a period when a young child starts making independent purchases (McNeal and Yeh, 1993). Adolescents in the modern societies need products in order to express their social identity. Therefore, adolescence is very closely associated with possessing consumer goods (Lueg and Ponder, 2006). Adolescents constitute an important market segment. Among India’s population of 1,210.19 million at the end of 2011 (Census of India, 2011), 362.87 million (31.1%) are under the age of 14. Thus, India has the largest potential young consumer base in the whole world (Chaudhary and Gupta, 2014). It is a general belief that attitude and preferences developed during this period are carried over into adulthood (Hurlock, 1968).

In order to understand their consumer behavior, it is necessary to know their knowledge about the marketplace, orientations behind consumption, attitude towards different market stimuli like brands, ads, stores etc. and what factors help them to acquire the knowledge, skills and values relevant to consumption.
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Research on the topic of consumer socialization is mainly based on the two models: the ‘Cognitive Development Model’ and the ‘Social Learning Model’. The Cognitive Development model explains that socialization is a function of changes in the cognitive structure that occur between infancy and adulthood. Piaget’s Theory of Cognitive Development explains that as the child grows older, he understands and responds to the world around him due to biological maturation and environmental experiences (Moschis and Churchill, 1978; Young, 2005). The social learning theory emphasizes on socialization agents. It states that socialization takes place when the learner interacts with the socialization agents. The three elements of social learning theory are the Antecedent Variables, the Socialization Processes and the Outcomes (Moschis and Churchill, 1978).

1. Antecedent Variables

These are divided into two categories. The first category is ‘social structural variables’. 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). These variables describe the demographic background of a person (Shim, 1996). In the present study the effect of socio-economic status and gender is investigated.

The second category is ‘age or life cycle position’. The process of socialization is not limited to childhood, but occurs throughout the life of every person (Brim, 1966). In the present study, adolescents among the age group of 10 and 16 years have been studied. Adolescence is a crucial and transitional period in the life of an individual. This is the period when changes occur in the behavior and personality of an individual.

These antecedent variables influence learning of different consumer skills. For example, it has been found that upper socio-economic class adolescents are able to manage finance better and are more likely to have economic orientations for consumption than the adolescents belonging to lower socio-economic class (Moschis and Churchill, 1978). Adolescents from upper socio economic status are more oriented towards brands than adolescents from lower socio-economic classes (Moschis et al., 1984b). In a study it has been reported that adolescents belonging
to higher socio-economic class are more aware about marketplace because they are more exposed to consumption opportunities as compared to the adolescents belonging to lower socio-economic status (Moschis and Moore, 1979). Likewise age and gender of an adolescent may also directly influence his/ her consumer skills. Older adolescents perform more socially desirable behavior and are able to manage finance better than younger ones. Boys are more aware about consumer matters, are more materialistic and have stronger social orientations for consumption than girls (Moschis and Churchill, 1978).

2. Socialization Processes

Socialization Processes includes both the ‘socialization agent’ and ‘the type of learning’ (Moschis and Churchill, 1978).

(a) Socialization Agent

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). Socialization agents are “the sources of influence which transmit norms, attitudes, motivations, and behaviors to the learner; socialization is assumed to be taking place during the course of the person’s interaction with these agents in various social settings” (McLeod and O’Keefe, 1972).

