



Self Esteem and Socially Influenced Consumer Behavior: Investigating the Mediating Role of Interpersonal Influence among Young Adults in India

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Abstract: The study aimed to examine the connection between self-esteem and young adults' susceptibility to interpersonal influence in India, and to differentiate between informational and normative components of influence. A cross-sectional survey was used, and the study consisted of 127 Indian adolescents (n=58 Male; n=68 female). Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale - to evaluate self-esteem, and consumer susceptibility was assessed using the Consumer Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence Scale. Pearson product moment correlations and linear regression analyses was conducted. Results indicated a significant negative association between self-esteem and consumer susceptibility, and similar for self-esteem and normative influence. No significant relationship was established between self-esteem and informational influence. According to regression analyses, self-esteem showed a small proportion of variance in overall and normative susceptibility. The results reflect that, rather than informational reliance, self-esteem is selectively linked to conformity that is directed toward approval in consuming contexts.

Keyword: *Self-Esteem; Consumer Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence; Normative Influence; Informational Influence*

1. Introduction

Consumer decision making does not occur in isolation. According to modern consumer psychology, consuming is essentially a part of social structures, even though early economic perspectives saw customers as self-directed and logical decision makers. People form their preferences, goals, and standards of evaluation in relational contexts that are

influenced by their family, friends, the media, and cultural norms. According to Stafford and Cocanougher (1977), Grasping consumer behavior necessitates assessing how social influences shape attitudes, values, and buying choices. The significance of products displayed in social environments and the regular employment of appealing endorsers in advertising campaigns demonstrate the belief that people respond to the judgments of others. Interpersonal impact is frequently included in behavioral models as a factor influencing attitudes and purchasing decisions.

Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence as an Individual Difference

Consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence is the extent people let other people affect their opinions about products and how they decide what to buy (Bearden et al., 1989).

Conceptually based on McGuire's (1968) idea of influenceability, susceptibility is seen as a general characteristic that differs from person to person and exhibits consistency across situations. Early studies on persuasion and conformance showed that while some people exhibit relative resistance, others consistently conform in many situations (Asch, 1958; Janis, 1954).

Influenceability in one aspect predicts influenceability in other aspects as well, according to McGuire's (1968) found that susceptibility to influence usually is constant across situation.

Until Bearden et al. (1989) created multidimensional scale to evaluate susceptibility as a domain-specific individual difference, in consumer research, susceptibility was not consistently operationalized, despite its importance. According to Kassarian's (1971) when making purchases, consumers are curious about the personalities of those they are purchasing from.

When someone is susceptible, they are prone to pay attention to what other people think when they are shopping. This implies that certain people are more susceptible to peer pressure in settings such as retail establishments. In these circumstances, personality attributes are highly sought after.

It is structurally relevant, according to study. D'Rozario Yang (1990) showed that those with high informational susceptibility do more extensive pre-purchase searches using both personal and impersonal sources. According to Murali et al. (2005), even after controlling cognitive demands, self-efficacy, and product knowledge, susceptibility still predicts preference for interpersonal information sources. Research suggests that susceptibility influences consumer decision-making in systematic ways and is not just an attitude.

Normative and Informational Dimensions

Deutsch and Gerard (1955) introduced terms normative and informational influence. “Normative influence is conformity motivated by the need to gain acceptance or avoid rejection, and informational influence shows dependence on others as trustworthy sources of information under difficult situations.” Normative influence has been separated into utilitarian and value-expressive components in the consumer setting. While utilitarian influence is compliance to gain rewards or prevent rejection, value expressive influence is identification with reference groups to improve self-image (Kelman, 1961). Internalization is how informational influence works, as people take other people's opinions as fact.

There is evidence to support this multifaceted viewpoint. Publicly visible products or consumption increases normative or peer pressure than the products that are consumed in private (Makgosa & Mohube, 2007). As noted by Prendergast et al. (2010), peer pressure can predict adolescents' attitudes towards society's luxury goods. It has been shown that informational influence reduces uncertainty and increases perceived competence, affecting product choices and brand evaluations (Burnkrant & Cousineau, 1975; Park & Lessig, 1977). Taken together, these findings reveal the complexity and the psychological distinctiveness of susceptibility.

Self Esteem as a Self-Evaluative Mechanism

Susceptibility does not adequately explain why people vary in how sensitive they are to social factors, even while it does indicate responsiveness to external factors. One basic self-evaluation process that may influence responsiveness is self-esteem, which is described as an individual's overall assessment of one's own value (Rosenberg, 1965).

Early study on persuasion shows a connection between influenceability and self-esteem. According to Janis (1954) and Cox and Bauer (1964), those who have lower self-esteem are more willing to follow others' instructions in order to avoid social rejection. In a similar vein, Berkowitz and Lundy (1957) discovered that people with low interpersonal confidence are more vulnerable to peer pressure. McGuire (1968) found that influenceability is linked to a number of human characteristics, including self-esteem.

People's evaluation about themselves and how they are impacted by the opinions of others are related. Research indicates a connection between people's self-esteem and their susceptibility to persuasion or imitation of others. Wood and Rhodes (1992) discovered that those who are confident in themselves are less susceptible to the opinions of others. It implies that people's self-perception influences how much they listen to others. Self-esteem functions as a filter that determines how confident people are in their ideas and opinions, which in turn

determines how much social influence they are subjected to.

The research backs that self-esteem affects consumer behaviour through interpersonal susceptibility, specifically in situations where external validation and social approval are important

Cultural and Contextual Amplifiers of Social Influence

Cultural background significantly influences the development of susceptibility to interpersonal influence and self-esteem. Interdependent cultures operate within a framework of cultural norms, values, and external assessments of outward behaviors. so social approval or disapproval has a dire effect on people which makes them more prone to normative cues

There is empirical evidence to support this social influence approach. Savani et al. (2014) found that Indian participants responded to normative cues more in relation to choice consistency than American participants, even when preferences were equal. Similarly, Bristow and Kleindl (1997) found that collectivist cultural environments are more vulnerable to normative susceptibility.

This suggests that people's cultural orientation may have an impact on how much they take in and respond to social expectations.

Particularly in the Indian context, Khare and Rakesh (2013) showed that the connection of group self-esteem and vulnerability to interpersonal influence is moderated by demographic characteristics. According to this finding, self-perceptions do not always mean social sensitivity; rather, the behavioral effects of self-perceptions are influenced by cultural factors.

Self-evaluation may be more strongly linked to relative social approval in collectivist cultures, where identity is frequently established inside relationship networks and society judgments.

Zhou et al. (2023) found that e-commerce platforms enhance purchasing willingness through trust and online interactions between consumers of the product. Even though this is viewing the aspect from a new standpoint, the principles are still the same on social evaluation.

When considered collectively, the literature indicates that the relationship between normative responsiveness and self-evaluation might be enhanced by the cultural environment. The connection between self-worth and tendency to be influenced based on approval may be noticeable in interdependent environments like India. The significance of studying these relationships among Indian young adults, who deal with both collectivist norms and increasing internet consumption is highly relevant.

