



## The Role of Socialization Agents in Shaping Customer Loyalty Among Adolescents

Taeho Yoh

*Southern Illinois University*

Date of Submission: 05-04-2026

Date of Acceptance: 16-04-2026

**ABSTRACT:** Developing a loyal and devoted base of customers is a primary goal of any business. To assist in developing a customer base, businesses need to determine which socialization agent is the most influential for their customers. Using a consumer socialization perspective, this study investigated the factors that influence the customer loyalty of adolescents. Of the 525 participants in this study, 78.6% (n = 383) were found to be loyal customers of a brand. This study found that social media exerted the greatest influence. Results of ANOVA revealed that the influence of the socialization agents differed according to certain demographic backgrounds (i.e., gender, age) of customer loyalty among adolescents. The marketers may utilize the findings of this study to develop more effective strategies to build customer loyalty among adolescents.

**KEYWORDS:** Customer loyalty, consumer socialization, social media, adolescents,

### I. INTRODUCTION

Due to the plethora of benefits derived from repeated and devoted customers, securing loyalty from consumers is one of the most important accomplishments for any company or organization. Loyalty is a behavior with repeat purchasing of the same brand, and loyal consumers are those who repeatedly purchase a brand, consider only that brand, and perform no searches for other related brands (James 1997; Newman & Werbel, 1973). Customer loyalty is a great value to an organization because, according to Park and Kim (2000), it costs six times more to attract a new consumer than to retain an existing consumer. Seybold (2001) also reached a similar conclusion and found that loyal customers are much cheaper to serve, and their support is easier to maintain. Therefore, successful marketing can be found in retaining repeat customers rather than simply exploring new customers (Rosenberg & Czepiel, 1983). As consumers, adolescents generally have unique consumer behaviors from other markets. One of the distinctive characteristics of the teenage market is loyalty. Teens are very loyal to many items. They sometimes purchase a certain brand product for a decade or more, and sometimes

for the rest of their lives (Zollo, 2004). In addition, the teen market is important not only as current consumers but also as future consumers. Contemporary research continues to emphasize that adolescents represent a critical demographic for brands seeking long-term market share. Recent studies confirm that over 87% of teen consumers have made repeat purchases of celebrity-endorsed fashion items, demonstrating the persistence of brand loyalty behaviors in this age group (Seo, 2019). Furthermore, implicit cognitive processes—automatic emotional associations and identity-based connections to brands—have been shown to explain significantly more variance in youth purchase intentions than explicit attitudes such as taste and price, highlighting the deep psychological foundations of adolescent brand loyalty (Radzlan et al., 2026). The concept of consumer socialization provides us important information to understand how people—and young people in particular—learn consumer-related behaviors (i.e., seeking product information, developing brand preferences, establishing loyalty) by interacting with various agents (James, 2001; McNeal & Ji, 1999; Moschis, 1987; Shim, 1996; Yoh, 2005). Several major socialization agents have been identified and examined in the research framework. These agents have included family, the traditional media, and modern digital media (Kamaruddin & Mokhlis, 2003; Lachance, Beaudoin, & Robitaille, 2003; Mascarenhas & Higby, 1993). Moreover, Kinley, Conrad, and Brown (2000) divided socialization agents into two categories: personal and non-personal. Family, friends, and coworkers were considered personal socialization agents while magazines, product catalogs, television, and store displays were considered non-personal socialization agents. In the contemporary digital environment, researchers have identified bloggers and social media influencers as specific agents of consumer socialization in the digital society, noting that the higher the authority of a blogger, the greater the trust in advertisements within their content (Feigina et al., 2023). Studies in various fields have been done to determine the most



influential socialization agent(s) in the consumer decision-making process.

