A qualitative study of mother-adolescent daughter-vicarious role model consumption interactions

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Abstract
Purpose – The purposes of this research are to examine the extent to which daughters view their mothers as consumption role models, the extent to which daughters serve as consumption role models for their mothers, and the extent to which external role models are shared by mothers and their adolescent daughters.
Design/methodology/approach – Two qualitative studies focused on mothers-adolescent daughters-vicarious role models interactions as drivers of consumption behaviors in Western cultures. Study 1 included 20 in-depth interviews with mothers and their adolescent daughters (conducted separately). Study 2 included five of the original dyads interviewed jointly and observed in fashion stores.
Findings – Regarding adolescent daughters' use as role models and fashion markers for their mothers, most mothers confirmed that their adolescent daughters' fashion opinion was very important. Second, based on consumer socialization arguments, mothers served as role models for their adolescent daughters. Most dyads shop for fashion items together and in the same stores. Regarding the issue of cognitive versus chronological ages, the studies suggest that there is a gap between mothers' cognitive and chronological ages in support of cognitive age theory and the youthfulness ideal of Western cultures. Notably, such a gap mostly failed to materialize for adolescent daughters. Hence, consumption similarity appears to be driven more by the gap for mothers than the gap for daughters. Finally, external role models such as celebrities did not have a great influence on mothers or their adolescent daughters.
Originality/value – The research used in-depth interviews with and in-store observation of mothers and adolescent daughters. Future research might use similar interviews with younger daughters. Another extension of the work reported here that can provide triangulation for the findings is to change from a qualitative to a quantitative methodology.

Keywords Consumer behaviour, Socialization, Qualitative research

Paper type Research paper

An executive summary for managers and executive readers can be found at the end of this article.

My glass shall not persuade me I am old (Shakespeare).

Introduction

The traditional paradigm in marketing views parents as role models for their children in the consumption domain (Clark *et al.*, 2001). This paradigm is based on the perspective that experienced parents serve as a primary source of information for their children. However, in today's Western cultures, an ever-increasing emphasis on a youthfulness ideal may cause a shift in role modeling, making children potential role models for their parents. Attempting to feel, look, and behave youthfully, parents might perceive their children as experts/role models.

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Women engage in youthfulness-oriented activities and annually spend $3000 more than men to stay young (Weiss, 2002). Additionally, maturing women seek reaffirmation of their self-concept of youthfulness as a normal, healthy, positive, and acceptable image of aging (Barak and Stern, 1985). They recalibrate their inner age to make youth important and tend to adopt consumption patterns fitting a younger cognitive rather than chronological age. Integrating a youth ideal with lower cognitive ages may lead mothers to view their adolescent's daughters as role models in certain consumption situations making the mother-daughter dyad a preferred unit of analysis (Moore and Lutz, 1988). Additionally, vicarious role models, such as celebrities, can impact both mothers and their adolescent daughters' consumption behaviors.

This paper develops and qualitatively evaluates an integrative perspective on consumption interactions of mothers, adolescent daughters, and vicarious role models. These interactions are studied using three theoretical frameworks (consumer socialization, intergenerational influence, and role models) and focusing on the influence of adolescent daughters on their mothers' self-consumption.

The first framework, "consumer socialization", suggests that parents serve as socialization agents to their children through consumer learning (Caruana and Vassallo, 2003; Moschis and Churchill, 1978). Though consumer

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socialization provides insights on how children acquire motivations, attitudes, and behaviors about the marketplace (Carlson *et al.*, 1994), it has focused mainly on a uni-flow of socialization from parents to their children.

The second framework, "intergenerational influences" (IGI), refers to the within-family transmission of information, beliefs, and resources across generations (Moore *et al.*, 2001). Although studies under this framework have emphasized mostly transmission from older to younger generations, it can also explain adolescent daughters' influence on their mother's consumption, adding a dimension to socialization theory.

The third framework deals with the impact of role models on individuals' consumption behavior (Martin and Bush, 2000; Clark *et al.*, 2001). Any person, who can potentially influence individuals' behaviors through direct or indirect contact, can be a role model (Bandura, 1977). Given Western cultures' increasing emphasis on youthfulness (Thompson and Hirchman, 1995), adolescent daughters and their mothers might use similar consumption role models (e.g. celebrities) for expressive products. Such products are consumed to fit one's personality and lifestyle and to make favorable social impressions (Shah and Mittal, 1997). Thus, the approach developed here extends beyond the mothers-adolescent daughters dyads.

In combination, children's influence on family consumption, children's socialization, IGI, role models, and the Western cultural environment might be useful in explaining if, when, and how adolescent daughters impact their mother's behaviors for products that are relevant to and used by the mothers. To the best of the authors' knowledge, this combined approach has not been studied before. The frameworks are described first. Then, the results of a two-phased qualitative study, conducted to assess consumption interactions, are presented, integrated, and discussed.

Literature review

Consumer socialization

Consumer socialization refers to the process by which individuals acquire skills, knowledge, and attitudes relevant to their consumption behavior (Viswanathan *et al.*, 2000). It is influenced by agents who have frequent contact with, are important to, or control rewards and sanctions given to consumers. In this context, children's consumer socialization is "the process by which young people acquires skills, knowledge, and attitudes relevant to their functioning in the marketplace" (Ward, 1974, p. 2). Studies have focused on children's learning process about the marketplace and changes in their learning over time. A focus on childhood socialization recognizes that learning of consumption skills could be impacted by new, post-childhood roles. Children have the opportunity to learn effective and ineffective behaviors by observing their parents' consumption practices in the family environment over time (Bandura, 1977; Heckler *et al.*, 1989; Martin and Bush, 2000).

In addition, family communication styles affect children's consumer socialization and consumption (Caruana and Vassallo, 2003). Family communication studies have focused on two communication orientations: concept- and socio-orientation (Moschis, 1985, Moschis, 1988). Concept-oriented communication is "consistent with reciprocal, two-way communication and...incorporating children's opinions into family decisions" and socio-oriented communication is "characterized by deference to parental standards and the avoidance of social conflict" (Rose *et al.*, 2002, p. 869). Concept-oriented communication encourages children to develop autonomous views and socio-oriented communication to adhere to parental control. Adolescents have more influence on family purchasing decisions in a concept-oriented communication environment compared to socio-oriented one (Palan and Wilkes, 1997). Tozier *et al.* (1973) investigated the degree of agreement between mothers and daughters regarding school clothes and found a higher consensus for expressive items. However, since concept-orientation encourages children to behave autonomously, adolescent daughters' consumption might differ from their mothers'. In contrast, since in socio-orientation communication children are expected to obey their parents, it is probable that adolescent daughters may consume like their mothers.