Consumer socialization agents play an important role in making adolescents learn the role of a consumer. When an individual interacts with these agents, he/she learns the norms, skills, attitude and behavior relevant to consumption from these agents. Social influence shapes the consumer behavior of adolescents by providing information and setting normative standards of conduct (Beyda, 2010). The socialization agents may not influence only during the purchase, but also before and after the purchase (Mangleburg et al., 2004). The existent literature has revealed parents, peers, school and mass media as four main consumer socialization agents. In the present study the influence of parents, peers, mass media (TV and Internet) and school as consumer socialization agents is investigated. These are discussed below:
Parents as a consumer socialization agent: Parents are the most important socialization agent. Parents interact with their children about consumption, take them on shopping trips. Thus, help them in learning the role of consumer (Ward et al., 1977). Children observe their parents when they use credit cards, use coupons while shopping. Hence, they learn how to spend money and to be economical (Martin and Oliva, 2001). By giving instructions to their children, parents influence their financial knowledge (Drentea and Lavrakas, 2000; Lyons and Hunt, 2003; Cude et al., 2006). Children also learn about the price-quality relations from their parents. Therefore, the parents help them to buy good quality products (Ozgen, 1995; Shim and Gehrt, 1996). According to Dursun (1993) parents help their children to learn the role of consumer in five different ways. These are: (1) prohibiting certain activities; (2) advising on consumption; (3) exchanging ideas on consumption decisions; (4) providing examples to the child by their own behaviors; and (5) allowing the child to learn by his or her own experience (Hayta, 2008).

Family as a socialization agent directly and indirectly influences the consumer socialization of children. Direct influence can be through various communication processes like social interaction, reinforcement and observation. Generally, limited attempts are made by the parents to teach consumer skills to the children. Parents expect that their children should observe them and learn consumer role from them (Moschis, 1985). Effective consumer behavior may develop if positive reinforcement is given and development of effective consumer behavior may get restricted if negative reinforcement is given (Moschis et al., 1984a). Most of the studies have focused on overt interaction about consumption like Moschis et al. (1984a) and Ward and Wackman (1971).

Studies have also been conducted to see that how structures and patterns of family communication influence consumer knowledge of children. By influencing the adolescent’s interaction with other sources of consumer influence, family indirectly influences the consumer
learning. For example, families with socio-oriented communication structure encourage their children to use mass media to learn how to behave in various social settings. Perhaps, due to this children develop materialistic attitude as it is believed that children learn the “expressive” aspects of consumption from mass media (Moore and Moschis, 1981). Parents also mediate the effects of other socialization agents especially television (McLeod et al., 1982).

The impact of television advertising on consumer learning has been found to be dependent on the frequency of interaction of adolescent with his/her parents about consumption matters. Impact of television advertising is stronger in families where discussions about consumption are less frequent (Moschis and Churchill, 1979; Moschis and Moore, 1982).

(ii) **Peers as a consumer socialization agent:** Peers are defined as “belonging to the same societal group especially based on age, grade, or status” (www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/peer). Peers are very important source of influence for adolescents (Campbell, 1969). Every individual feels the need for social interaction with various people like their friends, class-mates and members of formal organizations (Moschis, 1987). As the child grows older, the importance of peers increases in his/her life. Peers fulfill their need for social acceptance. Peers help adolescents to make their own social identities. They influence the choice, preference and taste of adolescents. Adolescents become more aware about the different brands and products in the market by interacting more about consumption matters with their peers (Ozgen, 1995). Previous research suggests that adolescents learn the symbolic meaning associated with products from their friends. Adolescents use those products and brands which they feel will be approved by their peers. Children learn from peers “expressive elements of consumption” or “affective consumption” (“styles and moods of consumption”) (Moschis and Churchill, 1978). Also, it has been found that peers play a vital role in the development of children’s preference for stores (McNeal, 1979), products (Hawkins and Coney,
1974), brands of selected products (Moschis et al., 1984b) and things to collect (Baker and Gentry, 1996).

(iii) **Mass media as a consumer socialization agent:** Mass media such as television, radio, newspaper, internet etc. plays an important role in the consumer socialization of children. “No other agent of consumer socialization has received more attention (in the literature) than mass media” (Moschis, 1987, p.121). It has been recognized as a very prominent consumer socialization agent in the marketing literature. For marketers, it is a very effective source of influencing people. As marketers believe that what is famous in the mass media becomes salient in the minds of the public and so it influences their behavior as consumers (Sutherland and Galloway, 1981). Mass media is very effective to reach the consumers and make them aware about the products. It has been ranked as the most important source of new product information by Chinese children (McNeal and Ji, 1999). Television advertising is an influential way of communicating messages to adolescents. Both advertising and editorial programming content of television, inform young people about products and influence their buying behavior (Galst and White, 1976; O’ Guinn and Shrum, 1997). Television advertising is the prime source of information to children (Oates et al., 2003).