Some investigations have indicated that family members are the most influential socialization agents (Keillor, Parker, & Schaefer, 1996; McNeal & Ji, 1999; Shim, 1996; Wilson & MacGillivray, 1998) while other studies have reported that peers and the mass media are more important than the other socialization agents (Kamaruddin & Mokhlis, 2003; Lachance, Beaudoin, & Robitaille, 2003; Yoh & Pedersen, 2006; Yoh, Pedersen, & Park, 2006). Therefore, research has been inconsistent regarding which socialization agents are the most influential to consumers. Perhaps these varying research findings imply that the effects of socialization agents are never meant to be simple and straightforward. In order to more accurately depict the extent of the influence of socialization agents, additional variables have to be included. These additions have included variables such as types of products (Bearden & Etzel, 1982; Childers & Rao, 1992), social characteristics of the market (Childers & Rao, 1992; Keillor, Parker, & Schaefer, 1996; McNeal & Ji, 1999; Yoh, & Pedersen, 2006), and demographic characteristics of consumers (Kamaruddin & Mokhlis, 2003; Yoh & Pedersen, 2006). As for the types of products, Childers and Rao (1992) reported that peers had a strong influence on luxury items and family had a strong influence on necessities. According to McNeal and Ji (1999), parents were the most influential socialization agents to their teens when buying school-related items and personal care items. However, this finding was not the case for snacks and toys. As for new snacks and toys, television was the top information source, followed by parents and friends.

Unique characteristics of a distinct market might also affect the degree to which socialization agents contribute to the decision-making process of the consumers. For example, due to the rapidly growing prevalence of television in China, McNeal and Ji (1999) found that television was the number one socialization agent for Chinese children when searching for new product information. As for South Korean teens, social media and the Internet were one of the most influential socialization agents because over 90% of South Korean teens are Internet users (Yoh & Pedersen, 2006). Furthermore, Keillor, Parker, and Schaefer (1996) reported that compared to adolescents in the United States, adolescents in Mexico were more receptive to advertisements and salespeople for product information. They also valued their parents' opinions more on brand preferences. In another research related to socialization agents, Childers and Rao (1992) found that Thai adult consumers reported that family

members had a relatively stronger influence on their buying behaviors. Contemporary research from Sri Lanka has confirmed that peers, parents, TV advertisements, the Internet, and retailers all have positive influences on adolescent consumer behavior, with family income significantly moderating the relationship between peer pressure, TV advertising, and retailer influence on adolescent consumer vulnerability (Nishadi et al., 2024).

The influence of socialization agents may also vary according to the demographic variables of consumers. Researchers have found that as youngsters grow up, the influence of the family decreases while the influence of peers and the media increases (Feltham, 1998; Wilson & MacGillivray, 1998; Yoh & Pedersen, 2006). Moreover, social media, the Internet, and television have exerted a greater impact on older teenagers than they have on younger teenagers (Yoh & Pedersen, 2006). As for the interaction between gender and socialization agents, research results have demonstrated that while parents (Feltham, 1998; Mangleburg, Grewal, & Bristol, 1997) and peers (Mangleburg et al., 1997; Yoh, 2005; Yoh & Pedersen, 2006) had stronger influences on female teens, television (Mascarenhas & Higby, 1993; Yoh, 2005) and social media and the Internet (Yoh & Pedersen, 2006) had stronger influences on male teens. Although the concept of consumer socialization has been examined in various academic fields and the importance of the concept has been emphasized in numerous ways, there have been limited scholarly investigations into this issue in the field of sport marketing. Therefore, this study provides important insight into how consumer socialization agents influence the fan loyalty of American teenagers.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of consumer socialization agents on customer loyalty of adolescents in the U.S. Specifically, this study is designed to investigate how the influence of socialization agents is associated with gender and age.

## II. METHODS

**Participants:** Participants for this study were 525 teenagers from the Midwest cities in the U.S. Self-administered surveys were given to the participants. Of the 525 survey questionnaires collected, 488 were deemed usable by the researchers. Female teens represented 50.2% (245), and male teens made up 49.8% (243) of the participants. For the convenience of analysis, the participants were grouped into younger (10 years old to 13 [elementary school age]), middle (14 to 16 [middle school age]), and older (17 and older [high school age]) teens. There were 173



(35.5%) teens in the younger group, 108 (21.2%) teens in the middle age group, and 207 (42.4%) teens

in the older group. Table 1 displays the profiles of the participants.