In sum, childhood consumer socialization focuses on children's development of consumption skills. It has mostly assumed a uni-directional process from parents to children.

Intergenerational influences (IGI)

IGI refers to within-family, cross-generational transmission of resources, information, values/attitudes, and consumption behaviors (Cashmore and Goodnow, 1985; Childers and Rao, 1992; Heckler *et al.*, 1989; Moore and Berchmans, 1996; Moore *et al.*2001; Whitebeck and Gecas, 1988). IGI influence can be bi-directional; forward, from parents to adult children, and backward, from adult children to parents (Shah and Mittal, 1997).

The primary determinant of IGI is the strength of family relationship (SFR; Shah and Mittal, 1997). SFR refers to the degree of respect and trust between parents and children and to the harmony of relations and communication between them. It is impacted by family environment, cohesion, and communication orientations (Moschis, 1988). IGI occurs when harmonious and mutually respectful relationships across generations are present (Shah and Mittal, 1997). Notably, consumer socialization studies emphasize parents' general communication orientation rather than the specific content of parent-child communication. Thus, they have dealt with dual communication quality, which can be a result of a high SFR and have mostly ignored the importance of SFR as a possible key to understanding the similarity between mothers and their adolescent daughters (Moore and Berchmans , 1996).

Another aspect of IGI refers to perceived expertise in a specific product area that someone believes another person possesses. IGI is stronger the more one generation perceives another as an expert on the brand, product, or store under consideration, as being similar on a product-relevant lifestyle, or for expressive over functional products (Shah and Mittal, 1997). Since teenagers are trendsetters for expressive products and might know more than their parents about certain products (e.g. the latest brands of designer jeans), adults often watch teens to spot what is "in" and emulate them (Zollo, 1995).

In sum, IGI suggests bi-directional parent-child influences whereas consumer socialization emphasizes one-directional influence from parents to children. Thus, a bi-directional flow should be recognized in studies of within-family consumption influences.

Role models

The term role model refers to "anyone an individual comes in contact with, directly or indirectly, who potentially can influence the individual decisions or behaviors" (Bush *et al.*, 2000, p. 441). Intra-family, since Western cultures increasingly emphasize youthfulness and anti-aging, mothers may compare themselves to their adolescent daughters. Since mothers are driven to look young, their tendency to view their adolescent daughters as role models should increase (Zollo, 1995; Saucier, 2004; Weiss, 2002).

Adolescents use many consumption role models, including parents (King and Multon, 1996), teachers (Basow and Howe, 1980), movie stars (King and Multon, 1996), or athletes (Lockwood and Kunda, 1997). While parents influence adolescents' attitudes and purchases (Martin and Bush, 2000; Moschis, 1985), non-family role models (e.g. entertainers) also affect adolescents' behavior (Martin and Bush, 2000; Clark *et al.*, 2001). "A superstar will become a source of inspiration or discouragement only if one compares oneself to this person. One is most likely to draw such comparisons. . .when the other is viewed as relevant to the self. These similarities are integrated and jointly affect the likelihood that one object, or in the case of social comparison, one person, will be mapped onto the other" (Lockwood and Kunda, 1997, p. 92). Thus, superstars may serve as role models for adolescent daughters and for their mothers driving the consumption behavior of both to converge.

Finally, mothers' and adolescent daughters' use of the same role models depends on the degree of their perceived resemblance (Holyoak and Thagard, 1989; Major *et al.*, 1993). Mittal (1988) distinguished between functional products, bought primarily for physical performance, and expressive products, consumed to fit one's personality and lifestyle and make favorable impressions. Consumers use role models to form opinions about expressive products (Shah and Mittal, 1997). Hence, youthfulness-driven mothers may see adolescent daughters as role models for expressive products more than for functional products.

Western cultures

Today, Western cultural standards impact women as they move through middle age and later. An emphasis on female youth and beauty is apparent in advertising, television, movies, and print media. Women are constantly bombarded with visual images of young females and ads promising youthful looks. Ageism is prevalent in Western cultures and women suffer more from a prejudice against older adults than men (Saucier, 2004).

Women tend to adopt youth-related characteristics (e.g. fashion interest) as an age denial mechanism and adolescent daughters have the opposite tendency since "the experience of an older age identity during adolescence would be consistent with the view that this life stage marks the transition from childhood to adulthood" (Montepare and Lachman, 1989, p. 73). In contrast, teenage girls might want to look older (higher cognitive age) than their chronological age and "strive toward a self-definition as independent, autonomous, and self-reliant" (Montepare and Lachman, 1989, p. 73). Therefore, the cognitive age gap between mothers and adolescent daughters can be narrowed as a result of a decreasing cognitive age of mothers and/or an increasing cognitive age of adolescent daughters.

In sum, consumer socialization has focused mainly on the role of parents as socialization agents for children and IGI has emphasized bi-directional influences with a focus on adult children. Coupled with the use of role models, these approaches are useful to the study of consumption interactions between mothers and adolescent daughters, especially, in Western cultures. These issues were addressed in a two-phased qualitative study, described below.

Qualitative study – Phase 1: method

Design

The first phase included in-depth interviews with 20 dyads (in two waves of ten dyads each; discussed further below) of mothers and adolescent daughters interviewed separately so that answers would not depend on the presence of the other dyad member. Several issues were examined: if and when adolescent daughters serve as role models for their mothers; if and when mothers serve as role models for adolescent daughters; and whether the youthfulness ideal of Western cultures exists and influences the consumption behavior of mothers and adolescent daughters. We note here that the second phase included five of the original dyads, who were interviewed together and were also observed shopping in fashion stores. The joint interviews were designed to reduce the possibility that perceived credibility of mother or daughter underlies consumption similarity and the in-store observations were designed to assess usage behavior as it happens (an issue revisited later).

Sample

A convenience sample was used. The dyads included mothers and daughters at different ages (daughters: 15-18; mothers: 39-51), from different social strata (low to high), and in different geographical locations (two cities in Northern/ Central Israel).

Qualitative study – Phase 1: analysis

The interviews were analyzed using a content story approach to identify what the story is about, what are its central themes, and what happened. (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990).

The analysis transformed and reconstructed the field text to a research text resulting in a coherent storyline, which incorporated appropriate field texts. The research text, distanced somewhat from the field text, was used to identify a storyline, examples, or common themes. The text was read several times until the repeated foci and central themes of the story were discovered (Lieblich, 1998). The goal was to combine pieces of information to create a whole namely, a story framework ordered in a significant manner. An illustrative writing style was used with the data presented in its literal form and serving as examples for analysis (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990).

