CHAPTER IV

RELEVANCE, OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES

Relevance

The consumerism of the western countries has transferred to the developing and emerging economies because of globalization. It has influenced the social, economic and ecological disposition of social order. There has been a lot of social and cultural transformation in the Indian set-up. The growing consumerism in Indians has distanced them away from their traditional culture (Chaudhuri & Haldar, 2005; Gupta, 2011).

Materialism includes longing for material goods. The description of materialism has found an essential place in the vast literature of consumer research. Materialism is an embryonic characteristic of Indian consumers and has become an emerging aspect of the Indian culture (Mishra et al., 2014). Experiential purchases are more closely connected to one's sense of self; our accumulated experiences seem to define who we are (Emamzadeh, 2018).

Materialism has been linked with less life satisfaction, low levels of happiness and diminished well-being (Kau, Kwon, Tan, & Wirtz, 2000). Kasser and Ahuvia (2002) found that highly materialistic individuals as compared to less materialistic individuals were psychologically less healthy.

Materialistic individuals tend to save less (Goldberg et al., 2003) and devote more time to shopping (Fitzmaurice & Comegys, 2006). Materialism has been positively correlated with depression (Wachtel & Blatt, 1990) and social anxiety (Schroeder & Dugal, 1995). Materialistic values disturb the social connectivity of the consumer and motivates him/her them towards self-centered consumption patterns (Pieters, 2013).

Materialism has a great bearing on changing the lifestyles of adolescents in India. The intensity of materialism among adolescents is soaring (Bristol & Mangleburg, 2005). Adolescents are the most vulnerable as they are the ones exposed
to trending consumer choices and develop a budding desire to exemplify a particular persona. Adolescents with an unstable sense of self-worth are more prone to fall into the materialist pattern of accumulating and consuming items just for the sake of impressing others (Koller, Floh, Zauner, & Rusch, 2013). Adolescence is a vulnerable stage in life, especially in the domains of identity and consumption (Shapiro & Margolin, 2014). Nowadays, adolescents are embracing a liberal outlook and they have become very demanding (Vinayak & Arora, 2018a).

Throngs of adolescents ask their parents for more pocket money and desire to get their hands on things possessed by their peers. Possessing costly valuables is considered to be a style statement for adolescents. With growing materialism, Indians have diverted their savings towards the possession of material goods and wealth. Indians between the age of 15 to 55 and ranging from small towns to metropolitan cities are increasingly reflecting such materialistic tendencies (Gopal & Srinivasan, 2006).

The adolescents influence each other in adopting the latest fashion styles (Makgosa, 2010). At an early age, adolescents develop brand loyalty and these favourable attitudes toward brands last well into adulthood (Akturan et al., 2011).

With the invasion of media into the family environment, the purchasing behavior of families and the exhibition of materialistic possessions have become very important. Modern adolescents are highly involved in consumer culture because of exposure to the Internet, TV, films, and other sources; and this exposure strongly correlates with consumer orientation and brand awareness (Bottomley, Nairn, Kasser, Ferguson, & Ormrod, 2010).

There are various variables influencing materialism in adolescents. Peer pressure is a very influential variable leading to increase in materialistic orientations in adolescents. Adolescents mostly communicate with peers and become less dependent on the family when it comes to making choices and developing morals and values. McNeal (1999) characterized both children and adolescents as hyper-consumers.
Adolescents spend on specific brands that their peers use, which are termed as the "right brands" (Moses, 2000). Peer influences are strongly related to materialism in adolescents (DeMotta, Kongsompong, & Sen, 2013). Adolescents look to their friends for guidance as to what is fashionable to acquire (Bindah & Othman, 2012).

Adolescents engage in a social comparison of possessions (Chan & Zhang, 2007). Roberts, Manolis, and Tanner (2008) stated that peer influence has a relatively stronger effect as compared to parental influence on adolescents’ materialism. Peer rejection is linked to elevated perceived peer culture pressure, which leads to greater materialistic tendencies (Banerjee & Dittmar, 2008). The frequent communication with peers can lead to peers becoming the prime socializing agents for consumption values (LaFerle, Edwards, & Lee, 2000; Choi & La Ferle, 2004). Materialistic students were influenced by their peers, whereas less materialistic students reported being influenced by their personal attitudes (Xie, Bagozzi, & Yang, 2013).

