

# Exploring Online Shopping Among Teenagers – The Attitudes and Motivations

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**ABSTRACT:** Online spending behavior is a prevalent topic in the growing areas of social media. Teenagers, especially, have become the target audience of online shopping companies. This study intends to explore the online spending behaviors of teenagers to better understand the motivations behind consumption. The study is divided into two sections: the first examines social media's influence on spending behavior through a review of relevant literature, and the second links behavioral intentions to attitudes using the Theory of Planned Behavior. In addition, interview data from empirical studies have been analyzed to identify patterns and investigate the underlying factors influencing youth's online purchasing behaviors. This research uses a qualitative approach to focus on the depth instead of the breadth of the phenomenon under investigation. The author argues for a positive relationship between social media and spending behavior.

**KEYWORDS:** Social Sciences, Online Purchasing, Young Consumers, Theory of Planned Behavior.

## ■ Introduction

Studies have shown that teenagers are far more competent with media and digital products than their parents.<sup>1,2</sup> Teenagers in today's society have more freedom than ever before, with a world they can access from the comfort of their homes. Similarly, they have greater power to make choices compared to past generations. Now, with the press of a button, a package can be delivered within hours. The growing presence of technologies like e-commerce and e-wallets has also increased the appeal and convenience of consumption, especially among youth.<sup>3</sup> With the rapidly improving digital world and different consumption venues, it is crucial to understand the motivations and behaviors behind teenage spending.<sup>4,5</sup> This study aims to explore the online spending intentions of adolescents while taking into account the influence of social media, which, in this study, is defined as communication sources that allow relationships to form between users from diverse backgrounds and includes user-generated content.<sup>6</sup> In this study, a detailed review of literature is conducted, and the Theory of Planned Behavior is utilized as the appropriate theoretical framework. Since this study explores behavior in the context of online shopping, understanding the role of attitudes and intentions behind such behavior is paramount. In addition, empirical, qualitative data from relevant studies is scrutinized. This is followed by an analysis of these empirical secondary datasets (interviews).<sup>7,8</sup> The discussion of these findings is presented in the relevant sections in this paper.

## ■ Methods

This study utilizes a structured and in-depth approach to reviewing the relevant literature and qualitative data analysis of secondary data. Notably, the literature review was conducted in a focused and systematic manner. A systematic approach has

been applied to minimize biased results in the review and avoid 'cherry picking' of the results.<sup>9,10</sup> Keywords such as "teenagers," "spending behavior," "motivations," and "online shopping" were used to narrow the scope of the search. No restrictions were placed on the timeframe, but two studies with qualitative data from 2006 and 2008 were utilized to create the initial database of in-depth interview quotations. Additionally, a common trend that was identified among more recent publications and studies that utilize quantitative methodologies is their tendency to focus on the effects of online spending by youth instead of the motivations behind the spending. Therefore, due to the lack of recent qualitative studies that adequately investigate the true intentions behind teenagers' online consumption behaviors, older studies were used. Similarly, with geographical information, the scope of the search was placed on a global level to produce a more comprehensive review of multiple countries and cultures. A qualitative methodological and analysis approach was used based on secondary empirical data. Furthermore, due to the variation between individuals' attitudes and motivations regarding online spending, a qualitative approach can better account for the nuances between teenagers, as the purpose is not to generalize findings but to provide an overview of the phenomenon based on available qualitative studies. It was also utilized based on the need for qualitative research to focus on depth rather than breadth within this topic.<sup>7,8</sup> Free coding was utilized for the secondary data analysis. Finally, secondary data was used to make links to relevant theoretical models through a thematic approach.

## ■ Result and Discussion

### *Social Media Influence on Spending Behavior:*

Social media is a key tool utilized by companies in their advertising strategies. Recently, it has become more prominent

as teenagers become the target audience. Several studies have been conducted regarding social media's influence on teenagers' spending behaviors.<sup>4,5</sup> A significant number of studies have found that social media has a positive relationship with the shopping behaviors of teenagers.<sup>5,11</sup> In particular, a survey revealed that 32% of respondents prefer advertisement through social media, and 24% prefer online offers.<sup>5</sup> For both online and brick-and-mortar businesses, this means a powerful marketing tool to attract consumers. For customers, it entails higher levels of temptation and advertisement.

