

## THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL DEPENDENCY ON TEENAGE SHOPPING BEHAVIOR

(A comparison between the adolescents of Tehran and Isfahan)

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### **Abstract**

*One of the common features among people is that we are all consumers. Forecasting the shopping behavior of consumers is a basic requirement for marketers. Market is place for producer and consumer to meet in which several factors affect the shopping behavior of consumer. Statistical population of this research consists of adolescents in the 14-18 age groups who live in Tehran and Isfahan. Using Cochran formula, sample size of this research was calculated for 385 persons and cluster random sampling was done for adolescents from the schools of Tehran and Isfahan. Data gathering was done through standard questionnaires. The role of peers (Roc et al, 1998), shopping affected by fashion/news (Tian and Makenzie, 2001) and shopping for entertainment/fun have been considered in part of "social dependency and need for uniqueness (Rio et al, 2008)".*

*Validity and reliability assessment of the questionnaire was done through face method and Cronbach's alpha with number of 0.855, respectively. Research results indicate that social dependency (need for uniqueness and the role of peers) positively affects teenage shopping behavior (shopping for entertainment/fun and shopping affected by fashion/news. Results from structural equations showed that most of the variables of this article are interrelated among which, social dependency and the role of peers are most effective ones.*

**Key words:** social dependency, teenage shopping behaviors, adolescents of Tehran and Isfahan.

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## 1. Introduction

Marketing is a process of understanding needs of consumers which are satisfied in a way that they will be a long-term customer seeing themselves in a good business relationship. On the other side, organizations and companies should understand and study the behavior of consumers to gain competitive advantage resulting in understanding taste of target market. This taste consists of different parameters like age, income, favor, education level, etc. and they all help on providing better goods and services to the market.

In general, consumer behavior is defined as the study of buyer units and the processes of exchange, acquisition, consuming and taking away the goods, services, experiences and ideas. Some points have to be noticed while studying consumer behavior and one of them is exchange. Consumers are inevitably placed in one side of the exchange where resources are exchanged between two sides. During such process of exchange, regardless of goods and services, other resources like emotions, information and social position may be exchanged too. Normally, process of exchange includes stages begin with acquisition going to consumption and it is finished by providing goods or services (Mooven and Minor, 17, 2013).

A point to be considered by marketers is that all behaviors of consumers (as main players of marketing arena) are affected by the culture of society they live in which, because consumption is a category that is significantly affected by culture. Culture is also affected by consumption (Moezzi, 7, 2012).

Today, adolescents follow their preferred customs, values and norms which are considered as the roots of their different behaviors. Cultures and life styles are different from one society to other society and they are also different from one generation to other generation. Norms and behavioral patterns of adolescents are created according to social features and positions of their generation. Therefore, it is natural that social dependency and culture of adolescents differ from adults' (Jafari, 3, 2009). Adolescents need to know what the expectation which they live up to is. They want to discern what is true and what is false. They would like to do right actions in different situations. Adolescents must buy goods to meet their needs and to interaction with society. The way of their shopping requires knowing and assessing available options; considering such matters adolescents go for shopping and this is affected by different conditions and factors including peers and need for uniqueness (Rohol-amini, 28, 2009)

Development of consumer behavior studies is the result of philosophical shifting from

production and products trend to sale trend and then to marketing report. There are some other factors involved in developing of consumer behavior studies including high speed of providing new products, shorter life cycles of products, development of movements of supporting consumers by NGOs and public policy makers, preserving environment and promotion of service marketing (Lahsabizadeh, 14, 2009).

In such condition, a proper understanding of consumers and process of consumption lead to several advantages. These advantages include assisting managers on taking decisions, providing a cognition basis through analyzing consumer behavior, helping policy makers and regulators on the legislations on buying and selling goods and products and finally helping consumers on taking better decisions. Consumer behavior towards organizing advertizing campaigns plays a leading role. Targeting media or selecting good messages requires understanding the behavior of audience.