The criteria for creating the story were derived from the goals of the study: to explore if adolescent daughters serve as role models for mothers, if mothers serve as role models for adolescent daughters, and if a youthfulness ideal influences the consumption of mothers and adolescent daughters. Six research criteria were used: similarity in product-relevant lifestyles; similarity in fashion items' usage; advertisements' influence on consumption behavior; cognitive ages' gap between mothers and their adolescent daughters; influence of non family role models on mothers' and their adolescent daughters' consumption of expressive products; and the strength of family relationship A set of ten interviews was conducted first. Then, one of the authors read the detailed transcripts to identify themes. A first draft of the paper was

written and read by the other two authors. The three authors discussed the interviews, themes, and examples and sought consensus on both themes and examples. Then, a second set of ten new interviews was conducted and analyzed by the same author. These new observations led to revising the themes and enriching the set of examples used. This continuous process of a description of the phenomenon and its interpretation (Hirschman, 1986) was used to clarify and challenge the emerging themes. A second draft of the paper emerged at this stage. This version was also read by the other two authors as a credibility check (Hirschman, 1986). This discussion, consensus-seeking phase was used to authenticate and enrich the interpretations, leading to confirmability of the findings (Hirschman, 1986). After accounting for this phase, the current version was written. The themes identified in the first ten interviews are marked throughout as "I" after quotes and additional ones from the other ten interviews are marked as "II" after quotes.

Cognitive ages gap between mothers and their adolescent daughters (1)

Western cultures require individuals to remain young and many people attempt to extend their youth and engage in youth culture activities. This requirement has led to a reduction in individuals' cognitive age, which refers to feel-, look-, do- and interest-age (Barak, 1987; Barak and Schiffman, 1981). Perceived youth was described as the gap between chronological and cognitive ages (Barak and Rahtz, 1999). While the cognitive age concept is applicable to people of all ages, adult females' actual ages exceed their cognitive ages and the younger a woman's cognitive age the stronger her interest in fashion (Wilkes, 1992).

According to the interviews, mothers reported a gap of approximately ten years between their chronological and cognitive ages, with cognitive age being younger than the chronological one, as anticipated. The following quotes illustrate this tendency:

> Yes, for certain. At least ten years (M: Ro.). "I"
>
> I don't feel my real age. At 43, do I have to dress like a grandmother? (M: Ro.). "I"
>
> I feel younger than my chronological age. Sometimes I just don't believe that I really am my age (M: Gi.). "I"
>
> This is true (the gap). In dressing, I think I am about 30 and my real age is 44 (M: Ln.). "II"
>
> Yes. I feel that there is a gap of ten years (M: Ze). "II"
>
> I feel that I am ten years younger. Sometime more and sometime less (M: Il.). "I"
>
> Yes. I feel like 30 years old. It's reflected in my dress and my thinking (M: Ya.). "II"
>
> I feel younger. In fact, I do not believe that I am 39 (M: Liz.). "II"

In contrast, most adolescent daughters did not report a gap and felt that their chronological and cognitive ages were in sync (exemplified first below). However, a few did report older cognitive ages, as expected:

> No. I think I'm 16 years old in cognitive and chronological ages (D:Ni). "II"
>
> I don't try to change myself or my age. Both ages are similar (D:Ma.). "I"
>
> Most time I feel the same. However, when I want to enter clubs on Fridays, I put more make-up to feel and look older (D:Sh.). "I"
>
> You really found the person to ask. Seriously, I feel 18 or at least 17.5 (D: Ad.). "II"

Finally, in three cases adolescent daughters reported younger cognitive ages:

> I feel younger than 18 (D: Ha.). "I"
>
> Sometimes I feel at my age and sometimes even younger (D: Ir.). "II"
>
> I feel that I am a little childish. It looks like my cognitive age is lower than my real age (D: No.). "I"

In sum, cognitive ages' differences between mothers and adolescent daughters seem to be smaller than the chronological age differences would indicate. In general, this narrower gap is an outcome of mothers feeling younger than their actual age, rather than daughters feeling older. Regardless, a narrower gap might lead to bi-directional consumption influences.

Similarity in product-relevant lifestyles (2)

Recall that IGI should be stronger the more one generation perceives the other as an expert or as being similar in a product-relevant lifestyle (Shah and Mittal, 1997). In addition, such an impact should be stronger for expressive than for functional products.

In most cases, mothers and daughters viewed themselves as sharing a similar lifestyle and therefore shopped for fashion items together. Mothers and daughters tended to find suitable clothes for both, especially fashion accessories, such as belts, necklaces and shawls, in fashion store chains, prevalent in shopping centers:

> Our dressing style is very similar … I think we both dress sportive (M: Ni.). "I"
>
> There is similarity between my and my daughter's lifestyle, but it is not identical. Our similarity is reflected in that we both do not tend to go too 'strip' (M:Il.). "II"
>
> Our style is similar, we are both very conservative (M: Ma.). "I"
>
> Our style is similar. We both find items in the same stores like Lutzi. I found there a shirt and my daughter found jeans and undershirt (M: Liz.). "II"

There was a resemblance between mothers and daughters on dressing style. However, in some cases joint usage is limited to shirts or fashion accessories resulting from size differences (particularly in the lower part of the body). In many cases, mothers reported that their daughters update them about what is fashionable. The following statements also provide evidence for mothers' learning from adolescent daughters. This daughter(mother learning process can be viewed as exemplifying IGI (but not socialization) processes because of its direction:

> I am very influenced by what is fashionable and the one who updates me is Ga., my fashion barometer. If there is any change in fashion she takes care to inform me (M: Ro). "I"
>
> Now if I have doubts I ask my daughter: "Is it beautiful?" and if she tells me that it's disgusting I remove it. This is influential (M: Ni.). "I"
>
> My daughter is much more updated than I. She has more time (M: Lim.). "II"

In other situations, adolescent daughters reported about their influence on their mother's consumption of fashion items. The examples below illustrate that the daughters' views converged with the mothers':

> I advise her more than she advises me (D: Ga.). "I"
>
> I have a lot of influence on my mother; I think that if I was not around she wouldn't dress like she does (D: Ba.). "I"
>
> Mother always asks me if it looks good on her (D: Ad.). "I"

Yes, I just say that this is not pretty and that it looks old and in most cases that's enough (D: Ro.). "I"