Furthermore, the intensity of social media can affect the strength of the desire to shop. This is examined in a study that compared the correlation between social media and materialism among South Koreans and United States citizens.<sup>4</sup> While the results on actual spending differed among the two geographical regions, one idea remained consistent across both groups: social media is positively related to materialism.<sup>4</sup> Increased social media exposure led to greater incentives and desire to purchase items.

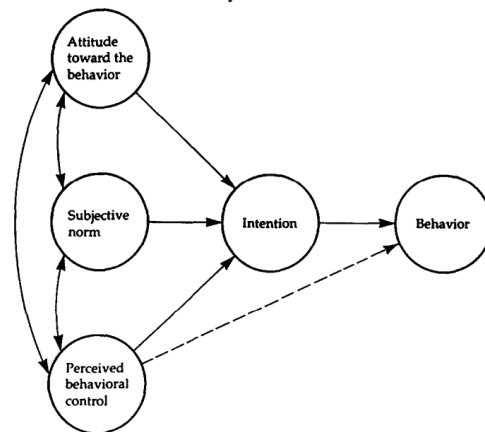
What is quite interesting is that the studies listed above, Thourmrungrroje,<sup>4</sup> Rama *et al.*,<sup>5</sup> and Dandona,<sup>11</sup> all seem to strongly believe in social media's power. This is evident because some of their recommendations were dedicated to companies when they thoroughly explained the benefits of increasing social media advertisements.<sup>4,5,11</sup> Social media has become a major player in online spending, and it is an area of exploration but also of concern as the world continues its journey in the digital age with a lot still to learn.

Nevertheless, while social media is a source of a substantial influence on consumers' spending behaviors, it is not the only reason for increased spending or the most important aspect. Dandona<sup>11</sup> finds that attitudes toward online shopping are the most crucial consumption factor. The study has found that when shoppers have a generally positive attitude towards online shopping, they will have an intention to purchase online, and any online tools, such as social media, can enhance this behavior. However, convincing consumers to spend online may be more difficult if that attitude is absent. The following section elaborates on the role of attitudes and their link to behavioral intentions through the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB).

#### *Attitudes towards online purchasing and their link towards behavioral intentions - considerations from the Theory of Planned Behavior:*

Ajzen's<sup>12-14</sup> theory of planned behavior (TPB) has been one of the most influential tools used in past decades to model attitude behavior.<sup>15</sup> It aims to explain how information and motivation influence behavior, which allows for its prediction and understanding.<sup>15</sup> TPB is an extension of the original Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), created to consider the behaviors of irrational individuals, including actions not entirely under the control of the individual.<sup>15</sup> Figure 1 provides a visual representation of TPB, showcasing the three factors that influence behaviors: attitude toward the behavior, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control. Attitude toward the behavior refers to an individual's positive or negative eval-

uation of performing a behavior.<sup>14</sup> If an individual positively evaluates the behavior, they are more likely to perform it, and the opposite is true if they negatively perceive the behavior.<sup>14</sup> Subjective norms involve the assumed social pressures to engage or not engage in a certain behavior.<sup>14</sup> The more pressure that exists, the more likely an individual is to perform the behavior.<sup>14</sup> Finally, perceived behavioral control addresses the individual's perception of their ability to execute a behavior.<sup>14</sup> The more control they assume they have, the more likely they are to carry out the behavior.<sup>14</sup> Based on the theory, perceived behavioral control can directly influence behaviors.