The Indian Young Adult Context and Research Gap

Indian youth forms a unique consumer group due to peer visibility, increasing digital presence, and exposure to global trends. Youths' social presence and display, particularly on social media suggests that their decision making is based on other people's approval that hold importance and influence an individual's self-evaluation. The link between an individual's internal assessments and societal expectations and approval becomes particularly significant.

Even though the prior studies have studied the importance of self-worth and vulnerability to social persuasion in consumer behavior, there is still a significant conceptual gap. Most of the researchers either examined self-esteem separately or saw susceptibility as a predictor of behavioral outcomes, ignoring to differentiate between the normative and informational effect. As a result, it is unclear whether self-esteem is generally linked with all forms of interpersonal influence or whether it is specifically associated with behavior that seeks approval.

Therefore, an in-depth study is called for to understand the relationship between self-esteem and normative and informational susceptibility within this global consumer sector. To determine if self-evaluative processes especially improve responsiveness to social acceptance or whether they more overly affect informational dependency in consuming contexts.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

This research aims to examine association between self-esteem and vulnerability of consumer to interpersonal influence. The study specifically investigates whether self-esteem is significantly connected to general susceptibility, as well as to its two components: normative susceptibility and informational susceptibility.

Normative susceptibility is the inclination to align with others to obtain social acceptance, whereas informational susceptibility refers to reliance on others for information when making decisions under uncertainty. By examining these two dimensions separately, the study aims to determine whether self-esteem is differently associated with each type of interpersonal influence.

The study also examines self-esteem as a predictor of overall consumer susceptibility, normative susceptibility, and informational susceptibility. In addition, it investigates whether these relationships differ between males and females. Through these analyses, the study seeks to provide a clearer understanding of how self-esteem is related to socially influenced consumer decision-making.

2. Review of Literature

Al Youzbaky, et al (2022) did a study named *“The Effect of Information Overload and Social Media Fatigue on Online Consumers’ Purchasing Decisions: The Mediating Role of Technostress and Information Anxiety.”* The study aimed to test the effect of continuous social media usage and information overload on the decision of consumers by means of psychological aspects such as technostress and information anxiety. The survey was conducted with 326 internet shoppers. Quantitative methodology was used and data was collected with structured questionnaires. The findings showed that information overload and social media fatigue increased consumers' information anxiety, and social media fatigue affected purchase decisions. The findings indicate that consumers experience higher psychological pressure in digital environments, which impairs their autonomy in decision-making and results in dependence on external informational cues.

Bearden, Netemeyer, et al. (1989) study named “Measurement of Consumer Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence,”. The objective was to create a scale to check vulnerability of consumer to social influence. The research included 220 adult participants in the first phase and 141 undergraduate students in the later phase. A quantitative research design was utilized, incorporating scale development methods such as item creation, evaluation of content validity, exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, along with reliability testing. The scale included 12 items that reflected two aspects of interpersonal influence: normative influence and informational influence. Both normative and informational susceptibility were identified as negatively related with self-esteem, suggesting that those with lower self-esteem showed greater susceptibility to social influence.

Prendergast, Ko, et al (2010) researched on “Online Word of Mouth and Consumer Purchase Intentions.” to investigate the impact of online word-of-mouth on buying intentions. The research was conducted in the shopping centers of Hong Kong and a total of 150 respondents were included. The regression analysis and mediation testing were used to test the relation among the factors. The results showed interpersonal influence is important in online purchasing situations because consumers rely on opinions from others that are displayed on Internet discussion forums when making purchasing decisions.

Kristofferson, Lamberton, et al (2018) did research called “Can Brands Extract Wine from Sour Grapes? The Significance of Self-Worth in Comprehending the Impact of Envy.” In four studies with undergraduate students and adults from university and community, self-esteem using Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale and measured envy using self-report measures. result showed that self-esteem strongly influenced the effect of envy on brand evaluations:

low-self-esteem participants reacted negatively under conditions of envy (lower brand ratings, lower willingness to pay), while high-self-esteem participants had positive brand attitudes or even increased their positive evaluations. The findings suggest that the way people feel about themselves is an important factor in evaluating how people react to social comparison and envy in consumer settings.

Bi and Zhang (2022) conducted a study titled *“I Will Buy What My ‘Friend’ Recommends: The Effects of Parasocial Relationships, Influencer Credibility, and Self-esteem on Purchase Intentions.”* The purpose was to see the impact of parasocial relation with YouTube influencers on purchasing, with influencer credibility (mediator) and self-esteem (moderator). The study was conducted among adult YouTube users through an online survey. Standardized scales were used to measure parasocial relation, credibility, self-esteem, attitudes, and purchase intentions. A quantitative methodology was adopted. The results showed that credibility of influencer and product attitudes mediated the relationship between parasocial relations and purchase intentions, and that customers individuals with low self-worth are more inclined to buy influencer-endorsed products, particularly when parasocial relationships were strong, whereas people with high self-esteem are more resistant to influence.

Bishop and Barber (2012) studied “how self-esteem and self-efficacy influence consumers’ choice of information sources during purchase decisions” in their study titled “A Market Segmentation Approach to Esteem and Efficacy in Information Search.” self-efficacy and self-esteem were measured using standardized scales. Dependent variables. self-reliance, media, internet. The samples were analyzed by multivariate analysis of variance. The results indicated that persons with high self-efficacy depending more on themselves for details, while individuals with low self-efficacy depended on alternative sources, including media and the internet. Individuals with elevated self-esteem depended on both their own judgement and external sources, indicating that self-esteem plays a crucial role in influencing the consumers' dependence on external information and their susceptibility to influence during decision-making.

Isaksen and Roper (2012) did a study titled *“The Commodification of Self-esteem: Branding and British Teenagers.”* This study was designed to examine how branding and consumerism affect the self-esteem of British teenagers. One hundred teenagers in Britain were interviewed in-depth using a qualitative research design. Results showed that peer pressure, and the urge to fit in influenced shopping behaviours, with brand-name consumption being required to sustain friendships, attract approval from others, and maintain

self-esteem. Teenagers who disengaged from their consumption patterns were socially ostracized, poorly evaluated by peers, and had a lower self-esteem. Results suggest that being a young consumer is susceptible to interpersonal influence at this age, and young consumers are dependent on brand-name consumption to attain acceptance.

Isaksen and Roper (2008) conducted a study named *“The Impact of Branding on Low-Income Adolescents: A Vicious Cycle?”* “The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of branding and advertising on the self-concept and consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence of low-income adolescents.” Two groups of British adolescents-low-income and high-income-were studied. Standard scales were used to assess self-concept clarity and CSII. Adolescents from the less-income group had less self-concept clarity and were notably more vulnerable to social influence compared to individuals from the high-income group. The SCC and CSII were significantly negatively correlated. Adolescents with less clear self-concepts were more susceptible to social and consumption pressures.

Wooten and Reed (2004) conducted a study titled *“Playing It Safe: Susceptibility to Normative Influence and Protective Self-Presentation.”* The aim was to test whether SNI predicts protective style of self-portrayal, marked by action to avoid social disapproval. The research comprised two studies. Study 1 involved 140 undergraduate participants to evaluate reactions to commercials with different clarity and message framing.