I am much more updated than my mother and I tell her that it suits her or that it is out of fashion (D: Sh.). "II"

The truth is that I don't imitate my mother's style but she imitates my style (D: Lin.). "II"

In addition, some mothers reported that they are role models for their daughters. The quotes below suggest either a bi-directional flow of influence in line with IGI and socialization, or a uni-directional flow expected under socialization:

In clothes, I have the same style as a 16 year old. Now my daughter adopted this kind of style (M: Ni.). "I"

I make sure that I buy fashion items that can suit both of us (M: Ha.). "I"

My closet is in her room (M: Ln.). "I"

Our dressing style is very similar. We both buy at the same stores in the mall (M: Ya.). "II"

Likewise, several daughters discussed their mother's influence. These reports reinforced the viewpoints expressed by the mothers:

When I buy, many times it is with my mother. If she says that it's nice, then I buy (D: Da.). "I"

My mother's opinion is very important to me but basically I choose my clothes (D: Ha.). "I"

I think that my mother is more updated than me (D: No.). "I"

I usually go shopping with my mother. When I find something I ask for her opinion and she is the same, asking for my opinion (D: Lin.). "II"

These statements support a mother → daughter learning process underlying the theory of consumer socialization. Adolescent daughters learn from their mothers and their mothers' fashion opinion affects their consumption behavior:

Yes, socks, shoes, scarves, and also perfumes, make-up, jacket (M: Liz.). "II"

Yes, we went to a fashion store and my daughter showed me a beautiful jacket. I told her that it is very beautiful and that it fit my pants. She laughed and told me that she asked me about the jacket for her. Then, we bought it for both of us (M: Ma.) "II"

However, in one case, the ages' gap was 39 years (the adolescent daughter was a late youngest child). In this case, the mother and daughter reported no similarity in lifestyle:

We have different lifestyle since she is my youngest child (M: Ze.) "II"

No. We have different lifestyle (D: Ni). "II"

In sum, a uni- or bi-directional flow of influence exists between mothers and daughters. Learning can emanate from the mother, the daughter, or be bi-directional, as anticipated by the theory of consumer socialization and/or the IGI framework.

Similarity in fashion items usage (3)

The themes identified to this point led to an assessment if mothers and daughters tend to use the same fashion items. In most cases, mothers and daughters, who shopped for fashion items together, tended to find suitable clothes for both, especially fashion accessories, such as belts, necklaces, and shawls, in popular fashion store chains in shopping centers:

Yes, belts, necklaces, and other fashion items that fit our sizes. In fact, we share almost everything (M: Li). "I"

My mother and I share fashion items. Most times, I use hers(D: Ta.). "II"

Yes, mainly belts and accessories (D: No.). "I"

She takes my items (M: Ay.). "I"

We use the same cosmetics (M: Ev.). "II"

We share make-up and shoes (D: Ro). "I"

Yes sometimes. We both buy things at Fox. We also use the same facial soap (M: Da.). "II"

Sometime my daughter takes my scarf (M: Da.). "II"

Accessories like scarves and hats…we share (M: Lim.). "II"

However, in the one case alluded to earlier of an extreme age gap, the mother and adolescent daughter reported no similarity in fashion items usage:

We go together to the shopping center only for her…we do not use the same items since she is my youngest child (M: Ze.) "II"

No. Even if I find something it will not be in my size (D: Ni). "II"

In sum, mutual use of fashion items occurs between mothers and their adolescent daughters. This tendency was observed mostly in fashion accessories.

Influence of non-family role models (4)

Non-family role models (e.g., entertainers) can affect adolescents' consumption (Clark *et al.*, 2001; Clark *et al.*, 2001). Superstars can be used as consumption benchmarks, especially when they are seen as relevant (Lockwood and Kunda, 1997). Hence, celebrities may serve as role models for adolescent daughters and for their mothers, leading their consumption behaviors to converge. Bandura (cited in Dittmann, 2004) emphasized that behaviors can change by following TV heroes. According to his social learning theory, people learn from role models whose behavior they wish to emulate. Thus, TV programs can lead people to make changes in their lives. Such learning supplements the learning processes underlying the consumer socialization theory and the IGI framework.

As we have already mentioned, today's Western cultures and mass media emphasize a youthfulness ideal. This ideal leads individuals to use different means to feel or look younger than their age. Hence, in contrast to the parent-child direction mostly assumed previously, some mothers emulate their daughters and consume similar perfumes, make-up, or clothes to look younger. This dimension was tested in phase 1 using in-depth interviews with mothers and their adolescent daughters. In addition, the influence of vicarious role models (e.g. fashion models) may also represent another socio-cultural aspect.

In the current study only two interviewees referred to this issue. In contrast to expectations, both indicated that they refrain from imitating celebrities. Notably, adolescent daughters' most important role models were their school friends, suggesting a social influence/learning facet:

If there is something beautiful and the price is reasonable, then I buy. Girlfriends influence me, but celebrities-no! (D: Ta.). "I"

No, no celebrities serve me as role models, not really. I can see something on someone and get excited but I don't imitate anybody (D: Ba.). "I"

When I need a shirt or something else I go to the store and buy. Sometimes my friends advise me but it is never based on celebrities (D: Ni). "II"

Mothers' attitudes towards non-family role models were similar to their daughter's. For example:

I do not behave according to celebrities (M: Ev.). "II"

Celebrities have no influence on me (M: Mi.). "II"

In sum, non-family role models exert minimal, if any influence, which is incompatible with the literature reviewed. Perhaps imitating celebrities was perceived as a weakness leading to a gap between interviewees' answers and their actual behavior. This explanation accounts for the nature of data collection (in-depth interviews, rather than anonymous questionnaires).

Advertisements' influence on consumption behavior (5)
The interviews uncovered an interesting phenomenon. While all mothers clarified that their fashion items' consumption behavior was not influenced by advertisements (exemplified first below), some adolescent daughters noted that advertisements serve them as a source of information:

> I have my own line. Advertisements do not influence me (M: Ze.). "II"
>
> I am not influenced by ads. I look at the mirror and know (M: Ya.). "II"
>
> I hope that advertisements do not impact me (M: Lim.). "II"
>
> No. I'm not a person who uses advertisements (M: Da.). "II"
>
> I spend many hours watching TV, especially the fashion channel (D: Ad.). "I"
>
> Advertisements influence me. I read fashion journals and watch TV (D: Sh.). "II"

These views can be explained by analyzing the role of adolescent daughters in guiding their mothers about up-to-date fashion. Adolescent daughters behave like fashion "sensors" as they receive information from the environment (e.g. advertisements, peers, or school) and transmit it to their mothers. Such a flow fits learning as expected by the IGI approach.