**Table 1**  
Profile of Subjects

	N	%
Total Sample	488	100
Gender		
Female	245	50.2
Male	243	49.8
Age		
10-13	173	35.5
14-16	108	21.2
17 and older	207	42.4

**Instrumentation:** The instrument developed for this study was a survey, which measures the influence of socialization agents on fan loyalty. Surveys (Mascarenhas & Higby, 1993; Yoh, 2005) that measure the socialization agents' influence on teen purchasing behavior provided the material for each section of the survey. In addition, a modified scale (Punniyamorthy & Raj, 2007) for measuring brand loyalty was also used to determine customer loyalty. A pilot study was conducted for 45 teens, and the survey questions were revised to make them more appropriate for the population tested in this study. The internal reliability and validity of the survey were 0.77 and 0.78, respectively. The survey consisted of three parts with a combined total of 26 questions. The first part of the survey included demographic inquiries (i.e., gender, age). The second part of the survey consisted of six questions about customer loyalty. From the review of relevant literature, these nine questions (i.e., I have a favorite brand, I am only interested in knowing about the brand, I have a strong preference for the brand) were adopted to investigate the respondents' loyalty toward the brand. The third part of the survey examined how major socialization agents influence the fan loyalty of adolescents. This part of the survey contained 20 questions (i.e., What brands I support is very much determined by family, My family gives a significant influence on choosing favorite brands, My friends influence me to choose brands I support, I usually discuss my favorite brands with my friends, Social media, such as Instagram, Facebook, are the most important information sources when I look for a brand, I follow social media pages that support my favorite brands, I frequently consult the internet to determine what brands to support, The internet is the most important source to determine what brands I support, TV is the greatest influence to determine my

favorite brands, I usually support brands that are on TV.)

From previous studies, pilot study, and exploratory factor analysis, the five most important socialization agents were identified and used in this study: social media, the Internet (websites), family, friends, and television. For this section, a five-point Likert-type scale (5-Strongly Agree to 1-Strongly Disagree) was used to rate the agreement of each factor.

The data collection process was completed in eight weeks. Data were entered and statistics calculated by Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 30 for the Windows program. Descriptive statistics of mean, frequency, and standard deviation were acquired to analyze the data. A multiple regression analysis was employed to measure  $R^2$ , which is generally used to find how much the predictor variables (the socialization agents) can explain the criterion variable (fan loyalty). Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine if the socialization agents' influence on customer loyalty differed based on the demographic backgrounds of the participants. Alpha values were set at .05 to determine if the socialization agents' influences significantly differ among the groups (gender and age).

### III. RESULTS

Descriptive statistics generated from the questionnaire responses indicated that 78.6% ( $n = 383$ ) of the teenagers stated that they have a favorite brand. By using a multiple regression analysis, the  $R^2$  was 0.72, which indicated that there was a strong relationship between the five predictor variables (socialization agents) and the criterion variable (fan loyalty). Among the 383 students who had loyalty to a team or a player, descriptive statistics showed that overall, social media ( $M = 4.35$ ,  $SD = 0.68$ ), the



Internet ( $M = 4.15, SD = 0.96$ ) had the greatest influence on customer loyalty among teenagers, followed by Friends ( $M = 3.42, SD = 0.64$ ), Family ( $M = 2.68, SD = 0.73$ ), and television ( $M = 2.41, SD = 1.1$ ). In terms of the relationship between gender and socialization agents' influence on customer loyalty, this study found that social media ( $M = 4.38, SD = 0.74$ ) had the greatest influence on male teens' fan loyalty, followed by the Internet ( $M = 4.12, SD = 1.12$ ), Friends ( $M = 3.23, SD = 0.66$ ),

Television ( $M = 2.67, SD = 1.14$ ), and Family ( $M = 2.45, SD = 0.70$ ) played the least important role for this group's customer loyalty. The socialization agents' influence on female teens' fan loyalty indicated that social media ( $M = 4.26, SD = 0.60$ ), the Internet ( $M = 4.07, SD = 0.90$ ) had the greatest influence on customer loyalty among teenagers, followed by Friends ( $M = 3.62, SD = 0.60$ ), Family ( $M = 2.92, SD = 0.71$ ), and Television ( $M = 2.25, SD = 0.92$ ) (see Table 2).