**Figure 1:** The Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen)<sup>12</sup>

Initial studies on the theory mainly were to challenge the theory's predictive validity in different circumstances.<sup>16</sup> Another point of heavy criticism concerns TPB's exclusive focus on rational reasoning, excluding unconscious influences.<sup>17</sup> In particular, the theory is associated with goal-oriented behaviors steered by a self-regulatory process.<sup>16</sup> Others have questioned whether the hypotheses from the model are open for justification and empirical challenge or whether they are common-sense statements that cannot be challenged.<sup>18,19</sup> However, the most prominent issue with TPB is that some of the theory's propositions are patently false. Mediation assumptions in the TPB contradict the evidence. For example, beliefs are often found to predict behavior above intentions.<sup>20,21</sup>

In the context of consumption, many studies have investigated the impact of perceived behavioral control, subjective norms, and attitudes on consumer spending. In particular, a study conducted by Wang *et al.*<sup>22</sup> discovered that while perceived behavior control beliefs had significant effects on online shopping, the subjective norms of the consumers had no influence. Another study by George<sup>23</sup> used the TPB to analyze specifically the factor of trust and privacy in consumer spending. He found that beliefs about trustworthiness in a brand positively affect attitudes toward buying online. Beliefs about self-efficacy in purchasing processes also positively affect perceived behavioral control. Both these findings resulted in an overall increase in consumption. Both studies, however, are close to two decades old. Hence, more recent research is needed to establish the current status quo and specifically how teenagers interact with, use, and consider online shopping. To showcase the implications of the TPB in the present study, the next section presents the initial data, followed by the themes

that were generated in line with perceived behavioral controls, subjective norms, and attitudes.

### *The initial data:*

Secondary empirical data collection was conducted using two research papers that contained quotes from in-depth interviews. The following tables contain the quotes discovered in the documents. Each paper's data was categorized into three groups. The groups were determined by keywords in the quotes or by their original groupings in the research papers. Not all the data the researchers collected were placed into the tables. Keywords again determined the data's relevance and relation to the purpose of this study. The initial coding of each group is also shown. The codes derive from the interpretations of each quote and the general category under which they were placed. All three categories of the first research paper (Table 1)<sup>7</sup> describe the motivations behind purchasing behavior, such as emotions and aspirations. These data points create the first theme, titled **Motivations Behind Spending**. The quotations from the second study (Table 2)<sup>8</sup> demonstrate the thought process of teenagers while shopping, illustrating the second theme: **Considerations While Shopping Online**.