Strength of family relationship (SFR) (6)
SFR evolves from parents-child mutual respect/trust, harmonious/cohesive family relationships, and positive intra-family communications (Moschis, 1988; Shah and Mittal, 1997).

However, SFR was not a dominant theme in the interviews. When it emerged, it suggested a friendly relationship bounded by the authority of the mothers. The interviews suggested minor gaps between mothers' and daughters' perceptions regarding their relationships. Most daughters viewed their relationships with their mothers as a combination of friendly and authoritative:

> I think that my relationship with my mother is a combination of authoritative (when it's necessary) … but still very friendly (D: Ga.). "I"
>
> My mom always tells me that 'I'm your friend but first of all I'm your mother'. This is true (D: Ro.). "I"
>
> My relationships with my mom are mostly authoritative (D: Ni). "II"
>
> Friendly with limits (D: Ma.). "I"
>
> Friendly with limits. Sometimes she is my friend but she knows very well how to restrict me (D: Sh.). "II"
>
> Friendly with limits. Sometimes we talk on things that are not between mother and daughter (D: No.). "I"

The viewpoint expressed by mothers was similar. The relationships were characterized as friendly, friendly with some limits, or even authoritative:

> Very friendly. We talk about everything (M: Ro.). "I"
>
> I tell my daughter that if the distance between mother and daughter will be right, it is an integral part of our being friends (M: Or.). "I"
>
> We are not friends. In general, I am authoritative. However, we have true and loyal mother-child relationships – but we are not friends (M: Ze.). "II"
>
> There is a combination of friendly and authoritative (M: Il.). "I"
>
> Friendly-authoritative. It means that our relationships are friendly with a very clear boundary (M: An.). "II"
>
> Friendly with limits. We are good friends and go out to movies or a restaurant together. We also tell each other very personal things. However, there are limits (M: Liz.). "II"

In sum, the relationships are perceived similarly by mothers and daughters. Both see the relationship as friendly, for the most part, subject to mothers being authoritative when necessary. However, since SFR played a minor role in the interviews compared to other concepts, such as "mother's youthfulness" and "similarity in product relevant lifestyle", it appears in our model (Figure 1) with lined arrows, representing weak relationships.

Qualitative study – Phase 2: method

Design
As was noted earlier, the second phase assessed the interactions between mothers and daughters together at home (unlike the separate interviews in Phase 1) and in fashion stores. Phase 2 sought to analyze the same phenomenon with both dyad members simultaneously for several reasons. First, joint interviews and shopping interactions were needed to assess if additional themes would emerge (e.g. credibility of the daughter in the eyes of the mother). Second, they served as checks on the themes identified in the Phase 1. Finally, in-store observations were used to provide a rigorous test of the relationships, being recorded "live" rather than relying on recall in interviews.

Sample
One of the authors met five of the original dyads in their homes and then recorded their interactions during subsequent shopping trips. The results of the second phase are reported separately for the interviews and the fashion store visits.

Phase 2 – joint interviews: analysis

The following support the findings of the first phase and add some new aspects of mothers'-adolescent daughters' consumption interactions. The analysis follows the same order of themes as in Phase 1.

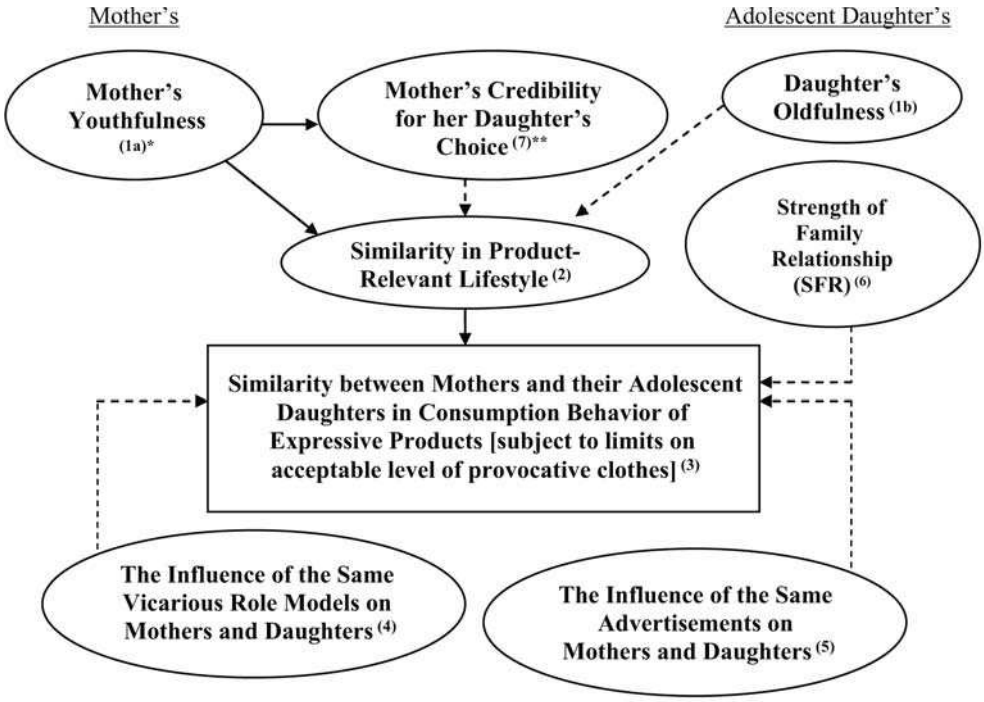
Cognitive ages gap between mothers and their adolescent daughters (1)
Regarding cognitive age gaps between mothers and their daughters, the dyads' answers were consistent with Phase 1. Mothers' chronological and cognitive ages' difference averaged 13 years (45 versus 32); most daughters reported similar chronological and cognitive ages:

> No. I think I'm 16 years old in cognitive and chronological ages (D: Ni).

Similarity in product-relevant life-styles (2)
The joint interviews supported the findings of Phase 1. In many cases, mothers and daughters share the same product-relevant life-style:

> The trousers I wear belong to her. I can use her blouses (not all), shoes, scarf, wallets, almost anything women need in fashion. We buy together in fashion stores (M: Ya).
>
> My mother and I have the same style in fashion. We often go together to fashion stores and get excited about the same items. Sometimes I choose an exposing blouse that my mother will not wear, but she likes it (D: Ba.)