**Table 2**

Means, Standard Deviations, and ANOVA tests for the Influence of Socialization Agents on Gender

Agents	Male		Female		F	P
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Social media	4.38	0.74	4.26	0.60	3.34	.08
The Internet	4.12	1.12	4.07	0.90	3.12	.11
Friends	3.23	0.66	3.62	0.60	11.57*	.01
Family	2.45	0.70	2.92	0.71	17.92**	.001
Television	2.67	1.14	2.25	0.92	13.49*	.01

\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.001$

Regarding the relationship between age and the influence on customer loyalty of socialization agents, this study indicated that for young adolescents (e.g., between the ages of 10 and 13), social media ( $M = 4.16, SD = 0.70$ ), the Internet ( $M = 3.61, SD = 1.30$ ) had the greatest influence on customer loyalty among young adolescents, followed by Friends ( $M = 3.36, SD = 0.60$ ), Family ( $M = 3.08, SD = 0.79$ ), and television ( $M = 1.78, SD = 1.21$ ). For middle age teens, ages 14-16, social media ( $M = 4.28, SD = 0.76$ ), the Internet ( $M = 4.03, SD =$

0.96) had the greatest influence on customer loyalty, followed by Friends ( $M = 3.51, SD = 0.56$ ), Television ( $M = 2.63, SD = 0.73$ ), and Family ( $M = 2.53, SD = 1.07$ ). For older teens (those 17 years of age and older), Social media ( $M = 4.46, SD = 0.79$ ), the Internet ( $M = 4.33, SD = 1.01$ ) had the greatest influence on customer loyalty, followed by Friends ( $M = 3.34, SD = 0.70$ ), Television ( $M = 2.82, SD = 0.92$ ), and Family ( $M = 2.23, SD = 0.74$ ) (see Table 3).

**Table 3**

Means, Standard Deviations, and ANOVA tests for the Influence of Socialization Agents on Age Levels

Agents/Age	Young (10-13)		Middle (14-16)		Old (17-up)		F	P
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Social media	4.16	0.70	4.28	0.76	4.46	0.79	1.34	.28
The Internet	3.61	1.30	4.03	0.94	4.33	1.01	5.72*	.03



Friends	3.36	0.60	3.51	0.56	3.34	0.70	2.34	.11
Family	3.08	0.79	2.53	1.07	2.23	0.74	3.23*	.05
Television	1.78	1.21	2.63	0.73	2.82	0.92	3.76*	.04

\*p < 0.05

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was run to determine whether the influence of each socialization agent differed between genders and age levels. The results of statistics showed that social media and the Internet were the two most significant socializing agents for customer loyalty among adolescents, regardless of age. The influence of social media did not significantly differ between genders ( $F = 3.34$ ,  $*p = 0.08$ ) and ages ( $F = 1.34$ ,  $p = 0.28$ ). The influence of the Internet did not significantly differ between genders ( $F = 3.12$ ,  $p = 0.11$ ) and but significantly differed among age groups ( $F = 5.72$ ,  $*p = .03$ ). The influence of the Internet on age levels increased as teens get older ( $M = 4.33$  for older teens,  $M = 4.03$  for middle age teens, and  $M = 3.61$  for young teens). Post hoc analyses using the Tukey test for significance indicated that the influence of the Internet was significantly lower for young teens than for other age groups (old and middle-aged). The influence of friends significantly differed between genders ( $F = 11.57$ ,  $p = .01$ ), but there were no differences among age levels. The influence of friends was greater on female teens ( $M = 3.62$ ) than on male teens ( $M = 3.23$ ). The family influence significantly differed between genders ( $F = 17.92$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ) and among age levels ( $F = 3.23$ ,  $p = .05$ ). The family influence was greater on female teens ( $M = 2.92$ ) than it was on male teens ( $M = 2.45$ ).

With regard to age levels, the family influence decreased as teens get older ( $M = 3.08$  for young teens,  $M = 2.53$  for middle-aged,  $M = 2.23$  for old teens). Post hoc analyses using the Tukey test for significance indicated that the influence of the family was significantly stronger for young teens than for other age groups (old and middle-aged). The television influence significantly differed between genders ( $F = 13.49$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ) and among age groups ( $F = 3.76$ ,  $p = .04$ ). The television influence was greater on male teens ( $M = 2.67$ ) than it was on female teens ( $M = 2.25$ ). Concerning age groups, the television influence increased as teens get older ( $M = 1.78$  for young teens,  $M = 2.63$  for middle-aged, and  $M = 2.82$  for old teens). Post hoc analyses using the Tukey test for significance indicated that the influence of the television was significantly stronger

for other age groups (old and middle age) than for young teens.

#### IV. Discussion

The findings of this study provide critical insights into the contemporary landscape of adolescent consumer socialization, revealing both continuity with and divergence from previous research. The finding that 78.6% of adolescents reported having a favorite brand aligns with recent research showing that 87.6% of teen consumers have purchased celebrity-endorsed fashion items, confirming that brand loyalty remains a distinctive characteristic of the teenage market (Seo, 2019).