**Table 1:** Young Consumers and Perception of Brands in Hong Kong: A Qualitative Study (Chan).<sup>7</sup>

| Emotional Implications of having possessions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Relationships with other people from having such possessions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | What the children want in their futures (possessions vs. no)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <u>Initial coding:</u><br><u>Pride, happiness, hedonism, sense of a higher state of being (spirituality), self-esteem, status, sense of belonging, sense of superiority, arrogance.</u>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <u>Initial coding:</u><br><u>Status, popularity, belonging, attraction, desires, negative emotions (jealousy), strategic and tactical, superficial.</u>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <u>Initial coding:</u><br><u>Quality of life, respect, role of money, conflicts, attention, vanity, happiness, independence, materialism and consumerism, implications on wellbeing.</u>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| "The one with a lot of branded goods is happy because of her possessions of branded goods. She is proud of her possessions. She feels good about buying things all the time as shopping can satisfy her desire for branded goods. She is happy to show off her possessions to friends. The one without a lot of branded goods is happy because she doesn't pursue possessions of branded goods. She enjoys spiritual satisfaction through reading and participation in cultural activities." (Female, 16) | "The young person with a lot of branded goods is rich. She can always buy snacks or little gifts for her friends and invite them to visit her house to play. Her friends will feel good and superior when being associated with her. Therefore she has more friends. The one without a lot of branded goods has few friends as people despise her and don't like to play with her." (Female, 13) | "I suppose everyone will want to enjoy an affluent life, with high living standards, quality products and services, lots of friends and a happy life." (Male, 15)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| "The one with a lot of branded goods is happy because she is rich and her desires for possessions of branded goods are fully satisfied. The one without a lot of branded goods is happy because she has many friends. Although she is not affluent, she is close with her family and feels warm all the time. Therefore, she is happy." (Female, 13)                                                                                                                                                      | "The one with a lot of branded goods is attractive because of his possessions. His possessions make others jealous. The one without a lot of branded goods is attractive because of his personality." (Male, 18)                                                                                                                                                                                 | "If you have branded goods, you will earn a lot of respect. People will not laugh at you. Branded goods make people pretty, like those movie stars. I want to become pretty and receive a lot of attention." (Female, 17)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| "The young person without a lot of branded goods is not happy. He doesn't and can't have things (branded goods) that others have. He has little friends as people tend to ignore him. That makes him feel inferior." (Male, 17)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | "Possessions mean wealth. Rich people are demanding, snobbish and calculative. They look down on others with lower social status. The young person with less possession will have more friends as she is easy going and approachable." (Male, 19)                                                                                                                                                | "I want to be the one with abundant possessions. People nowadays face many problems originates from the family, health, study, friendship and love. If we want to live a happy life, we need to cut down or reduce the sources of problems. Money plays a significant role. Although money can't do anything, but if you don't have money, you can do nothing. If you don't have money, your family may argue over financial issues. You can't get prompt medical treatment when you are sick. There will be a lot of arguments with your friends and lovers. It is sad to link everything with money but unfortunately, this is the fact of life." (Female, 17) |
| "The desire for material is infinite. The one with lots of branded goods would keep buying in order to satisfy her new desires. The feeling of satisfaction could not last. Desire will emerge again in a moment. Finally s-he would be unhappy since s-he could never have all of the desires satisfied." (Female 19)                                                                                                                                                                                    | "I think having too much material possessions or too little will make them difficult to get along with." (Female, 18)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | "The one with a lot of branded goods are often lost. They rely heavily on how others look at them. A person without a lot of branded goods is unique. They are happy in heart. They are independent and do not need to follow the trend." (Female, 19)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| "I think the young person with a lot of new and expensive branded goods is not happy as she is not welcomed by others. Everybody hates her. People approach her just because they want to take advantage of her. Besides, I think branded goods are not necessary. The joy brought by possessions of branded goods is temporary. It does not last long." (Female, 17)                                                                                                                                     | "I think many of those friends of the young person with a lot of branded goods are not genuine. They are fair-weather friends only. They intend to take advantage of that young person." (Female, 19)                                                                                                                                                                                            | "I wish to be the second one, because an ordinary person will have more real friends. This is more important than the vanity of possessions of branded goods. Worshipping brands are wasteful." (Female, 19)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| "I don't think owning branded goods will bring happiness. Happiness depends on many things such as relation with family, friendship and academic achievement." (Female, 15)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

**Table 2:** How competent are teenagers aged 11-15 in using new technologies within their consumption experience? Exploratory research on consumer behavior (Batat).<sup>8</sup>

| Considerations while shopping                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Morals while shopping                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Ecological Consciousness                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <u>Initial Coding:</u><br><u>Saving, decision making, research, finding the best deal, no regrets, transparency</u>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <u>Initial Coding:</u><br><u>Ethics, respect, values, views on other countries, crossing boundaries, using the internet to get things without paying, strategy, copyright.</u>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <u>Initial Coding:</u><br><u>Societal and environmental impacts, social media helps raise awareness, research, protect environments, and change consumption behaviour.</u>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| "I'm always comparing video games before buying. It's a necessary step because I can't buy a game before seeking offers on the Internet websites and also at different stores.... I know it takes me a lot of time but it is so useful, i.e. to compare prices, if I am comparing a single item at two different stores, it's simple. The item with the lower price is likely to be the better deal. However, it could be more difficult if the price is different depending on the number of items I purchase" | "For me, the competent consumer has to be an ethical consumer who buys in respect to his values....for example, people who are adept of McDonald's fast food aren't competent because in France we are against the war in Iraq where the US was engaged and McDonald's is American... that's why I don't eat their hamburger... in addition it's not a safe food... there is also another example of products and brands that I don't buy such as Nike , because their products were made by poor children in Asia" (Mathieu, 13) | "I'm always paying attention to current issues related to environmental protection in the media. You may get some more hints on how to live in an environmental friendly way... I also use Internet resources to search for more information... it's so important to protect our environment by changing our consumption behaviour, this is one of the main important areas to improve if you want to be a competent and a good consumer who cares about the future of his children" (Thomas, 15) |
| "Comparison shopping for quality, value, price, etc. is something I do for practically every purchase, large or small, I can get more information on the net and some specific purchase websites" (Charlotte, 15).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | "In my opinion, the competent consumers have to use the Internet and websites such as EMule to download games, music and movies instead of buying expensive video games...it's so stupid to pay for goods that we can get on the Internet without paying... that's a relevant competence for today's adolescents because we are born in a digital                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