In the whole world usage of internet is increasing tremendously. Internet as a communication tool is a strong socialization agent (Lee et al., 2003). The principal users are the adolescents. Internet is the most used and powerful socialization agent (Singh et al., 2003; Barber, 2013). It is an apt place for participating actively in the learning process and thus it promotes an ‘active’ process of socialization (Lee and Conroy, 2005).

It is the main source of consumer information and entertainment for adolescents (Rose et al., 2009). People can find variety of products easily on internet with the detailed information. Nowadays, adolescents spend long hours on internet. Internet offers a new shopping
experience. Lee et al. (2003) proposed that, “the internet has created a new learning culture, which is social in nature, allowing adolescents to share, discuss, influence and learn interactively from each other and from the medium” (p.1709). The revolutionary internet era has come up with consumer–generated media like blogs, social networking sites etc. which can be used by the marketers to reach the consumers (Ahmad et al., 2011). Adolescents among the age group of 11-15 years are ‘early adopters’ of new technologies (Rogers, 1995). As adolescents are the prime users of internet, so their internet use is of great interest to researchers from different fields (Kaur and Medury, 2011). Advertisers are now adopting and making more use of internet to connect with consumers.

(iv) **School as a consumer socialization agent:** School plays a major role in the socialization of children. It is a place where a child spends most of their productive time in a day. Role of teachers is as important as role of family in developing consumer behaviour of children (Ozgen, 1995). Schooling directly affects the children’s acquisition of knowledge and behaviour (Sylva, 1994). Stampfl et al. (1978) found that children who received formal structured teaching have better understanding of consumer concepts than those who received open structured teaching. According to Campbell (1969), 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”. Nowadays, marketers are targeting schools to capture the young consumer market. Companies sponsor the different activities in schools, organize workshops and seminars, distribute their pamphlets and free samples of their products, conduct educational programs like awareness about health and nutrition, environmental issues, hygiene through sanitary items etc. Hence, schools in recent times serve not only the academic purpose but also provide commercial knowledge. When a company promotes its products in schools, this conveys a message to the students that the
particular brand is trustworthy. Hence, schools influence the buying behaviour of adolescents.

(b) Type of Learning

Another aspect of socialization processes is the ‘type of Learning’. Moschis and Churchill (1978) described that individuals may learn from the socialization agents through the process of modeling, reinforcement and social interaction. Modeling involves imitation of agent’s behaviour. Reinforcement can be positive or negative. Social interaction includes combination of both modeling and reinforcement.

3. The Consumer Skills or the Outcomes

The socialization agents help the young consumer in learning the consumer behavior and acquire the “Consumer Skills” or the “Outcomes” (Ward and Wackman, 1971; Moore and Stephens, 1975). There are two types of consumer skills as suggested by previous research: direct and indirect. ‘Direct’ skills are directly relevant to purchase and consumption. Examples of such skills include skills at budgeting and pricing, attitude towards market stimuli etc. The skills that are not directly relevant to purchase and consumption but motivate purchase or consumption are called ‘Indirect’ skills. Examples of such skills include materialism, social and economic orientations for consumption etc. (Ward, 1974).

