

## REFERENCE GROUP EFFECT IN THE CHOICE OF CONSUMER GOODS

Yrd. Doç. Dr. Sema TAPAN (\*)

The individual behaves in accordance with a frame of reference created by his social environment. Reference group theory formulates this dialectical relationship between man and society. The present study develops some practical generalizations about the effects of reference groups in the choice of consumer goods.

For the last sixty years the discipline of marketing has been trying to construct theoretical explanations of consumer behavior. These efforts range from classification schemes to process models. Classification schemes search for a theoretically correct but simple explanation of buyer behavior. (Copeland 1923; A.M.A Definitions Committee 1948, 1960; Holton 1958, 1959; Luck 1959; Aspinwall 1962; Bucklin 1963; Miracle 1965; Kaish 1967; Kleimnhagen 1967; Mayer, Mason and Gee 1971; Holbrook and Howard 1977; Murphy and Enis 1986). Some behavioral variables are implicit in these classifications, however they substantially lack in behavioral content relative to the process models. A multivariate decision process underlies the exchange behavior which is viewed as a system of interrelated purposive activities. (Howard 1963, 1977; Andreasen 1965; Nicosia 1966; Howard and Sheth 1969; Engel, Kollat and Blackwell 1968, 1978, 1982; Bettman 1979). The goal of the research reported in this article is to describe social effects on consumer behavior. The simplicity of classification schemes and the richness of the process models are combined in determining the effects of two types of reference groups (close membership and aspirational groups) in a five stage decision process for two product categories (shopping and convenience goods).

### A THEORY FROM SOCIOLOGY: REFERENCE GROUPS

Sociological literature emphasizes the importance of reference groups as determinants of behavior, attitudes, beliefs and opinions. The concept of reference group links the behavior of the individual with social and cultural systems by incorporating psychological

(\*) Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Öğretim Üyesi.



needs and social influences and pressures. The phenomena that the reference group concept expresses is as old as the human race. Moliere's *The Ridiculous Precieuses* is one of the numerous examples of social influence on human behavior that can be found in literature throughout history. The appearance of the concept in scientific literature dates back to 1890 (James). It was named and expanded during 1940's and early fifties, and its popularity increased rapidly (Hyman 1942, 1968; Stouffer et al. 1949; Newcomb 1947, 1967; Kelley 1947, 1955; Merton&Kitt 1950; Asch 1951; Sherif 1953, 1964, 1967; Festinger 1954; Shibutani 1955; Turner 1956; Charters and Newcomb 1958; Kelman 1958; Nelson 1961; Campbell 1964; Kuhn 1964; Kemper 1966, 1968; Denzin 1966; Stafford 1971). The concept was very attractive for scholars of various aspects of human behavior. "The concept appears in Australia, Israel and India, in studies of farmers, scientists, drunkards and newspapermen; it has been applied to problems of mental illness, formal organization, marketing and public relations, mass communication, acculturation, political behavior, consumer behavior, labor relations and juvenile delinquency as well as opinion formation" (Hyman and Singer 1968).

Reference group theory explains the relationship between man and society from the individuals standpoint. Throughout his life, the individual is exposed to various groups either by direct contact or through mass or personal channels of communication. Those groups which affect an individual's behavior and opinion are reference groups. The individual may or may not belong to these groups and the influence may be a result of direct or indirect contact with the group. He is influenced either by using the group in evaluating himself or others; or by conforming to group norms. The conformed norms may be real or attributed. The individual may also identify himself with the group. The group influence is a function of the individual's perceptions about the group. The groups to which the individual refers himself may be real or imaginary. The real groups may be primary or secondary depending on the amount of interaction between the group and the individual. His feelings about these groups may be varied. Some close membership groups are given, he belongs to them and may or may not be happy with his membership. There may be other groups to which he may strive to enter, or would not want to be associated with at all.

There is an extensive literature developed around reference groups and related concepts like roles subculture, symbolic interaction, relative deprivation, self, social mobility, socialization, alienation, lifestyle and personality. The effects of reference groups on behavior and attitudes have been empirically determined. Studies about group effects on voting behavior (Kaplan 1954), political affiliation (Mc Clo-



sky and Dahlgren 1964), medical innovation (Coleman, Katz and Menzel 1966), adolescent premarital sexual behavior (Reiss 1967, Mirande 1968), smoking behavior (Simon 1967), sex conduct norm violations (Kanin 1957) and on attitudes (Newcomb 1947, Siegel&Siegel 1957, Fendrich 1967) are examples.

The determination of the degree of influence on the individual and also the groups to which he refers himself has a great potential for predicting behavior, attitudes, self evaluations and aspirations. Reference group theory is a general and promising tool to this end. It incorporates the concepts cited earlier and provides a framework for prediction. The theory, however, have been criticized for being too inclusive (Jakson 1959), and for not being clear conceptually (Williams 1970). Methodological criticism stated that the research in the field did not detect exact significant others with valid and reliable tools (Woefel and Haller 1971). The lack of emphasis on the explanation of the consequences of referring to groups was also criticized (Runciman 1966).