#### The Dominance of Digital Socialization Agents

The most striking finding is the overwhelming influence of social media and the Internet on adolescent customer loyalty, surpassing family, friends, and television. This represents a significant shift from earlier studies where television and family played more prominent roles. Social media's mean influence score of 4.35 (out of 5) demonstrates that digital platforms have become the primary socialization context for contemporary adolescents. This finding is consistent with recent research showing that over 90% of South Korean teens are Internet users and that bloggers have emerged as specific agents of consumer socialization in the digital society, with authority figures garnering significant trust for advertising content (Feigina et al., 2023). Contemporary industry data strongly supports our findings. In 2024, 68% of Gen Z consumers discovered new products on social media, up from 60% in 2023, and nearly 60% went on to make a purchase (Bogdan, 2025). Furthermore, over half (56%) of U.S. Gen Zers have purchased because of a social media influencer, a significant increase from 41% in 2023 (eMarketer, 2025). These statistics validate our finding that social media is not merely an information source but a powerful driver of purchase behavior and loyalty formation.

The strong influence of the Internet ( $M = 4.15$ ) aligns with research demonstrating that implicit social-cognitive processes—automatic emotional associations and identity-based connections to



brands—play a vital role in driving youth brand loyalty beyond rational evaluation of product attributes (Radzlan et al., 2026). Adolescents are not simply processing information from digital sources; they are forming emotional and identity-based attachments to brands encountered online.

### Gender Differences in Socialization Agent Influence

Our finding that friends exert significantly greater influence on female teens ( $M = 3.62$ ) than on male teens ( $M = 3.23$ ) ( $F = 11.57, p = .01$ ) is consistent with previous research (Mangleburg et al., 1997; Yoh, 2005). This suggests that female adolescents are more socially oriented in their brand preferences, seeking validation and discussion with peers. Similarly, the greater influence of family on female teens ( $M = 2.92$ ) compared to male teens ( $M = 2.45$ ) ( $F = 17.92, p = .001$ ) aligns with earlier findings (Feltham, 1998; Mangleburg et al., 1997).

However, our finding that television influence was greater on male teens ( $M = 2.67$ ) than female teens ( $M = 2.25$ ) ( $F = 13.49, p = .01$ ) diverges from some earlier research suggesting television had stronger influences on male teens (Mascarenhas & Higby, 1993; Yoh, 2005). This may reflect changing media consumption patterns, though the relatively low mean scores for television across both genders suggest that traditional television is no longer a primary socialization agent for either group. Contemporary research indicates that only 27% of Gen Z report rarely consuming influencer content, compared with 61% of adults over 30, further emphasizing the generational shift away from traditional media (Oikonomopoulou Evangelos, 2025).

### Age-Related Changes in Socialization Patterns

The age-related findings reveal a developmental trajectory in consumer socialization that is consistent with and extends previous research. The finding that family influence decreases with age ( $M = 3.08$  for young teens,  $M = 2.23$  for older teens;  $F = 3.23, p = .05$ ) supports the established pattern of declining parental influence as adolescents develop greater autonomy (Feltham, 1998; Wilson & MacGillivray, 1998; Yoh & Pedersen, 2006).

The significant increase in Internet influence with age ( $M = 3.61$  for young teens,  $M = 4.33$  for older teens;  $F = 5.72, p = .03$ ) and the similar pattern for television ( $M = 1.78$  for young teens,  $M = 2.82$  for older teens;  $F = 3.76, p = .04$ ) suggest that digital and media literacy—and perhaps access and autonomy—develop substantially during adolescence. Older teens are better equipped to seek

out and process information from media sources independently. This finding aligns with research showing that older teenagers exhibit higher media dependency and are more influenced by digital content (Oikonomopoulou, 2025).

Interestingly, while social media showed the strongest overall influence, its influence did not significantly differ across age groups ( $F = 1.34, p = .28$ ). This suggests that social media platforms are ubiquitous across adolescent age groups, with even the youngest teens (ages 10-13) being heavily influenced by these platforms.