The skills examined in the study are consumer affairs knowledge, consumer activism, materialism, economic and social orientations for consumption and attitude towards market stimuli (including ads, brands, prices, stores and salespeople). Influence of various consumer socialization variables on these consumer skills is discussed below:

Consumer Affairs Knowledge and Consumer Activism

Several consumers’ groups have criticized marketers for their unethical practices and the effects of these on children and adolescents, 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). Government of India, like responsible governments of other countries aims to make the consumers aware about their rights and duties and to protect their interest. Despite many efforts to protect consumers by the government, the consumers and especially children and adolescents as consumers
are being exploited by the marketers. Main reason for exploitation is the ignorance of consumers. A consumer who is aware about the consumer concepts and wisely uses the knowledge while performing consumer behavior is safe. Hence, the role of consumer affairs knowledge and consumer activism becomes important. Consumer affairs knowledge includes basic knowledge about the quality, price, utility of products and knowledge about consumer rights, duties and consumer protection measures. 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 affairs knowledge plays an important role in the analysis of the products or services that consumers want to buy (Cakarnis and D'Alessandro, 2015). Consumer activism has been defined as “activities relating to socially desirable consumer behavior” (Moschis and Churchill, 1978). Various consumer socialization variables influence consumer affairs knowledge and consumer activism.

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., 1984a). Peers have been found to be the most significant source of market knowledge (Mehta and Keng, 1985). Television commercials increase product and brand knowledge of adolescents (Moschis and Moore, 1978). Social utility reasons for watching TV shows (like ‘to learn what things to buy to make good impression on others’ and ‘to find out what kind of products to buy to become/ feel like those people I wish I were’) are found to be related positively to consumer affairs knowledge (Moschis and Churchill, 1978). Schooling directly affects the children’s acquisition of knowledge and behavior (Sylva, 1994). Children who receive formal structure teaching have better understanding of consumer concepts than those who receive open structure teaching (Stampfl et al., 1978). Adolescents belonging to upper socio-economic class 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 therefore shop smartly (Moschis and Churchill, 1978). The results of various previous studies like Moschis (1976); Moschis and Churchill, (1978); Moschis and Moore, (1978); Moschis and Churchill, (1979); Moschis et al. (1984a) revealed that boys have more consumer
affairs knowledge as compared to girls and perform consumer activism more frequently. In a study it has been found that boys are more concerned about environment and are ready to pay extra for environment friendly products (Yadav and Pathak, 2014).

**Materialism**

Materialistic individuals tend to emphasize only on material possessions. Materialism has been defined by different authors differently. Belk (1985) has defined three traits of materialism as possessiveness, nongenerosity and envy. Another definition is given by Richins and Dawson (1992), “as a personal value such that people who are more materialistic have “acquisition at the center of their lives,” “view these (possessions) as essential to their satisfaction and well-being in their life,” and “tend to judge their own and other’s success by the number and quality of possessions accumulated”.

Different socialization agents are responsible for inculcating materialism among adolescents. Adolescents who belong to those families where the interaction between parents and children is less frequent, are often more oriented towards material things (Moore and Moschis, 1978). Social utility reasons for watching TV shows (like ‘to learn what things to buy to make good impression on others’ and ‘to find out what kind of products to buy to become/ feel like those people I wish I were’) have been found to be positively related to materialism (Moschis and Churchill, 1978). Previous research suggests that children learn “expressive” elements of consumption from their peers and television (Parsons et al., 1953, Reisman and Roseborough, 1955). This speculation is supported by many studies (Moschis and Churchill, 1978; Churchill and Moschis, 1979). Materialistic values increase with the amount of television viewing and peer communication (Churchill and Moschis, 1979). Previous research studies have also found the relationship between materialism and demographic and socio-economic variables. For example: boys have been found to be more materialistic as compared to girls in many studies (Moschis and Churchill, 1978; Churchill and Moschis, 1979).

**Economic and Social Orientations for Consumption**

Orientation or Motivation within an individual is the driving force that urges them to act. The first type of orientation studied is the ‘economic orientations for
consumption’, which is defined as ‘cognitive orientation related to the importance of product’s functional and economic features; orientations toward comparison shopping and significant discriminatory attributes’ (Moschis and Churchill, 1978).