### *Data Analysis:*

#### *Motivations behind spending (Table 1):<sup>7</sup>*

#### *Emotional aspects and the role of happiness:*

Emotions can significantly influence individuals. Human connections with certain events can alter a person's reaction and impression of the event (Table 1).<sup>7</sup> This is clearly seen above, in the section discussing social media. As previously mentioned, a positive attitude towards online consumption incentivizes people to make purchases more than just through social media advertisements.<sup>9</sup> The interview results from the first research paper (Table 1) confirm the concept of emotional appeal<sup>7</sup> on the expressed attitudes as well as their behavioral intentions. The respondents had several different opinions on the idea of happiness during consumption and expressed a variety of emotional responses attached to these opinions (i.e. attitudes) and eventually to their expressed behavioral intentions. Many respondents thought those with luxury goods would be happier than those without them because of the achievement they feel from shopping or purchasing such goods. However, they attribute happiness in non-affluent individuals to character traits, family, friends, and other activities. For example, one respondent stated:

"The one with a lot of branded goods is happy because of her possessions of branded goods. She is proud of her possessions. She always feels good about buying things, as shopping can satisfy her desire for branded goods. She is happy to show off her possessions to friends. The one without a lot of branded goods is happy because she doesn't pursue possessions of

branded goods. She enjoys spiritual satisfaction through reading and participation in cultural activities.” (Female, 16)

Another respondent said:

“The one with a lot of branded goods is happy because she is rich and her desires for possessions of branded goods are fully satisfied. The one without a lot of branded goods is happy because she has many friends. Although she is not affluent, she is close to her family and always feels warm. Therefore, she is happy.” (Female, 13)

While another respondent mentioned:

“The one with a lot of branded goods is attractive because of his possessions. His possessions make others jealous. The one without a lot of branded goods is attractive because of his personality.” (Male, 18)

There was a consensus that individuals will feel fulfilled as they consume, which may drive teenagers to purchase more goods. If an individual craves a sense of happiness and finds it in shopping, it might steer them onto a path of materialism, a cycle that increasingly encourages consumption.

Other respondents directly contested the idea that a person without luxury brands is happy. In the following quotes, it is evident that some teenagers view spending as a positive behavior as they view the possession of luxury goods as a tool for social inclusion. This is an example of how attitudes are connected to subjective norms (based on the TPB) and how they ultimately lead to expressed behavioral intentions.

“The young person without a lot of branded goods is not happy. He doesn’t and can’t have things (branded goods) that others have. He has few friends, as people tend to ignore him. That makes him feel inferior.” (Male, 17)

“The young person with a lot of branded goods is rich. She can always buy snacks or little gifts for her friends and invite them to visit her house to play. Her friends will feel good and superior when being associated with her. Therefore, she has more friends. The one without a lot of branded goods has few friends as people despise her and don’t like to play with her.” (Female, 13)

A positive view of spending can influence individuals’ shopping behavior and, paired with the inferiority of not owning luxury goods, could increase overall consumption. Although the first two quotes state that those without many luxury brands will find happiness in friends, if that is not the case, then teenagers will turn to shopping to gain friendships through their display of wealth.

Nevertheless, some respondents did not believe money and consumption could buy happiness. They negatively view the idea of consumerism and believe that individuals without luxury brands can also be happy; a number of them stated:

“The desire for material is infinite. The one with many branded goods would keep buying to satisfy her new desires. The feeling of satisfaction could not last. Desire will emerge again in a moment. Finally, she would be unhappy since she could never satisfy all her desires.” (Female 19)

“I think the young person with many new and expensive branded goods is unhappy as others do not welcome her. Everybody hates her. People approach her just because they want to take advantage of her. Besides, I think branded goods are

not necessary. The joy brought by possessions of branded goods is temporary. It does not last long.” (Female, 17)

“I don’t think owning branded goods will bring happiness. Happiness depends on many things such as relation with family, friendship and academic achievement.” (Female, 15)