Moreover, studying consumer behavior may help us on understanding factors of social sciences which affect people's behavior. On such basis, analyzing consumer behavior is essential in cases of marketing mix, market partitioning and establishing the position of a product in a unique way (Ibid, 14). Having a general knowledge of consumer behavior holds personal value too.

Everyone has knowledge of factors affecting the way of consumption and this helps on being a better consumer. It also helps consumers on finding out the strategies used by companies for selling their products (Ashoori, 112, 2008). On the other hand, one should know that different factors affect consumer behavior and one of which is culture and subcultures inside. Different consumers from different generations and in diverse age groups have the same values, needs and behavioral patterns and they form subcultures which may create important parts of the market. Adolescents belong to the generation which needs have been recently noticed so much (Ashoori, 112, 2008)

## 2. Literature review

1-In a research titling "the impact of intercultural values on decision making models by consumers using Hofstede's theory of cultural values" Leo Vebinit (2005) compared decision making models of shopping among Australians and Singaporeans. Five aspects of cultural values consist of individualism, avoiding unreliability, futurism, democracy, power distance. Researcher of this article first reviewed the level and importance of these values and then (s) he compared

eight shopping models in consumer behaviors of two countries. These eight models include brand orientation, changeability, hedonism, excitation, quality orientation, price orientation, confusion while shopping and loyalty.

Research method was descriptive survey using the tool of questionnaire and ANOVA test was used for data analysis. Simple random sampling was used and sample size comprised 352 Australians and 182 Singaporeans. Hypotheses predicted that: 1- There is a significant difference between the levels of quality orientation by Australians and Singaporeans. Singaporeans are more quality-oriented. 2- There is a significant difference between the levels of quality orientation by Australians and Singaporeans. Australians are more quality-oriented. 3- There is a significant difference between the levels of price orientation by Australians and Singaporeans. Singaporeans are more changeable. 4 - There is a significant difference between the levels of hedonism by Australians and Singaporeans. 5 - There is a significant difference between the levels of price orientation by Australians and Singaporeans. Australians are more price-oriented.

Results of the research showed that in two countries with different cultures, decision making models for shopping would be different too. Higher level of power distance was seen among Singaporeans comparing to Australians and higher levels of uncertainty, individualism and matriarchy were seen among Australians. In a country with higher level of power distance, quality-orientation and brand-orientation reach higher levels. Avoiding high uncertainty (low changeability and high loyalty, high loyalty and low excitation). In an individualist society, levels of changeability, brand-orientation and price-orientation are high and confusion levels and loyalty levels are low. Hypotheses 2, 3 and 4 were accepted and hypotheses 1 and 5 were rejected.

2- In a research titling "**fun student shopping behaviors of Turkish universities considering the values of hedonism and materialism**" Iren et al (2012) studied shopping behaviors. The aim of this research was studying the relation of hedonism and materialism with fun shopping behaviors.

Research hypotheses:

- 1- There is a significant relation between the hedonism and fun shopping behaviors of the students of Turkish universities.
- 2- There is a significant relation between the materialism and fun shopping behaviors of the

students of Turkish universities. The research is descriptive survey using with the tool of questionnaire and data analysis was done through path analysis. The statistical population consisted of 861 students of Turkish universities who were chosen in simple random sampling. Values of hedonism and materialism were independent variables and fun shopping behaviors were dependent variables. Results of the research show that there is a significant relation between hedonism and materialism and fun shopping behaviors indicating that both hypotheses were accepted.

3-Tindana Piamphongsant in her thesis titling "**an intercultural study of fashion behaviors: special situations and introversion differences among employed women in international cities**" (2006) reviewed the difference/ likeness of apparel & fashion in eastern and western cultures to connect the special situations to within group situations. The thesis' studies was also expanded to job groups indicating that considering the matter of difference/likeness of apparel and fashion, no difference was seen among the employed women with eastern and western cultures. However, getting dressed is different from one professional group to other one. Use of PLS analysis made it possible to quantitative analysis of difference/likeness of apparel and fashion leading to have a deep understanding of differences in subgroups of eastern and western cultures.