Another type is the ‘social orientations for consumption’. It has been defined as ‘cognitive orientations related to the importance of conspicuous consumption; and self-expression via conspicuous consumption’ (Moschis and Churchill, 1978). Conspicuous consumption is “the tendency for individuals to enhance their image, through overt consumption of possessions, which communicates status to others” (O’Cass and McEwen, 2004, p.34). In many developing countries, owning and conspicuous show-off of luxuries is a key part of contemporary lifestyles (Bian and Forsythe, 2012). Nowadays, stature and prestige concerns are shaping buying behaviour (O’Cass and McEwen, 2004; Goldsmith et al., 2010). Children are aware about the ideas of conspicuous products/services, as a means of self-expression (Phau and Cheong, 2009; O’Cass and Siahtiri, 2013).

Researchers have found significant relationship between various socialization variables and orientations for consumption. Parents have been found to influence economic orientations (Moschis and Churchill, 1978; Churchill and Moschis, 1979) and social orientations (Moschis and Moore, 1979). In a study it has been reported that adolescents who feel less parental care and those who spend more time using media are more likely to consume conspicuously (Gudmunson and Beutler, 2012). Adolescents learn ‘expressive elements of consumption’ (like social orientations for consumption) from peers (Moschis and Churchill 1978; Churchill and Moschis 1979). Peers have major influence on young consumer’s purchase decisions of luxury products (Lachance et al., 2003). Television enhances social orientations. Children learn ‘expressive elements of consumption’ from television (Moschis and Churchill, 1978; Churchill and Moschis, 1979).

Social and economic orientations for consumption also vary with respect to demographic variables. As a child grows, social development takes place and adolescents start making social comparisons. Their ability to understand the social meaning of products increases (John, 1999). Gudmunson and Beutler (2012) found age to be significantly related to conspicuous consumption. Also, economic orientations for consumption increase with age (Moschis and Moore, 1978; Churchill
Upper socio-economic class adolescents have more economic orientations for consumption (Moschis and Churchill, 1978). Boys have more social orientation for consumption than girls (Churchill and Moschis, 1979; O’Cass and McEwen, 2004). Contradicting this, a study by Stokburger-Sauer and Teichmann (2013) concluded that girls have more positive attitude towards luxury brands than boys.

**Attitude towards Market Stimuli**

From marketing perspective, an attitude may be defined as a general evaluation of a product or service formed over time. Attitude towards market stimuli includes attitude towards ads, brands, prices, stores and salespeople. An attitude formed towards different market stimuli like ads, brands, prices, stores, salespeople etc. may influence the buying decisions of consumers. Attitudes may be formed from information obtained from peers, mass media, parents etc. as well as from personal experiences (Wu, 2003).

Various consumer socialization agents, demographic and socio-economic variables may influence the attitude of adolescents towards various market stimuli. Parents helped their children in learning to distinguish facts from exaggerations in commercials (Moore and Moschis, 1978). Ward and Wackman (1971) found that family communication is a strong predictor of attitude towards advertisements. Adolescents belonging to pluralistic family communication pattern (where adolescents are encouraged to explore their ideas and freely express their opinions) are more likely to have negative attitude towards the marketplace. Moreover, adolescents from consensual families (where children are allowed to express their opinion, but ultimate decisions are taken by their parents) are more likely to have positive attitude towards the marketplace (Moschis et al., 1986). Moscardelli and Liston-Heyes (2005) observed that adolescents who discuss consumption related issues with their parents develop more skepticism. Internet use has been found to be negatively related to skepticism. Television has been found as a significant socialization agent influencing attitude towards brands (Moschis and Moore, 1978; Valkenburg and Buijzen, 2005) and attitude towards ads (Ward and Wackman, 1971; Bush et al., 1999; Dotson and Hyatt, 2005). Children who watch TV frequently believe the ads more as compared to others (D’Alessio et al., 2009). Moschis and Churchill (1978) found that newspaper readership is the strongest predictor of
favorable attitude towards prices. Likewise, peers have been found as significant consumer socialization agent influencing attitude of adolescents towards various market stimuli. Moschis and Moore (1978) and Moschis et al. (1984b) found that more the adolescents interact with their peers more aware and more loyal towards brands they become. Opinion of the peers plays an important role to evaluate ads (D’Alessio et al., 2009). Courses in schools also help in forming attitude towards marketplace. Students who learn about consumer education in schools have positive attitude towards business (Langrehr and Mason, 1978).