From the above mentioned studies, we can ascertain that adolescents who are more susceptible to peer pressure tend to be higher on materialistic orientations. With the growing materialism in the adolescents, a need was felt to study the variables which can play a role in the relationship between peer pressure and materialism.

Self esteem is an important factor that determines materialistic tendencies in adolescents. Chaplin and John (2007) found an inversely causal relationship between the self-esteem and level of materialism in adolescents. Adolescents may seek material possessions for a sense of security when they face stressful situations (Chang & Arkin, 2002).

It has been seen that materialistic possessions help in establishing self-worth and high self-esteem. This makes individuals vulnerable to factors outside of their control, indicating that external locus of control is linked to an increase in materialism (Kashdan & Breen, 2007).

There is a relationship between vanity and several consumption behaviors such as materialism, cosmetics usage, beauty treatments and clothing concerns (Netemeyer
et al., 1995). Adolescents are motivated to buy branded products which are perceived to be superior, rich or fashionable (Rhee & Johnson, 2012).

There is a lack of research regarding the role of different moderators viz. self-esteem, social anxiety, locus of control and vanity which can influence the relationship between peer pressure with materialism, especially in the Indian context. This area of research is less explored in adolescents who are in the rapidly changing phase of their lives.

Different social environments have a major influence on the development of an individual into a materialistic person. Different social environments involve one's household, intimate relationships, peers and friends, locations, race and gender, and socio-economic background. For the present study, two categories of socio-economic status (low SES and middle SES) were taken into consideration along with two categories of gender (male and female adolescents) in order to get a detailed insight.

In consonance with this, the aim of the research was to investigate the role of self esteem, social anxiety, locus of control and vanity viz. physical vanity and achievement vanity in the relationship between peer pressure and materialism among adolescents across gender and socio-economic status differences. This topic is worthy of entrenched study and research to gauge such an influential aspect of consumer behaviour in adolescents.

**Objectives**

The present research has been designed keeping in mind the following objectives:

1. To study the interrelationship among materialism, self esteem, peer pressure, social anxiety, locus of control and vanity among male and female adolescents belonging to low and middle SES.
2. To study the role of self esteem, social anxiety, locus of control and vanity as moderators in the relationship between peer pressure and materialism among among male and female adolescents belonging to low and middle SES.
3. To study the gender differences in materialism, peer pressure, self esteem, social anxiety, locus of control and vanity.

4. To study the socio-economic differences in materialism, peer pressure, self esteem, social anxiety, locus of control, and vanity.

**Hypotheses**

Based on the review of literature, the following hypotheses have been proposed:

1. It is expected that there will be a positive relationship between peer pressure and materialism (H1a), social anxiety and materialism (H1b); locus of control and materialism (H1c); materialism and vanity viz. physical vanity (H1d) and achievement vanity (H1e); peer pressure and social anxiety (H1f); peer pressure and locus of control (H1g); peer pressure and vanity viz. physical vanity (H1h) and achievement vanity (H1i); social anxiety and locus of control (H1j); locus of control and vanity viz. physical vanity (H1k) and achievement vanity (H1l); social anxiety and vanity viz. physical vanity (H1m) and achievement vanity (H1n) in all the groups.

2. It is expected that there will be negative relationship between self-esteem and materialism (H2a); peer pressure and self-esteem (H2b); self-esteem and social anxiety (H2c); self-esteem and locus of control (H2d); self-esteem and vanity viz. physical vanity (H2e) and achievement vanity (H2f) in all the groups.

3. It is expected that self-esteem (H3a); social anxiety (H3b); locus of control (H3c) and vanity viz. physical vanity (H3d) and achievement vanity (H3e) will emerge as a moderator in the relationship of peer pressure and materialism in all the groups.

4. It is expected that gender differences will exist in materialism (H4a); peer pressure (H4b); self-esteem (H4c); social anxiety (H4d); locus of control (H4e); and vanity viz. physical vanity (H4f) and achievement vanity (H4g) among adolescents.

5. It is expected that socio-economic status differences will emerge in materialism (H5a); peer pressure (H5b); self-esteem (H5c); social anxiety (H5d); locus of
control (H5e); and vanity viz. physical vanity (H5f) and achievement vanity (H5g) among adolescents.

So, in view of the above given title that proposed to study the relationship between peer pressure and materialism: role of self-esteem, social anxiety, social anxiety; the present research was planned out.