“I think many of those friends of the young person with a lot of branded goods are not genuine. They are fair-weather friends only. They intend to take advantage of that young person.” (Female, 19)

“Possessions mean wealth. Rich people are demanding, snobbish, and calculative. They look down on others with lower social status. The young person with less possessions will have more friends as she is easygoing and approachable.” (Male, 19)

### *Role of money:*

Individuals’ opinions on the role of money can also influence their attitudes towards consumption (Table 1).<sup>7</sup> Those who perceive money as a powerful tool to build connections, respect, and increase quality of life will choose to shop more in the future. Many respondents characterized money as an important factor in a person’s development, for example:

“I suppose everyone will want to enjoy an affluent life, with high living standards, quality products and services, lots of friends, and a happy life.” (Male, 15)

“If you have branded goods, you will earn a lot of respect. People will not laugh at you. Branded goods make people pretty, like movie stars. I want to become pretty and receive a lot of attention.” (Female, 17)

“I want to be the one with abundant possessions. People, nowadays face many problems with family, health, study, friendship, and love. If we want to live a happy life, we need to cut down or reduce the sources of problems. Money plays a significant role. Although money can’t do anything, you can do nothing if you don’t have money. Your family may argue over financial issues if you don’t have money. You can’t get prompt medical treatment when you are sick. There will be a lot of arguments with your friends and lovers. It is sad to link everything with money, but unfortunately, this is the fact of life.” (Female, 17)

Current teenagers are affected by their perceptions of the functions of money as they choose to either shop or save. Several respondents view money as a hazard and do not want to fall into the materialism trap. Those individuals will thus limit their shopping. For example, the respondents below:

“The ones with a lot of branded goods are often lost. They rely heavily on how others look at them. A person without a lot of branded goods is unique. They are happy in heart. They are independent and do not need to follow the trend.” (Female, 19)

“I wish to be the second one because an ordinary person will have more real friends. This is more important than the vanity of possessions of branded goods. Worshipping brands is wasteful.” (Female, 19)

The differences between the two opinions on the role of money (a tool to increase one’s quality of life versus a hazard) showcase how subjective norms (i.e., perceived social pressure) affect spending behavior. The three quotes presented at the beginning of this section reflect social pressure to attain

wealth as a sign of success, expressing that “everyone will want to enjoy an affluent life”.<sup>7</sup> This pressure to engage in spending will drive their consumption behaviors upwards. Conversely, the two quotes presented at the end demonstrate resistance to the societal expectation to show success through wealth. They suggest that materialism creates a dependency on external validation, and they will not be subject to the same pressure to purchase luxury items. In that case, their overall consumption will decrease.

### ***Considerations While Shopping Online (Table 2):<sup>8</sup>***

#### ***Online Awareness and Efficacy:***

Aside from shopping motivations in general, other factors also encourage online shopping among teenagers. The second study (Table 2)<sup>8</sup> demonstrates that teenagers are constantly comparing products they find online to find the best value of an item or other better alternatives; for example, the respondents below stated that:

“I’m always comparing video games before buying. It’s necessary because I can’t buy a game before seeking offers on the Internet and at different stores... I know it takes me a lot of time, but it is so useful, i.e., to compare prices; if I am comparing a single item at two different stores, it’s simple. The item with the lower price is likely to be the better deal. However, it could be more difficult if the price differs depending on the number of items I purchase.”

“Comparison shopping for quality, value, price, etc. is something I do for practically every purchase, large or small; I can get more information on the net and some specific purchase websites” (Charlotte, 15).

Online shopping proves its benefits when teenagers conduct their market research, as online comparisons are much easier to make than in-person comparisons. Youth can access various products and quickly manoeuvre between sites, images, and reviews to find the best product. Accessibility is a factor when youth shop online,<sup>8</sup> so when they can quickly access all the information they need to make educated purchases, their shopping amounts can significantly increase as their hesitancy decreases.<sup>8</sup> However, a high perception of control over purchases could lead to a decrease in consumption. Consumers may believe that comparison shopping is a skill they can employ to make better choices, strengthening their ability to shop wisely. An increase in perceived control over what they can purchase may reduce the likelihood of impulsive purchases and, therefore, spending in general.