Figure 1 An emerging framework of mothers' and daughters' consumption interactions



Notes: * The numbers represent the criteria used throughout the paper; ** This theme was identified in Phase 2. Continuous arrows represent strong relationships, lined arrows represent weak ones

> We buy fashion items in the same stores. I go with my daughter to buy for her and I find myself buying for me and her. I love my daughter's style (M: Liz.).

Similarity between mothers and their adolescent daughters in consumption (3)

Consistent with our findings from Phase 1, mothers and daughters reported that in many cases they buy fashion items in the same stores and share fashion items:

> We love to shop together in the Shdera and in Castro (D: Ad.).

> The story behind the clothes I wear is that I search for them for about half an hour and finally find them in her wardrobe. In fact my wardrobe is in her room (M: Li.).

> Many of our clothes were bought in the same stores (D: Ga.).

> When we have the opportunity to use it together we feel that the investment is worth it. We buy together in Zara, Paul and Bear, Castro…We use the same belts, bags. Last year when we traveled to USA I bought a bag for myself. Ga. took it from me. In fact, I did not use it at all (M: Ro.)

> Mom uses my bag and also she took my sunglasses (D: Ga.).

In addition, we found a difference when mothers' size is similar to their daughters'. In such cases, the similarity in consumption and joint use rises dramatically:

> Look, I'm a very sportive woman and my sizes are just like my daughter's. As a result we can share trousers, blouses and other fashion items (M: Ya.).

> I am lucky to be tall (1.75 meters), my weight is only 55 kg, and my size is 36. It is very similar to my daughter so I don't see any reason why I have to stop wearing young fashion. I'm very young in my body and in my head (M: Ro.).

In other cases mothers admitted that they like their adolescent daughters' style. However, they had no intention to share their clothes because they were too provocative for them:

> My style is more conservative when I buy shoes for me but I love her style. I just do not have the courage to buy it for myself (M: Gi.).

> Some clothes she buys are too provocative and despite the fact that I like them I can't use them. Regarding fashion accessories (bugs, belts…) definitely we share. Particularly, I take from her (M: Liz.).

In sum, in many cases mothers and daughters buy fashion items in the same stores and even share some items. However, sometimes size differences or daughters' provocative style (as perceived by their mothers) lead to different consumption behaviors.

The influence of vicarious role models (4) and advertisements (5) on mothers' and daughters' consumption behavior

In Phase 1 we found a weak influence of vicarious role models and advertisements on the consumption behavior of mothers and daughters. Similarly, most dyads did not refer to these sources as factors that shape their consumption behavior in Phase 2. In only one case, a daughter explained her influence on her mother by saying that she watches more TV than her mother making her a more up-to-date and credible source of information for her mother:

> My mother works all the day and she does not have the time to go shopping in the malls. I watch TV, see on the internet what is fashionable and when my mother and I go shopping, she is counts on my style (D: Lin.).

Strength of family relationships (6)

Consistent with Phase 1, when mothers' and daughters' relationships were good, the similarity in consumption between mother and daughter was higher:

> Our interests and lifestyle are very similar so sometimes we feel like friends (D: Ta.).

Mother's credibility for her daughter's choice (7)
In Phase 2, we found a new theme absent from Phase 1. In some cases, mothers confirmed their adolescent daughters' fashion opinion as credible. Apparently, when daughters' credibility was higher, they had a stronger impact on their mothers' fashion consumption:

> Ga is very knowledgeable in fashion and she never lets me down when I ask her opinion what fits me and what is not (M: Ro).
>
> I don't tend to buy clothing for myself in the 'Shdera' (famous Acre store). However, I do buy there when I go with my daughters to buy for them. I definitely listen to their advice about the color and style fitting me.... (M: Gi.).
>
> Sometimes before an important date I ask for her opinion; if she tells me that it is not nice I will not wear it (M: Liz.).

Summary of joint interviews

In sum, the joint interviews paint the following picture, which was mostly similar to Phase 1's. In many cases, mothers and adolescent daughters shop for fashion items together and in the same stores. Joint usage mostly occurs in fashion accessories. Additionally, mothers confirmed that their daughters' fashion opinion is very important to them. Moreover, some mothers liked their daughters' style but found it too provocative for them. Finally, a new theme emerged, namely that of daughters' credibility, without which their influence was diminished.

Phase 2 – analysis of in-store observations

The five in-store observations were designed with two goals in mind. First, they were carried out in search of new themes of mothers'-daughters' consumption interactions. Second, they allowed a triangulation of the themes identified in the interviews.

As we have already mentioned, in-store observations helped us to learn about the behavior's and the sensation's dimensions.

Mothers' credibility for daughters' choices

As was noted earlier, the theme of mothers' credibility for daughters' fashion choices was new to Phase 2. In-store observations provided additional support for this theme. In most cases, when daughters' choices were viewed as credible, mothers asked for their daughters' fashion opinions. These opinions strongly affected mothers' consumption behavior. The dialogs between mothers and their adolescent daughters below illustrate this theme:

> "I want to buy this blouse but I do not know if its blue color will fit me. What do you think?" (M: Ya.); "It is very nice. It suits your blue eyes" (D: Ba.).
>
> "I must find shoes. What do you think about this pair?" (M: Li.); "Mom, you surprise me. This is totally old fashioned" (D: Ta.); "O.K. let's find something else" (M: Li.)
>
> "You shock me! You want to be my mother or my grandmother???" (M: Liz.); "OK. What about this one? " (D: Lin.)
>
> "Let's see the winter fashion. What do you say about this blouse?" (M: Ro.); "Too old" (D: Ga.); "This is a winter color. Your opinion killed my desire for it". (M: Ro.)

Similarity in product relevant life-style

Mothers and daughters shared similar lifestyle and shopped for fashion items together in the same stores. This theme is consistent with the findings from the separate and joint interviews. The dialogs between mothers and their adolescent daughters below illustrate this theme:

> "This is a nice bag, isn't it?" (M: Gi.); "It can suit me too". (D: Ad.)
>
> "What do you think about this shirt?" (M: Ro.); "It is beautiful. Maybe I will take it" (D: Ga.); "I want it for myself" (M: Ro.); "OK, but you probably knew that I will love it – it is exactly my style".(D: Ga.)