Study 2 with undergraduate students to explore the connection between SNI and self-presentation. SNI was checked using the eight-item normative influence subscale by Bearden, Netemeyer, and Teel (1989), and self-presentation was measured using the Self-Presentation Scale (SPS). The results showed that high-SNI consumers were more into keeping away negative impressions in public and responded more in favour of secure messages showing avoidance of socially negative outcomes. SNI was found to be negatively related to self-enhancing self-presentations, indicating that highly influenceable consumers prefer to blend in rather than stand out. Overall, the findings show that susceptibility to normative influence is closely associated with low self-confidence.

Fan et al. (2019) conducted a study *“The Interaction Effects of Consumer Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence and Type of Word-of-Mouth on Chinese Consumers’ Restaurant Choice.”* The goal was to investigate how restaurant selection is impacted by the interaction between various forms of word-of-mouth and consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence (CSII). Chinese customers participated in the survey. While WOM was conducted through informative cues (online ratings by anonymous reviewers) and normative cues (friend referrals), CSII was measured using standardized instruments. The

findings - there was little difference in consumption intentions between higher and lower CSII consumers when they were exposed to informational WOM-anonymous online ratings. However, consumers with strong CSII demonstrated noticeably increased consumption intentions when WOM occurred in normative cues from friends.

Bai et al. (2021) conducted a study titled “Effects of Self-Expressive Brand and Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence on Brand Addiction: Mediating Role of Brand Passion.” The study attempted to examine the effect of “SEBs” and vulnerability to social influence (SUSCEP) regarding brand addiction, with harmonious and obsessive brand passion as mediating variables. The study was conducted among Chinese consumers with a quantitative survey-based approach. Standardized instruments were used to measure SEB impressions, vulnerability in regards of interpersonal influence, brand passion, and addiction. The results revealed that SEB and the vulnerability to interpersonal influence increased brand addiction both independently and jointly and that these relationships were significantly mediated by harmonious and compulsive brand passion. It suggests that pupil are more likely to develop addictive relationships when they use brands for expression and are vulnerable to the opinions of others.

Khare and Rakesh (2013) conducted a study titled “*Collective Self-esteem and Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence: A Study on Indian Consumers.*” In the Indian setting, the study's objective was to investigate the association between consumers' sensitivity to interpersonal influence (CSII) and collective self-esteem (CSE), as well as the moderating effect of demographic factors. The study was carried out among Indian customers. Predictive correlations and moderating effects were evaluated using statistical techniques. The findings showed that together esteem and negative collective self-esteem - predictors of CSII and that the CSE and CSII scales had been adjusted for the Indian setting.

Kropp et al. (2005) conducted a cross-cultural study “*Values and Collective Self-esteem as Predictors of Consumer Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence among University Students.*” Examining the connections between individual values, collective self-esteem (CSE), CSII in various cultural contexts was the study's goal. 783 university kids from 4 nations—Australia, English-speaking Canada, Korea, and Norway—participated in the study. Using standardized collective self-esteem assessments, the List of Values (LOV) to gauge consumer values, and the CSII scale to gauge interpersonal influence susceptibility, a quantitative survey-based methodology was chosen. The findings showed that whereas internal values had a negative relationship with the normative aspect of CSII, exterior and interpersonal values had a positive relationship. Furthermore, normative CSII was favorably

predicted by the importance-of-group dimension of CSE, whereas normative CSII was negatively correlated with membership esteem. The results also demonstrated that Korean students' normative CSII was considerably higher than that of students from other nations.

Millán and Mittal (2017) conducted a study titled “*Consumer Preference for Status Symbolism of Clothing: The Case of the Czech Republic.*” With an emphasis on the roles of self-esteem and vulnerability to normative social influence (SNSI) in shaping consumers' demand for status symbolism in apparel, the study sought to investigate the psychological drivers of status-seeking consumption. 1,000 Czech customers participated in the survey. An international market research agency conducted structured, in-person interviews at the participants' homes as part of a quantitative study strategy. Standardized scales were used to measure rank concern, societal self-consciousness, self-esteem, vulnerability to normative social influence, need for status prestige, and consumer interest in clothing. The findings showed that desire for status meaning and susceptibility to normative social influence were strongly influenced by self-esteem, status concern, and public self-consciousness. Additionally, both variables positively predicted consumer interest in apparel, and desire for status symbolism was significantly positively impacted by susceptibility to normative social influence.

Bandyopadhyay (2017) conducted a paper entitled “Exploring the Link between Impulsive Buying Tendency, Self-esteem and Normative Influence: A Structural Equation Model.” The study is based on 250 corporate executives in India, and the data was obtained using online questionnaires. Standardised self-report measures were used to assess variables. Quantitative research design was used the findings showed that self-esteem was negatively associated with IBT, and consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence was positively correlated with impulsive buying tendency. Additionally, CSII mediated the relation with self-esteem and UBT, people with low self-esteem would have high impulsive buying behaviour as they are susceptible to interpersonal influence.

Yin, et al. (2025) conducted a study, “The Mediating Roles of Interpersonal Sensitivity and Rumination in the Relationship between Self-esteem and Depression.” 159 adult patients with major depressive disorder (MDD) or generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) participated in this study.

Depression, rumination, interpersonal sensitivity, and self-esteem were evaluated using standardised psychological assessment tools. Self-esteem, interpersonal sensitivity, and depression were evaluated at Time 1 in a longitudinal design, and rumination and depression were evaluated at Time 2 after 10–14 days. Poor self-esteem at Time 1 had a predictive effect

on depression at Time 2, both by ruminating alone and by a chain mediating effect of rumination and interpersonal sensitivity. The results indicate that interpersonal sensitivity is a main psychological mechanism between maladaptive outcomes and poor self-esteem.

Gunawan et al. (2023). "The Influence of Social Influence and Peer Influence on Intention to Purchase in E-Commerce." 338 university students in Surabaya, Indonesia who shopped on e-commerce sites were selected to participate in the study. A questionnaire was used as a measurement instrument in a quantitative study approach. The study's findings showed that peer and social influences had a positive impact on attitudes towards adoption of e-commerce and purchase intention. The finding-interpersonal relationships such as trust, recommendation, and frequent participation in social activities are influential on the purchase of online, particularly for younger consumers.

Kim and Srivastava (2007) published a study of "Impact of Social influence in E-Commerce Decision Making." "Holistic view of the impact of social influence on customer decision making in e-commerce and how web-based e-commerce sites can leverage and profit from social influence." The study was based on an amalgamation of previous studies, industry data, and actual e-commerce sites. The methodology involved an analysis of recommender systems technology as well as social network analysis (SNA) methods and a theoretical analysis. The results showed that normative and informational social influence, particularly from social networks, online reviews, ratings, and friends and trusted people, can and does affect a customer's online purchase decision. The study's survey found that customers will most probably follow the recommendations of trusted people rather than rely on automatic recommendation engines.

Roberts, Manolis, and Pullig (2014) conducted "Contingent Self-esteem, Self-Presentational Concerns, and Compulsive Buying." The study sought to determine if apprehension of unfavorable judgment and the significance of social identity act as mediators in the relation between contingent self-esteem (CSE) and compulsive purchase behavior. The study included two experimental investigations with 160 and 243 individuals, respectively, and 402 adults in the United States. Anxiety was experimentally manipulated and standardized self-report measures were used. Results indicated that fear of negative evaluation and social identity mediated the relation between self-esteem and compulsively buying. Furthermore, independent of anxiety, high contingent self-esteem was associated with increased self-presentational concerns.