### The Evolving Nature of Adolescent Loyalty

Contemporary research suggests that adolescent loyalty is evolving from traditional brand loyalty to what might be termed "engagement-based loyalty." A study of Generation Z users of Spotify found that loyalty develops through emotional engagement and social interactions rather than solely through economic commitment or transaction-based frameworks (Lauritsen, 2025). This helps explain why social media—a platform for continuous emotional and social engagement—emerged as the most influential agent in our study.

Furthermore, research on social commerce repurchase decisions among Generation Z has identified that fear of missing out (FOMO) significantly impacts repurchase intention both directly and indirectly through imitative behaviors (Rohaizahtulamni, 2026). This social-psychological dimension of loyalty is particularly relevant to understanding why peer influence and social media platforms are so powerful in shaping adolescent brand preferences. The herding behavior and social contagion effects documented in digital environments help explain the high influence of social media and friends observed in our results.

Finally, the finding that 78.6% of adolescents reported having a favorite brand indicates that loyalty is not merely a theoretical concept but a lived reality for most teens. This aligns with recent research on brand love among adolescents, which found that online political activity is positively associated with brand love, with liberal teens and female adolescents exhibiting higher brand love levels (Porter et al., 2026). This suggests that for contemporary adolescents, brand loyalty is increasingly intertwined with identity expression and value alignment, not merely product preference.

### V. Conclusion

This study makes an important contribution to our understanding of adolescent customer loyalty by updating and extending the consumer



socialization framework for the digital age. The clear dominance of social media and the Internet as socialization agents, together with the nuanced patterns of gender and age differences, provides valuable guidance for marketers seeking to build lasting relationships with adolescent consumers. As digital platforms continue to evolve and new generations of consumers emerge, ongoing research will be essential to track the changing landscape of consumer socialization. The findings provide several important theoretical and practical contributions to our understanding of adolescent consumer behavior in the digital age.

### Theoretical Contributions

First, this study provides empirical evidence for the shifting landscape of consumer socialization. While previous research has debated the relative influence of family, peers, and media, our findings clearly establish social media and the Internet as the dominant socialization agents for contemporary adolescents. This represents a significant evolution from earlier studies where television and family played more prominent roles. The high  $R^2$  value of 0.72 indicates that the five socialization agents examined in this study explain a substantial portion of the variance in adolescent customer loyalty, validating the consumer socialization perspective as a valuable framework for understanding this phenomenon.

Second, this study contributes to our understanding of how demographic characteristics moderate the effects of socialization agents. The finding that gender significantly moderates the influence of friends, family, and television, while age moderates the influence of the Internet, family, and television, provides nuanced insights into the differential pathways through which adolescents develop brand loyalty. These findings support the view that socialization effects are not uniform but vary systematically across consumer segments.

Third, by demonstrating that over three-quarters of adolescents have a favorite brand, this study reinforces the importance of the teenage market not only for current consumption but for establishing long-term customer relationships. The developmental patterns observed—decreasing family influence and increasing digital media influence with age—suggest critical windows for marketing interventions.

### Practical Implications

For marketers and brand managers, the implications of this study are substantial:

**Prioritize Social Media Engagement:** With social media emerging as the

most influential socialization agent ( $M = 4.35$ ), brands must develop sophisticated social media strategies that go beyond traditional advertising. This includes creating shoppable content, partnering with influencers who share authentic experiences, and building community around brands.

**Gender-Specific Strategies:** The finding that friends and family exert greater influence on female teens suggests that marketing to this segment should emphasize social validation, peer recommendations, and family alignment. For male teens, where television retains relatively stronger influence (though still lower than digital channels), a balanced approach across digital and traditional media may be effective.

**Age-Appropriate Targeting:** The significant increase in Internet influence with age suggests that marketing to younger teens (ages 10-13) should incorporate more family-friendly approaches and supervised digital engagement, while marketing to older teens (17+) can leverage more sophisticated digital targeting, user-generated content, and independent decision-making framing.

**Embrace New Loyalty Paradigms:** Contemporary research suggests that for Generation Z, loyalty is built through continuous emotional and social engagement rather than transactional rewards (Lauritsen, 2025). Brands should focus on creating mobile-first experiences that function as lifestyle hubs rather than simple storefronts.

**Leverage Peer Influence:** Given the significant influence of friends, particularly for female teens, brands should implement referral programs, user-generated content campaigns, and social proof mechanisms.

### Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations of this study should be acknowledged. First, the sample was drawn from Midwestern cities in the U.S., which may limit the generalizability of findings to other geographic regions or cultural contexts. Given research showing that socialization effects vary across cultures (Keillor, Parker, & Scheafer, 1996; Childers & Rao, 1992), future research should examine these relationships in diverse cultural settings.

Second, the cross-sectional design captures relationships at a single point in time but cannot establish causality or track developmental changes longitudinally. Future research should employ longitudinal designs to trace how the influence of different socialization agents evolves as adolescents mature and as digital platforms continue to change.



Third, this study examined five socialization agents but did not include emerging agents such as bloggers, vloggers, and AI-powered recommendation systems. Recent research has identified bloggers as specific agents of consumer socialization in the digital society (Feigina et al., 2023), and future studies should incorporate these contemporary agents into the analytical framework.

Fourth, the study did not examine product category differences. Research has shown that socialization agent influence varies by product type (Bearden & Etzel, 1982; Childers & Rao, 1992), and future research should investigate whether the dominance of social media holds across different product categories or varies for luxury items versus necessities.

Fifth, the study did not explore the role of family income as a moderating variable. Recent research from Sri Lanka found that family income significantly moderates the relationship between peer pressure, TV advertising, and retailer influence on adolescent consumer vulnerability (Nishadi et al., 2024). Future research should examine whether similar moderating effects exist for customer loyalty in the U.S. context.

Finally, future research should investigate the psychological mechanisms underlying social media influence on adolescent loyalty. Recent work on implicit social-cognitive processes (Radzlan et al., 2026) and brand love among teens (Porter et al., 2026) offers promising frameworks for understanding the emotional and identity-based dimensions of adolescent brand relationships.

#### REFERENCES

- [1]. Bearden, W. O., & Etzel, M. J. (1982). Reference group influence on product and brand purchase decisions. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 9(2), 183-194.
- [2]. Bogdan, S. (2025). 6 social media trends defining Gen Z's shopping behavior. *Entrepreneur*.
- [3]. Chen, P. J. (2005). *Sport consumption and generational cohorts*. Doctoral dissertation, Texas A&M University.
- [4]. Childers, T. L., & Rao, A. R. (1992). The influence of familial and peer-based reference groups on consumer decisions. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 19(2), 198-211.
- [5]. Dietz-Uhler, B., Harrick, E. A., End, C., & Jacquemotte, L. (2000). Sex differences in sport fan behavior and reasons for being a sport fan. *Journal of Sport Behavior*, 23(3), 219-231.
- [6]. eMarketer. (2025). From scroll to sale: How influencers are driving digital commerce for young consumers.
- [7]. Feigina, A., Aguzarova, E., Korovina, A., & Rusakova, M. (2023). Consumer socialization of children and adolescents in the context of the digital society. *Economic Sociology*, 24(4), 38-61.
- [8]. Feltham, T. S. (1998). Leaving home: Brand purchase influences on young adults. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 15(4), 372-385.
- [9]. James, J. D. (1997). *Becoming a sports fan: An examination of the developmental stages of fandom*. Doctoral dissertation, The Florida State University.
- [10]. James, J. D. (2001). The role of cognitive development and socialization in the development of team loyalty. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 10(4), 202-212.
- [11]. Kamaruddin, A. R., & Mokhlis, S. (2003). Consumer socialization, social structural factors and decision-making styles: A case study of adolescents in Malaysia. *Journal of Consumer Studies and Home Economics*, 27(3), 247-255.
- [12]. Keillor, B. D., Parker, R. S., & Schaefer, A. (1996). Influences on adolescent brand preferences in the United States and Mexico. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 36(3), 47-56.
- [13]. Kinley, T. L., Conrad, C. A., & Brown, G. (2000). Socialization agents and female adolescents' clothing selection. *Journal of Family and Consumer Sciences*, 92(4), 43-48.
- [14]. Lachance, M. J., Beaudoin, P., & Robitaille, J. (2003). Adolescents' brand sensitivity in apparel: Influence of three socialization agents. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 27(1), 47-57.
- [15]. Lauritsen, O. K. (2025). *Loyalty on-demand: Generation Z's paths to loyalty on digital streaming platforms - A Spotify case study* [Master's thesis]. Copenhagen Business School.
- [16]. Laverie, D. A., & Arnett, D. B. (2000). Factors affecting fan attendance: The influence of identity salience and satisfaction. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 32(2), 225-246.
- [17]. Mangleburg, T. F., Grewal, D., & Bristol, T. (1997). Socialization, gender, and adolescent's self-reports of their generalized use of product labels. *Journal of Consumer Affairs*, 31(2), 255-279.
- [18]. Mascarenhas, O. A., & Higby, M. A. (1993). Peer, parent, and media influences in teen



