India is one of the biggest consumer markets of the world and it is also fast emerging as world economic centre. The Indian market presents a potentially vast untapped area for research and businesses. The role of reference groups on consumer product and brand choice decisions has long been acknowledged by the marketers and they have been using this as one of the inputs in their marketing strategy formulation.

Past studies have shown that reference group influence on consumer behavior is all pervasive with some minor variations across cultures. Consumers seek information, self-image enhancement and approval from their reference groups. Consumer susceptibility to reference group influence varies depending upon the type of products, consumer characteristics, nature of consumption of products, group characteristics, etc. These factors may undergo change with the passage of time. Consumers in an individualist society may behave differently from those in a collectivist society. Research instruments developed in the West almost more than two decades ago need to be re-examined in the present times and also in a different cultural context.

The present study seeks to revisit the concept of reference group influence on product and brand choice decisions and to verify the relevance of reference groups in the current scenario, in the Indian context. It is sincerely hoped that the findings from this study will be insightful both for the researchers as well as for the marketers.

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the topic of study. While emphasizing on the need to study consumer behavior, it briefly touches upon the conceptual frame work of reference group influence on consumer behavior. The concluding remarks highlight the need for conducting this study in India.

Chapter 2 deals with the literature review. It highlights some of the past and some of the recent researches in the field of reference group influence, their outcomes and implications for marketers. Most importantly, it brings out the most researched dimensions of this field and also the ones which have not received much attention of the researchers. Thus, chapter 2 presents a
comprehensive review of the contemporary literature on reference group influence on consumer behavior.

Chapter 3 describes the research methodology of the study and the related sub-headings pertaining research problem, objectives, hypotheses, instrument administered, survey design, method of data collection and the method of analysis adopted for the present study.

Chapter 4 deals with a systematic analysis and interpretation of data. Here an attempt is made to infuse some meaning into the numbers generated by statistical analysis and thus make the analysis appear reasonable and meaningful.

Chapter 5 presents a summary of results and discussion. The presentation has been made section wise dealing first with forms of reference group influence followed by types of different referents and finally, the results related to demographic profile of the respondents are summarized.

Chapter 6 proposes suggestions to the marketers which may prove useful in developing suitable marketing communications and creating market segments based on the inputs from this study.

Chapter 7 gives a brief account of the research limitations and it also contains a section suggesting future research directions.

At the end, References and Appendices are given. Appendix I contains the questionnaires used in the phase I of the study and Appendix II contains the questionnaires used for the main study.

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