Further, attitude towards various market stimuli also varies with respect to demographic variables (age and gender) and socio-economic variables. Younger children get more influenced by persuasive ads (Robertson and Rossiter, 1974) and have favorable attitude towards prices (Moschis and Churchill, 1978). On the other hand, older adolescents are more skeptical towards ads (Moore and Stephens, 1975). Older adolescents prefer branded products more as compared to younger ones (Moore and Stephens, 1975; Moschis et al., 1984b; Ross and Harradine, 2004). Also, adolescents belonging to upper socio economic status are more oriented towards brands than adolescents from lower social classes (Moschis et al., 1984b). Researchers conducting studies on attitude towards market stimuli have also focused on the gender as a demographic variable. For example: the girls are more likely to hold more positive attitude towards ads as compared to the boys (Bush et al., 1999). Contrary to this, D’Alessio et al. (2009) found that the boys believe more in ads. There is another important study where the boys have shown higher brand recall and recognition than the girls (Valkenburg and Buijzen, 2005).
Figure 1  Conceptual Model of Consumer Socialization

Antecedents  Socialization Processes  Outcomes

- Modeling
- Reinforcement
- Social Interaction

Social Structural Variables:
Gender
Social Class

Socialization agents:
- Parent communication
- Peer Communication
- Frequency of TV Viewing
- Frequency of using Internet
- Motivations for Watching TV Shows, TV Ads and Internet
- Consumer Socialization activities in schools

- Consumer Affairs Knowledge
- Consumer Activism
- Materialism
- Orientations for Consumption
- Attitude towards market stimuli

Source: Adapted from Moschis and Churchill (1978)
NEED OF THE STUDY

This study is an attempt to examine the consumer socialization of adolescents. In order to achieve this objective, based on the fieldwork in the region of Punjab, 800 adolescents were taken as sample and their interaction with various consumer socialization agents was studied. The study also examined the influence of various consumer socialization variables on adolescent consumer learning. Adolescence is a transitional phase when behavior of an individual changes rapidly. It is an important phase from socialization point of view. A child acquires various consumption related skills during this period and consumer behavior formed during this period goes a long way. The skills, attitude, norms, preferences, knowledge related to consumption acquired during this phase are likely to be retained during adulthood (Hurlock, 1968). Consumer behavior of adolescents is influenced by various consumer socialization agents like family, peers, mass media etc. These agents may determine whether an individual will buy certain products or not.

The results of the study shall increase marketers understanding on adolescents buying behavior. Marketers will come to know about the various factors influencing the adolescent’s attitude, skills and knowledge related to consumption. Empirical investigation in the area of consumer socialization may also help the marketers in developing effective marketing strategies (Ward, 1974; Moschis and Churchill, 1978). This may help them to prepare effective communication campaigns.

Concerns about consumer awareness and consumer protection have always been voiced by various government bodies, NGOs and consumer groups. These bodies are always worried about the immoral practices of marketers and effect of such practices on vulnerable minds. Marketers encourage teenagers to buy expensive items like cell phones, videogames, laptops, designer-brand jeans etc. (Aucoin, 2004). They know the buying and influential power of adolescents. Marketers use several techniques to target adolescents. Adolescents do not have the knowledge and skills to deal with over- tempting offers provided by the marketers (Bergadaa, 2007). Hence, they fall into the trap easily. The adolescents need to be protected and made aware about their consumer duties and rights. Hence, this topic needs investigation, so that the
government policies can be framed accordingly. This study will help in understanding the effect of various marketing activities on the adolescent’s consumer behavior.