Zhou (2024) conducted research entitled "Unveiling the Influences: Self-esteem and Peer Impact on Luxury Consumption Among Consumers." The data was obtained by online

and offline questionnaires on personality variables, peer pressure, self-esteem and the behaviour towards luxury consumption. The studies used a quantitative research approach, and data were analyzed with one-way ANOVA and multiple regression analysis. The study found that pupils with high self-esteem have stronger intentions and behaviours towards luxury consumption, despite the fact that peer pressure significantly increases consumption, particularly among the young. The findings showed that the negative effects of luxury consumption, which is used to enhance ego, social identity and social status, are compounded by peer pressure and social media.

Bristow and Kleindl (1997) studied “The purpose of this research was to assess consumer responses to advertising in relation to cross-cultural differences in self-esteem and susceptibility to social influence.” College-aged Japanese and US consumers participated in the study. Research indicated that Japanese consumers exhibited lower self-esteem and were more influenced by social factors than US consumers. These results align with the theories suggesting that people with diminished self-esteem are more influenced by social and normative signals in consumption situations.

Clark and Goldsmith (2005) conducted a study that is called “Market Mavens: Psychological Influences.” The study sought to understand the psychological roots of market mavenism by looking at self-esteem, conformity, disposition, sensitivity to interpersonal influence, and the drive for individuality, and how each operates within a normative context. Adult consumers participated in the research. Standardized measures were used in a quantitative study method to assess self-esteem, conformity, disposition, sensitivity to interpersonal influence, customer need for individuality, opinion leadership, and market mavenism. The results of the study demonstrate the complex relationships involved between self-esteem, conformity, and social influence in consumer behavior by revealing that market experts are sensitive to normative interpersonal influence in spite of their high need for individuality.

Koller et al. (2013) researched on “Persuasibility and the self - Investigating heterogeneity among consumers” sought to discover different customer segments by examining the heterogeneity in the link between interpersonal influence susceptibility and self-related psychological factors. 1013 college students at a major business school in Europe.

The Campbell et al. (1996) scale, the Rosenberg (1965) scale, the Bearden et al. (1989) scale, and measures of Materialism, the desire for individuality, and convincing information were utilized to assess the definition of the self-concept, self-worth, and vulnerability to social influence. The results revealed two separate consumer clusters: a larger

cluster with higher self-esteem, clearer self-concepts, lower materialism, less persuasion knowledge, diminished susceptibility to interpersonal influence, and a smaller cluster with lower self-esteem, weaker self-concept clarity, and higher materialism.

Makgosa and Mohube (2007) explored how normative and informational social influences vary with product visibility and premium status. They conducted a quantitative survey with 101 University of Botswana students as a convenience sample. The Bearden and Etzel (1982) and Bearden et al. (1989) measures adapted to assess normative and informational influence across four categories of product: public luxury, personal luxury, communal necessity, and private requirement. The findings showed significantly stronger normative and informative peer influence for publicly consumed products, especially public luxuries (e.g., sunglasses) in comparison to privately consumed necessities (e.g., toothpaste). The findings overall showed that the peer effect is product specific and stronger when consumption is visible.

Cheng, Chuang, et al. (2012) studied “the effect of shopping companion gender on impulsive buying behavior,” concerning specific attention to the moderating roles of interpersonal influence susceptibility and cohesion. By adding situational and interpersonal aspects, the research aimed to further develop past research on impulse purchase. Adult shoppers were recruited for a three-study experiment. The standardized impulse buying scales were utilized for the measurement of impulsive buying behavior. The scale of CSII was used for determining interpersonal influence susceptibility. The findings indicated that especially in poor cohesion scenarios, customers were more impulsive to buy items when accompanied by the opposite gender. Additionally, impulse buying tendency was significantly stronger in highly susceptible persons to interpersonal influence, while this effect was weak in less susceptible.

Zhou et al. (2022) “The Impact of Interpersonal Interaction Factors on Consumers’ Purchase Intention in Social Commerce: A Relationship Quality Perspective.” The goal was to identify the key individual interaction factors and to test the impact of relationship quality on customers’ willingness to purchase. Participants had to fill in an online survey. The individual interaction parameters, purchase intention and the components of relationship quality (quick guanxi and initial trust) were measured by using standardized scales. The results indicated that both initial trust and quick guanxi were significantly affected by individual interaction parameters, which subsequently increased customers’ willingness to purchase. The link between individual interaction parameters and purchase intention was partially mediated by initial trust, while the effect of the perceived resemblance of online

recommenders on purchase intention was not mediated by swift guanxi.

Khan et al. (2007) examined "Peer Influence on Young Adults' Products Purchase Decisions" in order to comprehend how Pakistani young adults' purchasing decisions are influenced by their peer groups. 101 students from Pakistan participated in the study. The first survey determined which product categories were most vulnerable to influence, and the second used a 5- Likert scale to gauge the extent of influence from family, friends, the media, IT sources, and well-liked figures. The normative and informational peer influence scales were modified from Bearden et al. (1989) and Bearden and Etzel (1982). Peer groups are important in young people' purchasing decisions, as evidenced by the fact that their influence was consistent and significant across samples, even though they weren't always the greatest influence source in every area.

Orth and Kahle (2010) "Intrapersonal Variation in Consumer Susceptibility to Normative Influence: Toward a Better Understanding of Brand Choice Decisions." The aim was to see the extent to which consumer susceptibility to normative influence and subsequent brand choice decisions are driven by individual psychological characteristics. It was done on consumer sample of adult wine consumers. Consumers' susceptibility to normative influence. Personal values (internal versus external value orientation). Social identity complexity. Preferences for social versus functional brand benefits were assessed using established scales. The results from the quantitative analysis across consumption scenarios with and without reference group salience suggested that individuals with stronger internal values and more intricate social identities were less influenced by normative pressures and placed less importance on socially expressive brand advantages. Moreover, the prominence of reference group interacted with individual values and the complexity of social identity, influencing vulnerability to normative pressure and consequently the preferred brand advantages and brand selection.

Savani et al. (2014) studied "When Norms Loom Larger Than the Self: Susceptibility of Preference–Choice Consistency to Normative Influence Across Cultures" how social norms affect the consistency between personal preferences and actual choice. In 4 experiments, adult participants from the USA and India completed choice tasks. Preference-choice consistency was the main dependent variable. Experimental manipulations indicated the importance of general normative concerns, specific social norms, and counternormative motivations. Indians were found to be far more susceptible to normative influence, despite both Indians and Americans holding the belief that a social norm was against making judgments based on self-preferences.

When norms were made salient, Indians' preference-choice consistency either decreased or changed to conform with the standards, but Americans' consistency was largely unaffected. Furthermore, prompting participants to act in non-traditional ways improved Indians preference-choice consistency but had very little effect for Americans, illustrating how sensitive people from different cultures are to norms.