4- Akan Axay (2012), Pennsylvania, in a thesis titling "**uniqueness**" researched about the students of Kutztown University of Pennsylvania with three hypotheses:

1-disregarding group for an innovative choice 2- disregarding group for an abnormal choice 3- avoiding likeness. In this research, 250 questionnaires were filled by the students and they were analyzed with SPSS software. Results showed that people interested in uniqueness, consider all the three ones. Such people would like to be different and their aim is to be notable and superior in others' minds.

5- Ying Fun (2005), Lincoln University, in a research titling "**the impact of colors on teenage shopping behavior**" studied the impact of colors on teenage shopping behavior. In this research, 300 pupils in the 15-18 age groups were sampled for statistical population and the impact of colors on buying cloths, sneakers and cell phones among the boys and girls.

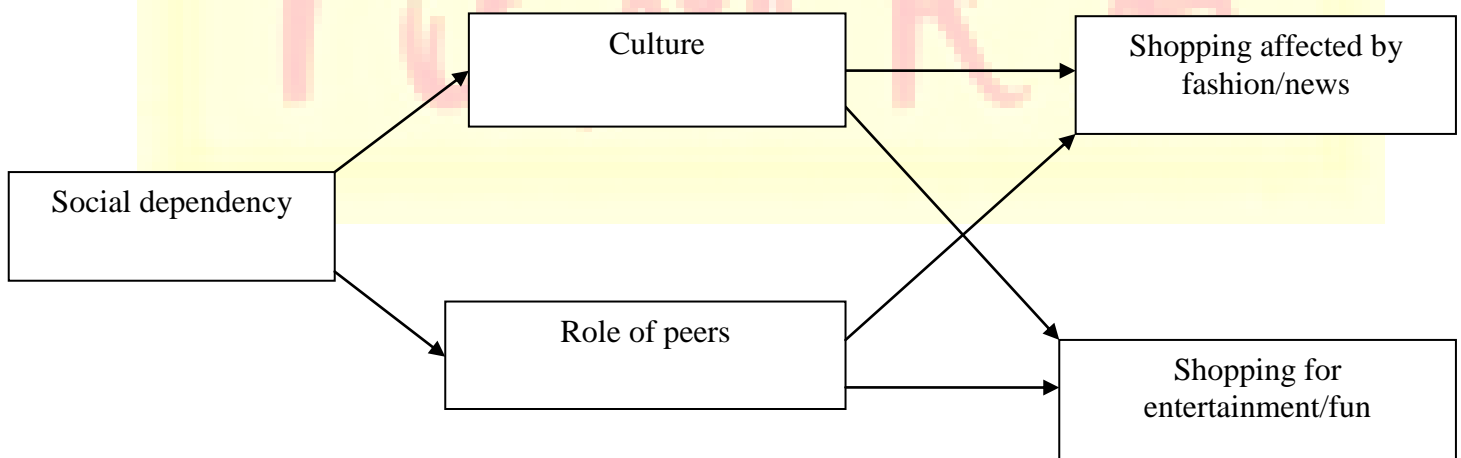
Fun used SPSS software for correlation test of hypothesis as follow: 1- there is a significant relation between the colors of goods (cloths, sneakers and cell phones) and buying them. 2- Girls

are more affected by colors of goods (cloths, sneakers and cell phones) comparing to boys. Fun concluded that adolescents really care about the colors of goods and they buy many of which for their colors; such feature is seen much more among girls comparing to boys. As a result, both hypotheses of the research were accepted.