The study will provide Indian academicians information about the level of consumer affairs, knowledge, buying behavior of adolescents, motivations underlying consumption and attitude towards various market stimuli.

Concerns about the adolescent’s learning of consumer skills has triggered significant research and heated debate since the early 1950s in the West. Crowds of studies related to consumer socialization have been conducted around the world (Ward, 1974; Moore and Stephens, 1975; Ward et al., 1977; Moschis and Moore, 1978; Moschis and Churchill, 1978; Moschis and Moore, 1979; Churchill and Moschis, 1979; Moore and Moschis, 1981; Moschis, 1985; Shim, 1996; 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; Burgess and Steenkamp, 2006), there is a need to understand the role of various consumer socialization agents in consumer socialization from adolescent’s view point in developing countries like India (Haq and Rahman, 2015).

Role of school and internet as consumer socialization agents is also not extensively explored (Belch et al., 2005). These are important socialization agents for adolescents. 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. Studies on the topics like economic orientations for consumption, attitude towards stores and attitude towards prices from consumer socialization perspective are very few in numbers. The studies that are available were conducted many years before. This study strives to fill these voids. Moreover, salespeople have a pivotal role in selling products. Surprisingly, it is seen that they have not been given their due share of importance in the earlier studies reviewed. So, salespeople have been included under the head market stimuli in the present study.
OBJECTIVES

• To examine the interaction of adolescents with various consumer socialization agents (parents, peers, TV, internet and school) with respect to demographic (age and gender) and socio-economic variables.

• To examine various consumer skills (consumer affairs knowledge, consumer activism, materialism, economic and social orientations for consumption, attitude towards market stimuli including ads, brands, prices, stores and salespeople) among adolescents; and to find out the influence of consumer socialization agents and demographic and socioeconomic variables on these consumer skills.

ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

This study has been divided into seven chapters. The first chapter ‘Introduction’ attempts to introduce the various concepts of the present study such as—meaning and concept of consumer socialization, role of parents, peers, mass media and school as consumer socialization agents and different consumer skills such as consumer affairs knowledge and consumer activism, materialism, economic and social orientations for consumption and attitude towards market stimuli (including ads, brands, prices, stores and salespeople). This chapter also explains the need for the study and the objectives of the study.

The second chapter ‘Review of literature’ reviews the past literature regarding the different issues of the present study.

The third chapter ‘Research methodology’ explains that primary data (survey method) has been used to conduct this study. It describes the design of the study, methods of collecting data, techniques used to analyze data and also the limitations of the study.

The fourth chapter ‘Interaction of adolescents with various consumer socialization agents’ discusses in detail the interaction of adolescents with various consumer socialization agents (parents, peers, TV, internet and school). It presents how frequently adolescents interact with their parents and peers. Mass media (TV and Internet) as a consumer socialization agent has been measured with the help of two
measures i.e. frequency of and motivations for using mass media. This chapter also presents the frequency of consumer socialization activities conducted in schools. All these consumer socialization agents have been analyzed with regard to age, socio-economic status and gender.

The fifth chapter ‘Consumer skills among adolescents’ analyzes the various consumer skills such as consumer affairs knowledge, consumer activism, materialism, economic and social orientations for consumption and attitude towards market stimuli (including ads, brands, prices, stores and salespeople) with respect to age, socio-economic status and gender.

The sixth chapter ‘Influence of consumer socialization agents, demographic (age and gender) and socio-economic variables on different consumer skills’ analyzes the relationship between consumer socialization variables and different consumer skills. This chapter presents the determinants of various consumer skills.

The findings of the present study are summarized and conclusions are given in the seventh and final chapter ‘Summary, Conclusions and Suggestions’. Directions for further research and recommendations for government authorities, consumer groups/educators, NGOs, schools, marketers and parents have also been included in this chapter.