Gil et al. (2017) "Effect of Popularity and Peer Pressure on Attitudes Toward Luxury among Teens. A sample of 558 Brazilian teens 12 to 19 years took part in the study. Results indicate that a clearer self-concept increases social consumption motivation, which positively impacts attitudes towards luxury goods, and is a significant predictor of peer pressure and popularity. Overall, this indicates that social motives are a strong component in the development of a positive attitude toward luxury; however, teens with a clearer sense of self are less likely to be influenced by peer pressure.

Koller et al. (2013), "Persuasibility and the Self: Investigating Heterogeneity among Consumers", studied how the susceptibility of consumers to interpersonal impact is related to their self-esteem and self-concept clarity (while acknowledging the importance of unobserved heterogeneity). Couples used an online survey to collect data from 1,013 college students (mean age 24.8 years) at a large European business school. The Campbell et al. (1996) scale, the Rosenberg (1965) scale, and the Bearden et al. (1989) scale were used. The survey revealed two customer segments. All considered, higher self-esteem enhanced self-concept clarity, which in turn reduced susceptibility to interpersonal influence (especially of a normative nature). Unlike the smaller segment, which was mostly normatively influenced, had lower self-esteem, and relied more on social approval in purchasing decisions, the larger segment had lower normative and informational susceptibility and greater self-concept clarity.

D'Rozario and Yang (1990) in the article "The Effect of Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence on the Pre-purchase External Information-Search Tendencies of Chinese Americans" explored the relationship between a consumer's susceptibility to be influenced by others and his or her search for pre-purchase information in a Chinese American micro cultural context. This study was undertaken to reassess the CSII measure and to examine the effect of the normatively and informational components of the CSII measure on information-search behavior. The sample of 506 Chinese American respondents were from three socioeconomic classes in New York. Findings showed normative susceptible consumers tended to rely mainly on socially discernible cues, such as in-store displays, in the case of public and luxury products, while informational susceptible consumers were more likely to

seek information from a broader variety of sources.

Xie, Wang, et al. (2018) "Reference Group Perspective on Individual Investors' Herd Behavior: The Effects of Self-esteem and Trait Anxiety", the study was to point on the psychological mechanism by which the different types of reference groups may effectively influence the herd behavior. Structured questionnaires were administered to 306 investors participating in the Chinese stock market. We used reliable and valid psychological tools to measure the trait anxiety and self-esteem. The peer, friend and expert reference groups were used to assess the herd behavior. The findings revealed that if an investor has high trait anxiety or low self-esteem, he/she would be prone to herd, especially when the opinion of the reference group is expressed. The influence of self-esteem on the connection between herd behavior and reference group was mediated by trait anxiety. This study is important because it shows that low self-esteem increases the conformity of the reference group.

Bristow & Kleindl (1997) "Consumer Self-esteem and Susceptibility to Social Influence: A Cross-Cultural Comparison and Investigation of Advertising Implications" Young adults in Japan and the US view themselves and respond to peer pressure differently. It is more important to fit in with this society; Japanese participants were more affected by the thoughts of others, while Americans seemed to feel better about themselves. The relationship held for individual differences too: low self-esteem was linked to higher reliance on social cues, particularly in the Japanese. Admittedly, the difference in how we view ourselves is interesting, but it is equally interesting the extent to which culture affects who we listen to.

Mourali, Laroche, and Pons (2005), in their study titled "Antecedents of Consumer Relative Preference for Interpersonal Information Sources in Pre-Purchase Search", investigated the reasons behind consumers' reliance on personal recommendations while making purchases. The study evaluated the cognition, self-assurance, product awareness, perceived risk, and consumer vulnerability to interpersonal influence using survey data of 419 respondents (Bearden et al., 1989). While perceived risk had no direct impact, structural equation modeling revealed that consumers' want for Interpersonal information search was enhanced by their susceptibility to social influence, along with an increased need for cognition, self-assurance, and product knowledge. The study offers empirical support for considering interpersonal influence as a key mechanism through which individual differences impact consumer decision making, with the current research's focus, by showing that vulnerability to interpersonal influence systematically shapes socially driven information-seeking behavior.

Rhodes and Wood (1992), in their study titled “Self-esteem and Intelligence Affect Influenceability: The Mediating Role of Message Reception,” analyzed 57 empirical studies to determine how IQ and self-esteem predict an individual's vulnerability to social influence. To further understand individual differences in influenceability, the study separated the processes of message reception and yielding. The self-esteem and the impact of persuasive messages on conformity or attitude change were measured in the studied research using the Janis and Field (1959) and Rosenberg (1965) Self-esteem Scales. The findings demonstrated a curvilinear relationship between influenceability and self-esteem, with moderately self-assured individuals being the most susceptible, low self-esteem obstructing the reception of messages, and high self-esteem reducing yielding. These results support the inclusion of self-esteem as a subtle element of vulnerability to interpersonal impact in consumer behavior research that examines socially influenced decision making.

3. Methodology

3.1 Aim

The aim of the research is to examine the relationship between self-esteem and consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence, including normative and informational susceptibility, and to explore whether the association and levels differ between males and females.

3.2 Objectives

- To investigate the relationship between self-esteem and consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence.
- To investigate the connection between self-esteem and normative susceptibility.
- To investigate the connection between self-esteem and informational susceptibility.
- To investigate whether the relationship between self-esteem and consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence differs between males and females.
- To examine self-esteem as an indicator of consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence.
- To examine self-esteem as an indicator of normative susceptibility.
- To examine self-esteem as an indicator of informational susceptibility.

3.3 Hypothesis

H1: There will be a significant negative relationship between self-esteem and consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence.

H2: There will be a significant negative relationship between self-esteem and normative susceptibility.

H3: There will be a significant negative relationship between self-esteem and informational susceptibility.

H4: There will be a significant negative relationship between self-esteem and consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence among males and females.

H5: There will be a significant negative relationship between self-esteem and normative susceptibility among males and females.

H6: There will be a significant negative relationship between self-esteem and informational susceptibility among males and females.

H7: Self-esteem will significantly predict consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence.

H8: Self-esteem will significantly predict normative susceptibility.

H9: Self-esteem will significantly predict informational susceptibility.

3.4 Participants

A total of 127 Indian residents (46.5% male, $n=59$; 53.5% female, $n=68$) aged 18 -25 years ($M = 20.75$, $SD = 1.88$) participated. Most participants had an undergraduate qualification ($n = 98$, 77.2%), high school ($n = 15$, 11.8%), postgraduate ($n = 8$, 6.3%), or diploma ($n = 6$, 4.7%). Economic status was upper-middle income (43.3%, $n = 55$), middle income (37.0%, $n = 47$), low income (10.2%, $n = 13$), high income (6.3%, $n = 8$), and lower-middle income (3.1%, $n = 4$).

3.5 Measures

The Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1965) used 10 items with a response format ranging from 0 (strongly disagree) to 3 (strongly agree) to measure trait self-esteem. Prior to summarization, five negatively items were reverse scored, resulting in total scores ranging from 0 to 30 (higher scores = more self-esteem). Good internal consistency was confirmed by the sample's $\alpha = .819$ ($N = 127$). Inter-item correlations averaged about .35, whereas corrected item-total correlations ranged from .164 to .626. The item means ($M = 17.76$, $SD = 2.217$) ranged from 1.18 to 2.09.