Year	Author	Title	Variables	Results
2012	Iren	fun shopping behaviors of the students of Turkish universities considering the values of hedonism and materialism	Dependent variable: shopping behavior of the students Independent variable: Values of hedonism and materialism	Results of the research show that there is a significant relation between the hedonism and materialism and fun shopping behavior
2012	Akan Axay	Uniqueness among the students of Kutztown University of Pennsylvania	Dependent variable: uniqueness Independent variable: disregarding group and avoiding likeness	People highly interested in uniqueness, consider all the three ones. Such people would like to be different and their aim is to be notable and superior in others' minds
2006	TindanaPiamphongsant	An intercultural study of apparel and fashion behaviors: special situations and introversion differences among employed women in international cities	Dependent variable : cultural behaviors Independent variable: Intercultural differences/likeness in apparel and fashion	Considering the matter of difference/likeness of apparel and fashion, no difference was seen among the employed women with eastern and western cultures. However, getting dressed is different from one professional group to other one .
2005	Leo Vebinit	The impact of intercultural values on the decision making	Dependent variable: Decision making model, brand-orientation, changeability,	In two countries with different cultures, decision making models for shopping would be different too. Higher level of

		models by consumers (a comparison between Australians and Singaporeans)	hedonism, excitement, quality orientation, price orientation, confusion while shopping and loyalty.  Independent variable: Intercultural values, individualism, avoiding uncertainty, futurism, democracy, power distance	power distance was seen among Singaporeans comparing to Australians and higher levels of uncertainty, individualism and matriarchy were seen among Australians. In a country with higher level of power distance, quality-orientation and brand-orientation reach higher levels. Avoiding uncertainty (low changeability and high loyalty, high loyalty and low excitement).
2005	Ying Fun	Study of the impact of color on shopping behavior of adolescents	Dependent variable: shopping behavior of adolescents Independent variable: the impact of color	Adolescents really care about the colors of goods and they buy many of which for their colors; such feature is seen much more among girls comparing to boys

Current research is a conceptual model and adaptation of an article by Elodie and Raphaelle



*Elodie and Raphaelle (2013)  
Conceptual model of the research*

### 3. Methodology

Applied methodology used for this research regarding objectives and essence. In an applied research, fundamental research is used for solving different problems in different fields. Descriptive-Experimental research was done for data gathering in the hypothesis test. Variable is what may vary in value, accepts different numerical values and it may have variance. So, all things can be variables if a researcher can observe, control or interact with them (Khaki, 2009, 40)

In this research, social factors are independent variables including: social dependency, need for uniqueness and role of peers. Shopping affected by fashion/news and shopping for entertainment/fun are dependent variables. Female adolescents of Tehran and Isfahan form the statistical population of this research. In order to easy access, all female adolescents of Tehran and Isfahan in the 14-18 age group, have been considered as statistical population. There were 5564 female pupils in the 14-18 age group in Isfahan (according to Statistics Department of Isfahan Education Administration, 2012) and There were 7823 female pupils in the 14-18 age group in Tehran (according to Statistics Department of Isfahan Education Administration, 2012).

City	Age group	Number of pupils
Isfahan	14-18	5564
Tehran	14-18	7823

In this research, sample size was defined and calculated by following formula showing confidence level of 95% and standard error of 5%:

$$n = \frac{N \frac{z^2}{2} \times P(1-P)}{\epsilon^2 N - 1 + \frac{z^2}{2} P(1-P)} = \frac{13387 \frac{1}{96}^2 0.5(1-0.5)}{0.05^2 13387 - 1 + \frac{1}{96}^2 0.5(1-0.5)} = 385$$



In this research, 160 adolescents in the 14-18 age group were selected as sample size from 5564 female pupils of Isfahan and 225 adolescents in the 14-18 age group were selected as sample size from 823 female pupils of Tehran.

In this research, cluster random sampling was used. This sampling method is used for large statistical population. In this research, Isfahan was educationally divided into two zones of 1 and 2. Then, city of Isfahan was split in two clusters and the schools in mentioned zones were marked. Afterwards, two girls' high schools and one girl's middle school were selected randomly from the two zones; in the selected schools a number of classes were chosen at random and the questionnaires were given to the students.

The same method was used in Tehran too. Tehran was educationally divided into two clusters and the schools in each zone were marked. Two girls' high schools and one girl's middle school were selected randomly from the zone 1 and three girls' high schools and one girl's middle school were selected randomly from zone 2; in the selected schools a number of classes were chosen at random and the questionnaires were given to the students.