Consumption similarity of mothers and adolescent daughters

In many cases, mothers' and adolescent daughters' consumption behavior was similar, as was found in the interviews. In one case, a saleswoman also noticed it: "I know you two very well. You have the same taste and style, and you are not behaving like typical mothers and daughters. You are friends":

> We can share it. It comes with rubber and we can use it together (M: Ya.).
>
> Did you see the bags here? I must buy a bug for Friday. This one is for you and for me. It is a very good color, it fits everything (M: Ya.).
>
> You forgot that I have a very similar blouse. Buy it for yourself and I will borrow it from you (D: Ta.).
>
> The small size is cute. Let's buy it for both of us (D: Lin.).
>
> It is hard to know. Try it on. If it fits you, I will try it too. After all, we are the same size (M: Ro).

Limits on acceptable level of provocative clothes

As seen in the interviews, some mothers liked adolescent daughter's fashion style but found it too provocative for them. The cases below refer to low-cut or skinny jeans, found to be too provocative for the mothers:

> They have very nice trousers but they are cut too low (M: Gi.).
>
> I need jeans. You need jeans too. Maybe you will choose something not cut too low that I can take too? (M: Ya.).
>
> It is really nice but cut too low for me (M: Li.).
>
> Too skinny for me. I like different shapes (M: Liz).

In sum, the in-store observations triangulated the interviews' findings. In support of the interviews' comprehensiveness, no new themes were found. The observations illustrated that many mothers and adolescent daughters found fashion items for both in the same stores. Some mothers perceived items such as skinny jeans as too provocative and refused to wear them.

An emerging consumption interaction model

We developed a framework based on the seven themes identified throughout the research process. The framework summarizes Phase 1 and Phase 2 and includes the themes and their inter-relationships. It is summarized graphically in Figure 1.

According to the framework, when the gap between mothers' and adolescent daughters' cognitive ages decreases due to youthfulness of mothers and/or oldfulness of daughters, their fashion consumption's similarity tends to increase. However, since most adolescent daughters felt that their chronological and cognitive ages were the same, the lined arrow represents a weak relationship between daughters' oldfulness and similarity in relevant life style. Smaller cognitive age gaps between mothers and daughters lead to similarity in product-relevant lifestyles and, through such similarity, to a resemblance in consumption of expressive products (subject to limits on

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acceptable level of provocative clothes). Similarity of consumption behavior also results from weak influences of shared vicarious role models and exposure to the same advertisements. Regarding credibility, we found a relationship between cognitive age and credibility. However, in some cases credibility did not lead to similarity in product relevant life styles, mainly due to mother's conservative attitudes.

Discussion, future research, and implications

Discussion

As previously noted, several issues were examined. The first was to assess if adolescent daughters serve as role models for their mothers. The second was to examine if mothers serve as role models for their adolescent daughters. The third was to explore if the youthfulness emphasis in Western cultures exists and if it influences the consumption behavior of mothers and their adolescent daughters.

The separate interviews, joint interviews, and the in-store observations provided partial answers to these questions.

Regarding adolescent daughters' use as role models and fashion markers for their mothers, most mothers confirmed that their daughters' fashion opinion was very important. This is compatible with Zollo (1995), who suggested that teenagers serve as trendsetters for their parents. The second question, drawing on the consumer socialization literature, asked if and when mothers serve as role models for their adolescent daughters. This question was answered positively. Most interviewed dyads shop for fashion items together in the same stores and share fashion items.

Regarding the issue of cognitive versus chronological ages, the data suggest that there is a gap between mothers' cognitive and chronological ages in support of cognitive age theory and the youthfulness ideal of Western cultures. Notably, such a gap mostly failed to materialize for adolescent daughters. Hence, consumption similarity appears to be driven more by the gap for mothers than the gap for daughters.

Finally, external role models such as celebrities did not have a great influence on mothers or their adolescent daughters. Thus, the cognitive ages' gap, which is narrower than the cognitive ages' gap, did not lead to the use of shared role models.

Future research and limitations

Future research can take several directions. First, the research for this article used interviews with mothers and adolescents daughters. Future research might use interviews with younger daughters. Such research is needed in light of accumulating anecdotal evidence that children are maturing earlier than they did in the past. Likewise, it would be instructive to examine if similar themes emerge for fathers-sons dyads. Another extension that can provide triangulation for the findings is to use quantitative methodology. Such research can build on the results reported above by including scales for the major constructs uncovered qualitatively. Such constructs can include product expressive qualities, chronological and cognitive ages, communication styles, and mothers' and daughters' influence. Ideally, both mothers and daughters should be queried in such research to assess the extent to which they agree/disagree on the structure of relationships arising from the findings reported here.

This Israeli study included Jewish dyads. Studies in additional sub-cultures and in other countries/cultures are needed to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Hofstede's work on cultural values can be used to identify cultures that are maximally different from Israel on relevant dimensions for this purpose. For example, Israel is the second lowest nation on power distance (Hofstede, 2001). Low-power-distance nations are typified by family relationships in which children are treated as equal and in which they treat parents and older relatives as equal (Hofstede, 2001, p. 107). It would be interesting to examine how dyadic relationships develop in high-power-distance nations (e.g. many South American nations).

Israel had a fairly high score on uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 2001, p. 169). Such a score is important as Hofstede reported that children is such cultures are guided by many rules; it they fail to adhere to them, the children need to change their behavior. Thus, research is needed in low-uncertainty avoidance cultures (e.g. Scandinavian countries), in which there are few rules, which are subject to change when children fail to meet them.

In addition, Israel captured the middle ground on masculinity/femininity (Hofstede, 2001). Importantly, especially in cultures emphasizing femininity, parents are expected to earn their children's respect (Hofstede, 2001, p. 308). Further research in such nations (e.g. Costa-Rica or Chile) is needed as well.

Finally, our research focused on mothers-adolescent daughters-vicarious role models consumption interactions and not on factors such as brand loyalty and peers' influence on fashion consumption. Furthermore, given the relative minor influence of ads and role models identified here, future studies should assess their impact, as well as additional factors.

Managerial implications

Our findings can be used by managers in several ways. First, as was noted, adolescent daughters serve as important role models and fashion opinion leaders for their mothers. This finding can be useful in the design of products, for example. Given that daughters lead their mothers, products designed for the former can also be marketed to the latter. However, sizes of clothing, especially for pants/skirts most subject to post-birth-giving changing bodies, and provocative levels might need to be adapted before being marketed to mothers.

Second, the gap between mothers' and daughters' cognitive ages is lower than the chronological gap. The narrowing of the gap is driven mostly by mothers' perceptions of themselves as younger than their actual ages. Coupled with the role of daughters as fashion markers for their mothers, marketers can use appropriate advertising themes. For example, mother and daughter can be depicted together in ads for fashion products. Such ads can show both in the process of exchanging information on products or shopping together.