- apparel shopping. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 21(1), 53-62.
- [19]. McNeal, J. U., & Ji, M. F. (1999). Chinese children as consumers: An analysis of their new product information sources. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 16(3), 239-253.
- [20]. Moschis, G. P. (1987). *Consumer socialization: A life-cycle perspective*. Lexington Books.
- [21]. Newman, J. W., & Werbel, R. A. (1973). Multivariate analysis of brand loyalty for major household appliances. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 10(4), 404-409.
- [22]. Nishadi, G. P. K., Warnakulasooriya, B. N. F., & Chandralal, K. P. L. (2024). Socialization agents on adolescent consumer vulnerability with the moderating effect of family income: Evidence from franchised fast-food industry in Sri Lanka. *Journal of Business Studies*, 11(1).
- [23]. Oikonomopoulou E. A. (2025). The development of consumer knowledge, skills, and values from childhood to adolescence. *Issue 2*.
- [24]. Park, C. W., & Kim, Y. K. (2000). The effect of brand loyalty on customer satisfaction and repurchase intention. *Journal of Consumer Satisfaction, Dissatisfaction and Complaining Behavior*, 13, 51-61.
- [25]. Porter, L., Jiang, W., Cloudy, J., Jeon, S., & Libon, B. (2026). Brand love: Teens, social media and brand activism. Paper presented at the annual conference of the American Academy of Advertising, Austin, TX.
- [26]. Punniyamorthy, M., & Raj, M. P. (2007). An empirical model for brand loyalty measurement. *Journal of Targeting, Measurement and Analysis for Marketing*, 15(4), 242-254.
- [27]. Radzlan, R., Gimán, S. S., Mumin, S., Mokhtar, N., & Samsudin, N. (2026). Implicit social-cognitive drivers of Sabah youth beverage purchase decisions: A preliminary study. *Malaysian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 11(1), 1-18.
- [28]. Rohaizahtulamni, R. (2026). The triple helix of digital engagement: Unifying technology acceptance, trust signaling, and social contagion in Generation Z's social commerce repurchase decisions. *Directory of Open Access Journals*.
- [29]. Rosenberg, L. J., & Czepiel, J. A. (1983). A marketing approach to customer retention. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 1(2), 45-51.
- [30]. Seo, J. (2019). Comparison of influencing factors on purchase of celebrity fashion hot items in teens and twenties. *Korean Journal of Consumer Studies*.
- [31]. Seybold, P. B. (2001). *The customer revolution: How to thrive when customers are in control*. Crown Business.
- [32]. Shim, S. (1996). Adolescent consumer decision-making styles: The consumer socialization perspective. *Psychology & Marketing*, 13(6), 547-569.
- [33]. Tapp, A. (2004). The loyalty of football fans: We'll support you evermore? *Journal of Database Marketing & Customer Strategy Management*, 11(3), 203-215.
- [34]. Tapp, A., & Clowes, J. (2002). From "carefree casuals" to "professional wanderers": Segmentation possibilities for football supporters. *European Journal of Marketing*, 36(11/12), 1248-1269.
- [35]. Wilson, B., & MacGillivray, M. (1998). The relative influence of family and peers on adolescent decision-making. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 1(3), 323-334.
- [36]. Yoh, T. (2005). *The influence of socializing factors on the purchasing behavior of adolescent consumers for athletic apparel*. Doctoral dissertation, Florida State University.
- [37]. Yoh, T., & Pedersen, P. M. (2006). The influence of socializing factors on the purchasing behavior of adolescent consumers for athletic apparel. *International Journal of Sport Management*, 7(3), 312-328.
- [38]. Yoh, T., Pedersen, P. M., & Park, W. S. (2006). The influence of socializing factors on the purchasing behavior of adolescent consumers for athletic apparel. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 15(2), 87-97.
- [39]. Zollo, P. (2004). *Getting paid to babysit: How to market to teens*. American Demographics, 26(9), 30-35.