In literature part of this research, library data collection included books, visiting scientific websites and reviewing hypotheses and information gathering for the questions of the research done in two stages. In stage 1, general information like age, grade, address, etc. are gathered and in stage 2, questions (taken from standard questionnaires) are about variables. The inquiries of the research were conducted in the form of 30 questions. See table 1 to know how questions have been distributed between hypotheses and variables.

Table 1

Questions distribution among hypotheses and variables

Variables	Hypotheses	Questions	Source of questions
1 <sup>st</sup> independent variable	Social dependency	1-2-3-4-5-6	Royo, 2008
2 <sup>nd</sup> independent variable	uniqueness	7-8-9-10-11-12	Royo, 2008

3 <sup>rd</sup> independent variable	Role of peers	13-14-15-16-17-18	Roc, 1998
Dependent variable	Shopping affected by fashion/news	19-20-21-22-23-24	Tian & Makenzie, 2001
	Shopping for entertainment/fun	25-26-27-28-29-30	Biti & Frel, 2005

5-point Likert scale was used for preparing questionnaires and considering the objective of research, options range from completely agree to completely disagree. Maximum score for each variable is 30 and minimum score is 6.

Table 2

Numeral valuation of the phrases in the questionnaires

Options	completely agree	agree	No idea	disagree	completely disagree
Numeral value of options	5	4	3	2	1

By permission of Education Administrations in both cities of Tehran and Isfahan, questionnaires were given to girl's high schools of two cities. Isfahan has two education zones. 80 questionnaires were distributed between the students of two high schools and one girl's middle school located in educational zone 2 in Isfahan.

Tehran has also two educational zones. 105 questionnaires were distributed between the students of three high schools and one girl's middle school located in educational zone 2 in Tehran. The researcher was present at mentioned schools to give advices and to answer the questions of the students. Finally, gathered information was analyzed by analytical tools to achieve the results.

Casual models are tested by structural equation modeling (SEM) through system of linear equations and according to hypotheses on casual relations between variables. Therefore, SEM examines theoretical relations between supposed or given structural conditions. It makes it possible to assess relationship between latent variables and observed variables. In SEM, resembling a great skill of multivariate analysis, every single item is analyzed with separate errors.

In addition to exploratory factor analysis, SEM uses confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) too. CFA is a kind of hypothesis test based on that you have an idea of what is the component of latent variables i.e. you are not searching for indicators. SEM examines that whether you have chosen indicator for defining your structure or latent variable and if so, are the aspects define it well? It also represents the exactness of selected indicators in defining the latent variable.

First hypothesis test:

$H_0$  : Social dependency does not affect a need for uniqueness among adolescents.

$H_1$  : Social dependency affects a need for uniqueness among adolescents.

Table 3  
First hypothesis test

Variables		Numbers	Beta coefficient	t-statistic	Test results
Social dependency	Uniqueness	385	0.52	3.95	Effective

Regarding path analysis and values of Table 3, standard coefficient of social dependency to need for uniqueness is 0.52 and  $t=3.95$  and if  $-1.96 < t < 1.96$  then, relationship is statistically significant. As a result, regarding  $t$  in this path ( $t=3.95 > 1.96$ ), first hypothesis is accepted in 99-percent probability showing that social dependency positively affects the need for uniqueness in a way that with 1 point change in the variable of social dependency, we experience 0.52 point increase for the variable of need for uniqueness.

Second hypothesis test:

$H_0$  : Social dependency does not affect the role of peers among adolescents.

$H_1$  : Social dependency affects the role of peers among adolescents.

Table 4  
Second hypothesis test

Variables		Numbers	Beta coefficient	t-statistic	Test results
Social dependency	Uniqueness	385	0.98	3.36	Effective

Regarding path analysis and values of table 4, standard coefficient of social dependency to the role of peers is 0.98 and  $t=3.36$  and if  $-1.96 > t > 1.96$  then, relationship is statistically significant. As a result, regarding  $t$  in this path ( $t=3.36 > 1.96$ ), second hypothesis is accepted in 99-percent probability showing that social dependency affects the role of peers in a way that with 1 point change in the variable of social dependency, we experience 0.98 point increase for the variable of the role of peers.