Third, the flow of influence appears to be bi-directional. In other words, in many cases, the mothers also impact their daughters' decision-making for expressive products. When coupled with the finding that the mother-daughter relationship is typified by a combination of friendly and authoritative styles, advertisers might use messages that stress the friendliness of the relationship, as well as one in which mothers still limit their daughters' decisions to an extent. Additionally, such a combination implies that targeting only adolescent daughters in advertising campaigns might be insufficient. Ads must also be directed at mothers, who, in some cases, have the final say about daughters' fashion choices.

Conclusions

Our research supports the idea that most mothers view their adolescent daughters as role models for fashion items. In addition, most interviewed dyads shop for fashion items together in the same stores and share fashion items. Regarding the cognitive-chronological ages' gap there is a gap between mothers' cognitive and chronological ages in support of cognitive age theory and the youthfulness ideal of Western cultures. Finally, external role models such as celebrities did not have a great influence on mothers or their adolescent daughters.

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Executive summary and implications for managers and executives

This summary has been provided to allow managers and executives a rapid appreciation of the content of this article. Those with a particular interest in the topic covered may then read the article in toto *to take advantage of the more comprehensive description of the research undertaken and its results to get the full benefits of the material present.*

Marketers have conventionally regarded parents as shaping the consumption behavior of their offspring. In Western societies, however, there is growing evidence of role reversal and child is instead now influencing parent.

Young mothers and old daughters

Western women place substantial value on youthfulness and are prepared to invest heavily in the quest to act, look and feel younger than they are in reality. These aspirations are further nurtured by various media portraying idealistic images. The result is a consumption pattern that reflects their cognitive rather than chronological age. In contrast, teenage girls aspire to adulthood and the increased autonomy and self-reliance it is perceived to bring. An increase in their cognitive age thus serves to bring mother and daughter much closer together and increases the likelihood of an adolescent female advising her mother what products to consume.

In the current paper, Gavish *et al.* utilize three different frameworks to investigate whether and how teenage girls can influence what their mothers consume. A core premise of the first, consumer socialization, is that children acquire the necessary knowledge and abilities necessary to function as consumers through frequent contact with influential figures like their parents. While this framework perceives influence as a uni-dimensional flow from old to young, intergenerational influences (IGI) recognizes that persuasion between the generations can occur both ways. Strength of family relations helps inspire IGI, with harmony and mutual respect seen as especially significant. It is likewise noted that IGI can be stronger when expertise is perceived to exist. Parents may seek their daughter's opinion as adolescents are considered a greater authority on existing trends.

The third of the frameworks considers the impact of various role models on consumption behaviors. It is assumed that the growing importance of youthfulness within Western culture can increase the influence of celebrities and other high-profile individuals. Both mothers and daughters may be susceptible to such influence, which relates primarily to "expressive products" consumed to create "favorable social impressions". Celebrity others will be more influential when perceived as "relevant to the self".

Research has indicated that the communication style within a family unit also determines the consumer socialization process of young people. Where communication is reciprocal, children are encouraged to express their views and are likelier to enjoy some influence over family purchase decisions. On the other hand, any such influence is less probable when parental control is more prevalent. It is likewise supposed that communication style can shape consumption behavior. Mothers will exert more influence over their daughters' tastes and consumption in households focusing on parental standards rather than those where the opinion of children is valued more.

Research and findings

The combined effect of these factors is explored by Gavish *et al.* through interviews and observations of mothers and their adolescent daughters based in two cities within Northern and Central Israel. Participants were first interviewed separately and then together, and interviews were supplemented by in-store observations of consumption behavior in action. Mothers were aged between 39 and 51 and their daughters between 15 and 18.

Initial interviews revealed:

- The cognitive age gap between mothers and daughters was smaller than the difference in chronological age. Since daughters reported parity between chronological and cognitive ages, this was down to mothers feeling younger.
- Most mothers and daughters considered their tastes similar and this prompted them to shop for clothes and fashion accessories together. Some reported sharing such items.
- Many mothers rely on their daughters to learn what is trendy.
- Evidence that daughters influence their mother's consumption of fashion items, although some reported that influence occurs the other way. The latter belief was corroborated by mother responses.
- Neither mothers nor their daughters believed they were influenced by celebrities or other stars. Daughters reported school friends were more influential. The authors suggest participants might have felt that admitting to celebrity influence would be perceived as a weakness. An anonymous questionnaire could have produced different results.
- Some daughters reported taking notice of advertisements but mothers did not. This supports the notion of expert adolescents keeping their mothers informed.
- Both parties considered their relationships as friendly, with mothers adopting a more authoritative role where necessary.

Joint interviews confirmed the above findings and also revealed:

- A significant increase in shared consumption and usage when mother and daughter are of a comparable size.
- Mothers were reluctant to share their daughter's clothes that they considered too provocative.
- Some mothers considered their daughters to have a credible opinion on fashion and were consequently likelier to be swayed by their views. A possible relationship between this perceived credibility and cognitive age was also noted.

Observations of in-store shopping activities further corroborated these indications. It was noted, for instance, that mothers sought the opinion of their daughters when they perceived them as credible. In addition, the similarity of consumption behavior between mother and teenage daughter was frequently evident and even noticed by a store assistant in one case.

Implications for marketing and further research

The knowledge that teenage girls can function as role models for their mothers can be exploited by designers and marketing managers. For example, it may be possible to design products that appeal to both mother and daughter alike subject to allowing for difference in body shapes and evident concerns among mothers about some clothes being too provocative.

A narrowing of the cognitive age gap together with the friendly mother-daughter relations might be incorporated into marketing themes. Depicting them out shopping together is one idea. Marketers should, however, recognize that mothers do continue to enjoy some influence over their daughters' consumption of expressive products. Messages in this respect could emphasize the friendliness, while also acknowledging that mother may have the final say. Gavish *et al.* believe that such advertisements will be most effective when targeted at both parties.

Growing anecdotal evidence suggests that children are now maturing earlier and future studies could examine the influence of younger daughters. Similar research into father-son relations is another possible option to pursue. The potential for cultural influence is recognized and the authors point out the need for further research before any generalizations can be assumed. Israel was selected for the present study and additional work may, for example, consider cultures that differ in respect of such as power distance, masculinity-femininity, and uncertainty avoidance. Other factors to explore include peer influence and brand loyalty.

(A précis of the article "A qualitative study of mother-adolescent daughter-vicarious role model consumption interactions". Supplied by Marketing Consultants for Emerald.)

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