The 12-item scale (Bearden et al., 1989) used to assess consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence (CSII) consisted of 8 normative influence items and 4 informational influence items. There were anchors from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Administration yielded excellent reliability ($\alpha = .842$, $N = 127$), with a total score range from 12 to 84. An average inter-item r of about .40 and item-total correlations ranging from .272 to

.690 were obtained. Item means (M total = 41.64, SD = 4.92) ranged from 2.57 to 4.87.

3.6 Procedure

A Google Forms link was sent to participants via convenience and snowballing sampling techniques, allowing them to access the online survey. Respondents gave their affirmative assent to continue after reviewing an informed consent form. The Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale, the CSII scale, and demographic variables (age, gender, education level, and economic status) were provided in a predetermined order on the survey questionnaire. It took an average of five to seven minutes to complete. No identifying information was collected. Google Forms was used to export raw data (N = 127 complete responses, with no missing values) into SPSS.sav format. IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 29) was used for the ensuing analyses.

3.7 Data Analyses

IBM SPSS Statistics was used to analyze the data (Version 29.0). Cronbach's α coefficients and corrected item-total correlations were used to evaluate reliability for the RSES (10 items) and CSII (12 items). For all variables, descriptive statistics including means, standard deviations, skewness, kurtosis, and frequency distributions were produced.

In addition to boxplot assessment for outliers and Levene's tests for homogeneity of variance, assumption testing included Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk normality tests. Using age as a continuous covariate, bivariate relationships between self esteem total scores and CSII total/subscale scores are investigated using Pearson product-moment correlations (two-tailed). To study self-esteem as a predictor of consumer susceptibility, normative susceptibility and informational susceptibility, linear regression analyses were used.

4. Results

Preliminary Analyses

Complete data were obtained from N = 127 participants. Descriptive statistics for all study variables are presented in Table 1. Scores on the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale ranged from 0.10 to 3.00 (M = 1.78, SD = 0.46). Consumer Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence total scores ranged from 1.08 to 5.83 (M = 3.55, SD = 0.99). Normative susceptibility scores ranged from 1.00 to 6.13 (M = 3.03, SD = 1.17), and informational susceptibility ranged from 1.00 to 7.00 (M = 4.61, SD = 1.28).

The coefficients of skewness and kurtosis fall on an acceptable continuum, depicting a

very good concordance with a normal distribution on the variables. The histograms and the normal Q-Q plots demonstrated no visible departures from normality and the absence of extreme outliers, justifying the application of parametric statistical techniques.

All of the scales showed satisfactory internal consistency within the present sample. The Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale showed good reliability ($\alpha = .82$). The overall CSII scale also showed good internal consistency ($\alpha = .84$). The normative subscale showed high reliability ($\alpha = .87$), while the informational subscale showed acceptable reliability ($\alpha = .77$).

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics*

Variable	M	SD	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis
Self esteem	1.78	0.46	0.10	3.00	−0.42	1.48
CSII	3.55	0.99	1.08	5.83	−0.06	−0.06
Normative Influence	3.03	1.17	1.00	6.13	0.50	−0.11
Informational Influence	4.61	1.28	1.00	7.00	−0.83	0.40

Correlational Analyses

Pearson product–moment correlations was used to test the relation between self-esteem and susceptibility to interpersonal influence (see Table 2). In the overall sample ($N = 127$), self-esteem was significantly negatively correlated with overall consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence, $r(125) = -.20$, $p = .026$, indicating that those who report higher self-esteem report less overall susceptibility. Self-esteem was also significantly negatively correlated with normative susceptibility $r(125) = -.19$, $p = .035$, but the correlation between self-esteem and informational susceptibility were negative, but not significant, $r(125) = -.12$, $p = .190$. Correlations with self-esteem were tested separately for males and females (Table 3). For males ($n = 59$), self-esteem was not significantly correlated with overall consumer susceptibility, $r(57) = -.05$, $p = .728$, nor was it significantly correlated with normative susceptibility, $r(57) = -.12$, $p = .364$, or informational susceptibility, $r(57) = .12$, $p = .376$. For females ($n = 68$), self-esteem was significantly negatively correlated with overall consumer susceptibility, $r(66) = -.30$, $p = .013$, and informational susceptibility, $r(66) = -.29$, $p = .017$. The correlation with normative susceptibility was significant, but not at the .05 level, $r(66) = -.24$, $p = .052$. In general, the results show that those who have higher self-esteem are less susceptible to interpersonal influence, and specifically the females. The negative relationship was not observed among males.

Table 2. *Pearson Correlations of Dependent and Independent Variables*

Correlations			RSE_TOTAL	CSII_TOTAL	CSII_NORM	CSII_INFO
RSE_TOTAL	Pearson Correlation		1	-.197*	-.187*	-.117
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.026	.035	.190
	N		127	127	127	127
CSII_TOTAL	Pearson Correlation		-.197*	1	.912**	.660**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.026		.000	.000
	N		127	127	127	127
CSII_NORM	Pearson Correlation		-.187*	.912**	1	.292**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.035	.000		.001
	N		127	127	127	127
CSII_INFO	Pearson Correlation		-.117	.660**	.292**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.190	.000	.001	
	N		127	127	127	127

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3. *Pearson Correlations by Gender*

Correlations						
Gender			RSE_TOTAL	CSII_TOTAL	CSII_NORM	CSII_INFO
Male	RSE_TOTAL	Pearson Correlation	1	-.046	-.120	.117
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.728	.364	.376
		N	59	59	59	59
	CSII_TOTAL	Pearson Correlation	-.046	1	.902**	.606**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.728		.000	.000
		N	59	59	59	59
	CSII_NORM	Pearson Correlation	-.120	.902**	1	.204
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.364	.000		.122
		N	59	59	59	59
	CSII_INFO	Pearson Correlation	.117	.606**	.204	1
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.376	.000	.122	
		N	59	59	59	59
Female	RSE_TOTAL	Pearson Correlation	1	-.300*	-.237	-.289*
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.013	.052	.017
		N	68	68	68	68
	CSII_TOTAL	Pearson Correlation	-.300*	1	.924**	.718**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.013		.000	.000
		N	68	68	68	68
	CSII_NORM	Pearson Correlation	-.237	.924**	1	.398**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.052	.000		.001
		N	68	68	68	68
	CSII_INFO	Pearson Correlation	-.289*	.718**	.398**	1
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.017	.000	.001	
		N	68	68	68	68

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Regression Analyses

Linear regression was used to examine if self-esteem predicted consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence (see Table 4). Self-esteem significantly predicted overall susceptibility, $F(1, 125) = 5.07$, $p = .026$, explaining 3.9% of the variance, $R^2 = .039$ (adjusted $R^2 = .031$). Self-esteem was a significant negative predictor ($\beta = -.20$, $t(125) = -2.25$, $p = .026$). The regression coefficient indicated that a 1 unit increase in self-esteem meant 0.42-unit decrease in overall susceptibility, $B = -0.42$, 95% CI $[-0.79, -0.05]$.