Third hypothesis test:

$H_0$  : Need for uniqueness affects shopping for fashion/news among adolescents.

$H_1$  : Need for uniqueness does not affect shopping for fashion/news among adolescents.

Table 5  
Third hypothesis test

Variables		Numbers	Beta coefficient	t-statistic	Test results
Uniqueness	Shopping affected by fashion/news	385	-0.05	-0.46	Not effective

Regarding path analysis and values of table 5, standard coefficient of need for uniqueness to shopping affected by fashion/news is the weak result of -0.05 and  $t=0.46$  and if  $-1.96 > t > 1.96$  then, relationship is statistically significant. As a result, regarding  $t$  in this path ( $t=-0.46 < 1.96$ ), third hypothesis is rejected and from the viewpoint the researcher, need for uniqueness does not affect the variable of shopping affected by fashion/news.

Forth hypothesis test:

$H_0$  : Need for uniqueness does not affect shopping for entertainment/fun among adolescents.

$H_1$  : Need for uniqueness affects shopping for entertainment/fun among adolescents.

Table 6  
Forth hypothesis test

Variables		Numbers	Beta coefficient	t-statistic	Test results
Uniqueness	Shopping for entertainment/fun	385	-0.26	-2.06	Effective

Regarding path analysis and values of table 6, standard coefficient of need for uniqueness to shopping for entertainment/fun is -0.26 and  $t=-2.06$  and if  $-1.96 > t > 1.96$  then, relationship is statistically significant. As a result, regarding  $t$  in this path ( $t=-2.06 > -1.96$ ), forth hypothesis is accepted in 99-percent probability showing that need for uniqueness affects shopping for entertainment/fun in a way that with 1 point change in the variable of social dependency, we experience 0.26 point increase for the dependent variable of the impact of shopping for entertainment/fun.

Fifth hypothesis test:

$H_0$  : The role of peers does not affect shopping affected by fashion/news among adolescents

$H_1$  : The role of peers affects shopping affected by fashion/news among adolescents

Table 7  
Fifth hypothesis test

Variables		Numbers	Beta coefficient	t-statistic	Test results
The role of peers	Shopping for fashion/news	385	0.62	3.61	Effective

Regarding path analysis and values of table 7, standard coefficient of the role of peers to shopping affected by fashion/news is 0.62 and  $t=3.61$  and if  $-1.96 > t > 1.96$  then, relationship is statistically significant. Regarding  $t$  in this path ( $t=3.61 > 1.96$ ), forth hypothesis is accepted in 99-percent probability showing that the role of peers positively affects shopping affected by fashion/news in a way that with 1 point change in the variable of the role of peers, we experience 0.62 point increase for the dependent variable of shopping affected by fashion/news.

Sixth hypothesis test:

$H_0$  : The role of peers does not affect shopping for entertainment/fun among adolescents

$H_1$  : The role of peers affects shopping for entertainment/fun among adolescents

Table 8  
Sixth hypothesis test

Variables		Numbers	Beta coefficient	t-statistic	Test results
The role of peers	Shopping for entertainment/fun	385	0.27	2.36	Effective

#### 4. Results

**First hypothesis:** social dependency affects the need for uniqueness among adolescents

In this hypothesis, the impact of social dependency on the need for uniqueness was reviewed. Results of structural equations showed that social dependency positively affects the need for uniqueness (with standard coefficients of 0.52 and  $t=3.95 > 1.96$ ) and first hypothesis was accepted in 99-percent probability.

**Hypothesis explanation:** social dependency means kind of dependency and a relationship between some persons. Thus, a sense of being dependent to a group or society is very important to adolescents. According to this hypothesis, the more adolescents are socially dependent, the more they need for being unique in a group or society, in that case, adolescents focus much more on differences between themselves and group or society.