#### ***Morals and Ethics:***

Aside from comparison considerations, teenagers also consider morals and ethics as they shop. When they think it is unethical to purchase products from a specific retailer, they will refrain from buying, as documented in the response below:

“For me, the competent consumer has to be an ethical consumer who buys in respect to his values....for example, people who are adept at McDonald’s fast food aren’t competent because in France we are against the war in Iraq where the US was engaged, and McDonald’s is American... that’s why I don’t eat their hamburger... in addition, it’s not a safe food... there is

also another example of products and brands that I don’t buy, such as Nike, because poor children made their products in Asia.” (Mathieu, 13)

This is also true for online shopping, as teenagers can boycott online retailers. Especially with the increase in social media usage by consumers and companies, it becomes easier for teenagers to discover unethical facts about retailers.<sup>8</sup> This will significantly decrease their interest in purchasing from that retailer, reducing overall consumption.<sup>8</sup> However, while teenagers often boycott certain retailers due to ethical concerns, they do not hesitate to download video games that are copyrighted. One respondent stated:

“I download video and games, and I don’t care about copyright, it’s so easy to use the peer-to-peer file-sharing networks to get my music...It’s so unrealistic to expect people not to do it” (Charlotte, 15)

This conflict in ethics shows that teenagers are still willing to perform unethical tasks even if they would refrain from purchasing from a company. Based on these two responses, it can be identified that teenagers may find brands and companies more unethical than actions such as using file-sharing networks. While these two responses are not representative of the entire teenage population, they still show, at a certain scale, the subjectiveness of teenagers’ opinions and ethical standings in the process of online shopping.

Overall, the fact that teenagers consider morals and ethics while shopping indicates that they perceive a level of control over their decision-making. This is proven by their explicit explanations of their decisions when it comes to boycotting certain brands. Similar to the analysis presented in the previous section, when individuals feel that they have a choice of what to purchase based on their knowledge of morals and ethics, they may increase or decrease their spending based on how much research they perform on a company.

## **■ Conclusion**

This study found that social media heavily influences consumer behavior and is often used by companies in advertising to attract and target youths. The Theory of Planned Behavior is discussed, revealing that perceived behavior control beliefs and self-efficacy positively correlate with online spending. The analysis of the secondary empirical data found that motivations, awareness, efficacy, and ethics positively affect consumerism.

From a practical perspective, this study evaluated teenagers’ online consumption trends in the status quo. It took into account both theoretical (TPB) and practical aspects. The Theory of Planned Behavior, although covering the theoretical factors, lacks more recent research. Hence, further advances on the theorization of the Theory of Planned Behavior are needed to evaluate the situation with more accuracy. Practical components included the analysis of social media. It demonstrated the shifting behaviors of youth in the age of advanced technology. Methodologically, a systematic review was utilized, and emerging synthesis was considered.<sup>24</sup> Secondary data was used.

In conclusion, the literature review, the theory of planned behavior consideration, and the interview data analysis reached the aim of exploring teenagers’ online consumption behaviors.

Finally, social media significantly shapes the consumption process, as evidenced by this study's findings and extensive prior research.

### Propositions and Limitations:

Throughout this study and in the sources, traces of social media influence have remained present. Companies should recognize that social media is a powerful tool to enhance marketing and advertising. Conversely, consumers should be cautious about the constant influence of social media and its effects on excessive spending. Furthermore, given the influence social media has on the younger population, policies should be made or reformed to enforce safety while youths engage in online consumption. Additionally, more research should be conducted on the topic of teenagers' online consumption behaviors, as many of the studies used in this research article likely do not account for the advancements in social media and the shifting worldviews of young individuals. Specifically, research on the effects of teenage overconsumption in terms of mental health, relationships, and career prospects can provide a more robust implication of the attitudes and motivations discussed in this research article. Similarly, more recent research that includes interviews would be beneficial in either proving or reforming the discoveries made in the studies that were previously discussed. Limitations to this study include its scope and the quantifiable analysis to support the claims made either in the relevant literature or the utilized secondary data.

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