



KIDS AND APPAREL PURCHASING: TOWARD AN UNDERSTANDING OF HOW KIDS BUY APPAREL

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Preadolescents (8 to 12-year-olds) are spending more money on consumer goods than at any other time in history. During this period children begin making product decisions and building a foundation of product knowledge. Information about this age group is necessary for retailers to understand and cater to this unique market segment and for researchers and educators to understand the unique role parents play in helping children become wiser consumers. The purpose of this research is to examine the extent to which conformity motivators influence shopping behavior among pre-adolescents, especially with regard to clothing purchase criteria and shopping independence. Overall, this research found that consumer socialization begins before adolescence. Data from this study demonstrate that preadolescents begin to use clothing to conform to peer groups as early as age 8. Also beginning at age 8, children reported going to the mall with friends as a form of recreational activity. Although more expensive clothing items were still widely purchased while with a parent, preadolescents shop and buy inexpensive items such as T-shirts, costume jewelry, and hats or caps while at the mall with friends. Quality was listed as the most important purchase criterion preadolescents look for when shopping for clothing. Style, price, and brand were ranked 2nd, 3rd, and 4th in clothing purchase criteria, respectively.