**Second hypothesis:** social dependency affects the role of peers among adolescents.

In this hypothesis, the impact of social dependency on peers was reviewed. Results of structural equations showed that social dependency positively affect the role of peers (with standard coefficients of 0.98 and  $t=3.36 > 1.96$ ) and second hypothesis was accepted in 99-percent probability.

**Hypothesis explanation:** regarding the acceptance of this hypothesis, one may say that social dependency affects the role of peers, i.e. the more adolescents are dependent to a group, the more they like to be accepted by members of the group. For this reason, adolescents are affected by members of a group and society. In particular, adolescents follow their peers and are affected by them.

**Third hypothesis:** Need for uniqueness affects on shopping affected by fashion/news among adolescents.

In this hypothesis, the impact of need for uniqueness on shopping affected by fashion/news was reviewed. Results of structural equations showed that need for uniqueness negatively affects shopping affected by fashion/news (with standard coefficients of -0.05 and  $t=0.46 > 1.96$ ), i.e. third hypothesis was rejected.

**Hypothesis explanation:** uniqueness means being unique and focusing on differences between one person and the others. By rejecting this hypothesis, one may say that need for uniqueness does not affect shopping affected by fashion/news.

**Forth hypothesis:** the role of peers affects shopping affected by fashion/news

In this hypothesis, impact of the role of peers on shopping affected by fashion/news was reviewed. Results of structural equations showed that the role of peers positively affects shopping affected by fashion/news (standard coefficients of  $t=-2.06 > -1.96$  and  $-0.26$ ). Forth hypothesis was accepted in 99-percent probability.

**Hypothesis explanation:** regarding the acceptance of this hypothesis, one may say that since adolescents are much more affected by their peers, they follow the group while shopping. In this hypothesis, standard coefficient is negative and the role of peers has a reverse impact on shopping affected by fashion/new i.e., the more the role of peers increases, and the less they buy things according to trends of fashion/news.

**Fifth hypothesis:** need for uniqueness affects shopping for entertainment/fun among adolescents.

In this hypothesis, the impact of need for uniqueness on shopping for entertainment/fun was reviewed. Results of structural equations showed that need for uniqueness positively affects shopping for entertainment/fun (with standard coefficients of  $t=3.61 > 1.96$  and  $0.62$ ). Fifth hypothesis was accepted in 99-percent probability.

**Hypothesis explanation:** regarding the acceptance of this hypothesis, one may say that the more adolescents need for uniqueness and being different and highlighted in a group or society, they buy more unique and special goods. Some kinds of shopping for entertainment/fun are categorized as buying special and unique products, for this reason, shopping for entertainment/fun is more common among the adolescents who want to be more unique.

**Sixth hypothesis:** the role of peers affects shopping for entertainment/fun.



In this hypothesis, impact of the role of peers on shopping for entertainment/fun was reviewed. Results of structural equations showed that the role of peers positively affects shopping for entertainment/fun (with standard coefficients of 0.27 and  $t=2.36 > 1.96$ ). Sixth hypothesis was accepted in 95-percent probability.

**Hypothesis explanation:** adolescents would like to be accepted by members of group as a result; they are affected by the group and follow it. Shopping is one of the reasons makes adolescents to be affected by their peers, especially shopping for entertainment/fun. One aspect of such kind of shopping is that the buyer does not need the product; in this case adolescents do not buy their needed products but rather they buy such things to be accepted by the members of the group.

### 5. Summary and conclusion

*Statistical population of this research consists of adolescents in the 14-18 age groups who live in Tehran and Isfahan. Using Cochran formula, sample size of this research was calculated for 385 persons and cluster random sampling was done for adolescents from the schools of Tehran and Isfahan. Research results showed that social dependency, need for uniqueness and the role of peers positively affect teenage shopping behavior (shopping for entertainment/fun and shopping affected by fashion/news). Results of structural equations showed that most of the variables of this research are interrelated among which, social dependency and the role of peers are most effective ones.*

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