Self-esteem significantly predicted normative susceptibility, $F(1, 125) = 4.54$, $p = .035$, explaining 3.5% of the variance, $R^2 = .035$ (adjusted $R^2 = .027$). Self-esteem was a significant negative predictor ($\beta = -.19$, $t(125) = -2.13$, $p = .035$). A 1-unit increase in self-esteem meant a 0.47-unit decrease in normative susceptibility, $B = -0.47$, 95% CI $[-0.91, -0.03]$. On the other hand, self-esteem did not significantly predict informational susceptibility, $F(1, 125) = 1.74$, $p = .190$, explaining 1.4% of the variance, $R^2 = .014$. The regression coefficient was not statistically significant ($\beta = -.12$, $t(125) = -1.32$, $p = .190$), and the confidence interval included zero, $B = -0.32$, 95% CI $[-0.81, 0.16]$.

Table 4. Simple Linear Regression Analyses Predicting Consumer Susceptibility from Self esteem

Dependent Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	R^2	<i>F</i>
CSII	-0.42	0.19	-.20	-2.25	.026	.039	5.07*
Normative Influence	-0.47	0.22	-.19	-2.13	.035	.035	4.54*
Informational Influence	-0.32	0.25	-.12	-1.32	.190	.014	1.74

Note. $N = 127$.

Additionally, we examined whether these predictive relationships were moderated by gender by conducting separate regression analyses for males and females (see Table 5).

Self-esteem was not a significant predictor of overall susceptibility for male participants ($n = 59$), $F(1, 57) = 0.12$, $p = .728$, explaining 0.2% of the variance, $R^2 = .002$. Self-esteem was not a significant predictor ($\beta = -.05$, $t(57) = -0.35$, $p = .728$). Likewise, self-esteem did not explain a significant amount of variance in normative susceptibility, $F(1, 57) = 0.84$, $p = .364$, $R^2 = .014$, nor informational susceptibility, $F(1, 57) = 0.80$, $p = .376$, $R^2 = .014$. For each, the regression coefficients were not significant.

Self-esteem significantly predicted overall susceptibility in female participants ($n =$

68), $F(1, 66) = 6.51$, $p = .013$, accounting for 9.0% of the variance, $R^2 = .090$ (adjusted $R^2 = .076$). Self-esteem was a significant negative predictor ($\beta = -.30$, $t(66) = -2.55$, $p = .013$) so that higher self-esteem predicted lower overall susceptibility. The model predicting normative susceptibility was close to significance, $F(1, 66) = 3.91$, $p = .052$, accounting for 5.6% of the variance, $R^2 = .056$. The regression coefficient was negative ($\beta = -.24$, $t(66) = -1.98$, $p = .052$) but was not significant at our conventional level of .05. Self-esteem significantly predicted informational susceptibility in female participants, $F(1, 66) = 6.00$, $p = .017$, accounting for 8.3% of the variance, $R^2 = .083$.

Self-esteem was a significant negative predictor ($\beta = -.29$, $t(66) = -2.45$, $p = .017$) so that higher self-esteem predicted lower informational susceptibility.

Table 5. Simple Linear Regression Analyses Predicting Consumer Susceptibility from Self-esteem by Gender

Dependent Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	R^2	<i>F</i>
CSII	-0.11	0.31	-.05	-0.35	.728	.002	0.12
Normative Susceptibility	-0.35	0.38	-.12	-0.92	.364	.014	0.84
Informational Susceptibility	0.37	0.41	.12	0.89	.376	.014	0.80

Male Participants (n = 59)

Dependent Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	R^2	<i>F</i>
CSII	-0.60	0.24	-.30	-2.55	.013	.090	6.51*
Normative Susceptibility	-0.54	0.27	-.24	-1.98	.052	.056	3.91
Informational Susceptibility	-0.72	0.29	-.29	-2.45	.017	.083	6.00*

Female Participants (n = 68)

Overall, these results say that the predictive role of self-esteem in consumer susceptibility is more pronounced among females than males.

5. Discussion

Overview of Findings

The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between self-esteem and consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence (normative and informational

susceptibility) and to investigate the relationship and differences in the level between males and females. Based on the earlier literature indicating that self-evaluations influence sensitivity to social cues, the results provide empirical support for the argument that self-esteem acts as an internal psychological resource that can either be a buffer or a factor that enhances socially driven consumer decision making (Bearden et al., 1989; Rhodes & Wood, 1992). The results are presented below in relation to each hypothesis.

The hypothesis (H1) was supported. A statistically significant negative relation between self-esteem and overall consumer susceptibility was there. Participants with high self-esteem had less susceptibility to interpersonal influence. While the effect size was small, the direction of the relationship was consistent with theory and prior research.

This is consistent with other studies. In their review, Rhodes and Wood (1992) found that influenceability was affected by self-esteem and that predicts how differently people respond to persuasion. Bearden et al. (1989) showed in consumer research that consumers' receptivity to social influence in the marketplace and their susceptibility to interpersonal impact are stable traits. These findings combine these two traditions by showing that sensitivity to social input throughout the purchasing process is heavily correlated with personal assessment of oneself.

People with low self-esteem may be more sensitive to the social context because they are more worried about being accepted and judged, whereas people with high self-esteem may be more autonomous in their decision-making and less dependent on outside approval.

This hypothesis (H2) was supported. Self-esteem was significantly and negatively related to normative susceptibility. Individuals with lower self-esteem expressed a higher likelihood to conform in order to win acceptance or stay out of unpleasant situations. According to Bearden et al. (1989), normative influence is a reflection of conformity driven by social approval processes. Escalas and Bettman (2005) showed that when identity formation motives are triggered, consumers establish self-brand links based on associations with reference groups. In order to strengthen their sense of social belonging, those with lower self-esteem might be more likely to support group-endorsed businesses. In an Indian sample, Bandyopadhyay (2017) discovered that normative susceptibility moderated the association between self-esteem and impulsive purchase, indicating that lower self-esteem increased sensitivity to socially motivated spending. By directly demonstrating that global self-esteem is a negative predictor of normative susceptibility in young people, the current findings confirm and expand on this pattern.

This hypothesis (H3) was not supported, although the relationship was negative in direction, it was not statistically significant. Informational susceptibility involves looking for advice or information from others when making decisions under uncertainty (Bearden et al., 1989). Unlike normative influence, informational influence is not solely rooted in looking for approval but in uncertainty reduction. Murali et al. (2005) showed that reliance on interpersonal information sources influences the need for cognition, self-confidence, and product knowledge. This suggests that informational susceptibility may be more cognitively driven than affectively driven.

The theory supports that lack of association with self-esteem in some capacity. Even individuals with high self-esteem may look for information from others if they have insufficient knowledge. Informational influence may reflect rational decision strategies rather than identity based conformity.

This hypothesis (H4) was moderately supported. In female participants, self-esteem was significantly negatively related to overall consumer susceptibility. In male participants, the relationship was not statistically significant.

Importantly, it does not necessarily say that females are more susceptible to interpersonal influence than males, but it suggests that self-esteem played a stronger predictive role in regard to female participants. This tells that the psychological mechanism linking self-esteem and susceptibility might differ between genders. Previous research such as Escalas and Bettman (2005) has shown that identity related consumption varies according to self-concept processes, the findings suggest that the influence of self-esteem on susceptibility may also operate differently across subgroups.

This hypothesis (H5) was not proved. No significant relationship was found among males. In females, the relationship was negative and almost significant but did not meet the threshold. The lack of statistical significance shows that this association's strength might be dependent on an individual, sample, or contextual factor.

The hypothesis (H6) was proved for females but not for males. Among women, self-esteem predicted information susceptibility in consumer settings. No significant association found among males. This women's self-esteem has been found to lead to higher consumer approval and information seeking behaviour. Greater uncertainty or less confidence in one's decisions as a result of lower self-esteem may increase reliance on others due to one's lower subsequent confidence. This trend suggests that the susceptibility to information may not be completely unrelated to self-evaluation in some subgroups.

This hypothesis (H7) was proved through analysis. Regression analyses showed that self-esteem significantly predicted overall consumer susceptibility in the overall sample or effect size.

Although the variance was relatively small, the predictive effect was statistically meaningful. Self-esteem has the capability to assess and measure an individual's susceptibility. According to Rhodes and Wood (1992), self-evaluative processes explain the responsiveness to external influence. Nonetheless, susceptibility is likely to be influenced by different and varied psychological and contextual factors.

H8: Self-esteem will significantly predict normative susceptibility. This hypothesis was validated. Regression analysis of the data revealed that normative susceptibility was significantly predicted by self-esteem. The normative susceptibility falls as self-esteem rises, according to the negative regression coefficient. This result shows the theoretical difference between normative and informational influence introduced by Bearden et al. (1989). The idea that self-esteem is strongly linked to getting approval from society rather than informational processes is supported by the predictive nature of effect for normative susceptibility.

H9: Self-esteem will significantly predict informational susceptibility. The hypothesis was not supported as self-esteem has no significant impact on informational susceptibility of individuals. The female subgroup showed promising significant negative relation between self-esteem and information susceptibility, so this indicates subgroup variation. This finding supports the theoretical framework of the difference between normative and informational influence. Informational susceptibility appears less dependent on global self-evaluation and self-esteem of oneself and more dependent on situational knowledge factors, consistent with Murali et al. (2005).

Theoretical Implications

By integrating frameworks of interpersonal influence with self-evaluative theory, the study expands on the literature of consumer psychology. Rhodes and Wood (1992) suggested that susceptibility to social pressure is affected by self-esteem of consumers. Normative susceptibility is the major type of influence within the consumer domain. This involves the consumer searching for external social acceptability. The cross-cultural evidence is also supported by the current study results and findings. Bristow and Kleindl (1997) suggested that lower self-esteem is linked with higher susceptibility in various cultural groups. Similarly, Khare and Rakesh (2013) suggested that self-evaluations are predictive of susceptibility among Indian consumers. The present research expands on this evidence within the young adult Indian context it further emphasizes the significance and effect of this psychological

connection.

According to the study, self-esteem acts as a barrier to keep us safe from the opinions of others. Individuals who have a strong sense of self-esteem do not feel the need to follow others' lead in order to win their acceptance. We can manage the pressure to fit in with everyone when we have a high sense of self-esteem. When we have self-esteem, we are content with who we are and don't need approval from others.

Practical Implications

From a marketing and consumer psychology point of view, the results of this study strongly support the importance of understanding self-esteem in consumer behavior. This research shows that self-esteem is connected to how much a person is influenced by others while making purchase decisions.

Many marketing strategies are based on social influence. Brands often show that a product is popular, trending, or liked by many people. They use influencers, celebrities, reviews, and social media to create a feeling that “everyone is using this.” According to normative influence theory (Bearden et al., 1989), people sometimes buy products to feel accepted or to avoid being judged. The findings show that people with lower self-esteem may be more affected by these strategies.

This means that social approval-based marketing can be especially powerful for certain consumers.

This supports the relevance of the research. It proves that internal psychological factors, like self-esteem, matter in real market situations. Marketing is not only about price or quality. It is also about how people feel about themselves. When consumers feel less confident, they may depend more on others' opinions. Understanding this helps marketers design better and more effective communication strategies.

At the same time, this research adds value because it shows that not all consumers respond in the same way. Since self-esteem changes how people react to social pressure, marketers should not treat all consumers as identical. Instead, they should understand psychological differences when planning campaigns.

In today's world, especially with social media, people constantly see what others are buying and using. Because of this, the role of self-esteem becomes even more important. It clearly shows that self-esteem plays a meaningful role in consumer susceptibility, which makes this research highly relevant for modern marketing practice.

Limitations

The small effect sizes show that only a small percentage of the variation in

susceptibility can be explained by self-esteem. According to Savani et al. (2014), Koller et al. (2013), Murali et al. (2005), and cultural norms, susceptibility is probably influenced by a number of interrelated elements, such as social comparison orientation, need for approval, desire for cognition,

self-concept clarity, and cultural norms. More participants and the addition of other variables, such as social media usage or exposure, might have produced better research outcomes because the sample size was rather small. Furthermore, the use of self-report measures raises the possibility of response biases. Prospective Paths Experimental and longitudinal designs may help elucidate causal pathways. Theoretical generalizability would also be improved by cross-cultural comparisons.

6. Conclusion

In summary, the present study showed that self-esteem is modestly but consistently associated with consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence, with a particularly stronger link to normative susceptibility. Although the magnitude of the effects was small, the direction of findings was stable and theoretically coherent. This indicates that internal self-evaluation plays a meaningful role in shaping how individuals respond to socially driven consumption environments.

The stronger association between self-esteem and normative susceptibility is conceptually aligned with broader self-related and interpersonal frameworks. Vohs and Heatherton (2001) demonstrated that threats to self-esteem alter interpersonal perceptions and increase sensitivity to social evaluation. When individuals experience vulnerability in self-evaluation, they may become more attentive to external validation and relational feedback. In consumer contexts, such heightened evaluation sensitivity can translate into greater conformity to socially approved consumption choices.

Further et al. (2018) showed that lower self-esteem was associated with stronger herd behavior tendencies among investors when reference group cues were present. Although situated in financial decision making, their findings reinforce the idea that diminished self-confidence increases responsiveness to social consensus signals. The present findings extend this logic to everyday consumer decisions among young adults.

The absence of a strong overall relationship between self-esteem and informational susceptibility is also theoretically meaningful. Informational reliance may reflect uncertainty reduction rather than approval seeking. Gil, Dwivedi, and Johnson (2017) Their findings highlight that not all forms of social influence are driven by self-worth concerns; some are

driven by social positioning and visibility. This supports the present study's finding that normative processes are more directly tied to self-evaluation than informational processes.

Importantly, this study added to the literature of these relationships within an Indian young adult sample. Within such contexts, internal psychological resources such as self-esteem become central in determining whether individuals resist or internalize social pressure.

Overall, the findings underscore that consumer susceptibility is not merely a marketing outcome but a psychologically grounded process. Self-esteem operates as an internal stabilizing factor that can reduce conformity driven by approval motives. By integrating interpersonal influence research, identity-based consumption theory, and evidence from emerging market contexts, this study advances a more nuanced understanding of how internal self-evaluation shapes socially embedded consumer decision making.

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