#### **Reference Group Concept In Marketing**

Reference group influence is one the several variables used in marketing in attempts at appealing to specific target groups. Marketing management's common reliance on the fact that "status can be earned by achievement by those who can not claim status by right of birth" (Fisk 1967) is an example to this practice. The consumer behaviorist and the marketing manager both want to know the ways in which reference groups influence the individuals exchange behavior, "The question today is exactly how, in what way, and to what extent social factors influence consumer behavior" (Stafford 1966).

Like other behavioral variables, reference group influence is implicit in the primitive explanations of consumer behavior. In the process models, social influences are explicitly stated. For example, Howard and Sheth model (1969) treats reference groups as exogenous variables which are effective in consumer's comprehension of the features of a brand and his attitudes and purchase intention related to that brand. Later in his book on the application of the theory, Howard defines social structure as specified relationships between people and states that in limited problem solving it may effect attitudes, but in extended problem solving it may be effective in the strongest way (1977). In Engel, Kollat and Blackwell model, reference group effect is treated within the normative compliance factor which affects the consumer's choice through purchase intentions. Normative compliance is a function of reference groups, personality and life style. Reference groups have a direct effect on life style which effects personality and motives. The motives determine the evaluative criteria which



are used in assessing brands and products. They are also effective in recognizing a need (Engel, Blackweel and Kollat 1978).

The role of reference group influence is frequently expressed in marketing literature. "The consumers purchase behavior is a socially oriented process on which group norms, reference groups, roles and status have an important bearing" (Markin 1974). Personal influences in consumer behavior are more important than mass media (Kaz and Lazerfeld 1964) and products and services are social communication tools between the individual and significant others (Grubb and Grathwohl 1967). Many buying actions come from a desire to identify with a reference group (Venkatesan 1966). The number of empirical research that has been carried out on the topic, however is limited. This fact may be explained by two factors. The first is the complexity of the reference group theory and methodological difficulties in measuring social influence. The second factor is the development of process models which strongly emphasize the multivariate nature of consumer behavior. As stated earlier, however, models provide a framework in which the results of related research may fit in meaningfully. Investigation of one variable related to consumer behavior does not conflict with the multivariate nature of this behavior. The results of the available empirical research related to the study of reference groups in marketing and consumer behavior are summarized in Table 1. Except for the Cocaunougher and Bruce study (1971) all empirical reserach cited in Table 1 examine the effect of membership groups only, and attempts are made to classify products on the basis of susceptibility to group influence. The same product however, may vary in terms of susceptibility to group influence depending on the type of group operative. The present study examines how the nature of the group as well as the product may be effective in determining the degree of reference group effect.

The application of the reference group concept to practical problems of marketing requires the determination of reference group relevance in a certain situation, the identification of the groups and effective means of communication (Bourne 1957). The research efforts in the field however are limited due to the complexity of the phenomena. Operationalization of reference group influence is a major source of difficulty. Most of the research cited above have different operational definitions. The complexity of the phenomena leads to questions about "... the advantage of dealing with the concept of reference group as opposed to focusing on the mechanism through which it might affect behavior..." (Wind 1977). Given the present state of the explanation of reference group behavior in the behavioral sciences, concentrating on the consequences of this behavior may prove to be more fruitful. The study reported below derives some practical generalization about the effects of primary and secondary reference groups in the choice of consumer goods. A richness of analysis is attempted by including two types of reference groups in all stages of consumption decision process for both shopping and convenience goods.



TABLE 1  
EMPIRICAL STUDIES OF REFERENCE GROUP EFFECT IN CONSUMER CHOICE

Study	Research Design	Sample	Type of Group	Type	Product	Number	Contracts Used	Results
Lewin 1952	Experiment	House-wives	Membership/ informal	Convenience		1		Group discussion is effective in changing meat consumption habits.
Whyte Jr. 1954	Experiment (field)	Row house dwellers	Membership/ informal	Shopping		1	Luxury/ necessity/ information	Success of a product depends on information acquired from friends and relatives.
Bourne 1957	Experiment and secondary	Not specified	Membership/ informal	Convenience and shopping		16		Reference group effect may operate with respect to product alone or for both brand and product.
Stafford 1966	Experiment (field)	House-wives	Membership/ informal	Convenience		1	Group cohesive- ness/brand choice similarity	High degree of group cohesiveness increases the probability of members' conformity.
Venkatesen 1966	Experiment (lab)	University stu- dents	Membership/ informal	Shopping		1	Group norm/ conformity/ independence	Group pressure for compliant behavior is ineffective; the individual tends to conform in the absence of objective standards.
Arndt 1967	Experiment	Married Univer- sity students	Membership/ informal	Convenience (new product)		1	Social support/ risk reduction	Word of mouth has an important role in providing social support, risk reduction and acceptance of new products.
Witt 1969	Survey	University stu- dents	Membership/ informal	Shopping and convenience		1	Cohesiveness/ information on group behavior	Brand choice similarity is significantly related to group cohesiveness.

TABLE 1  
Continued

Author(s) and Year	Experiment	Married University students	Membership/informal	Shopping	Conformity/cohesiveness	Group effect in terms of brand choice similarity is not attributable to group cohesiveness.
Hansen 1970	Experiment	Married University students	Membership/informal	Shopping	5	Group effect in terms of brand choice similarity is not attributable to group cohesiveness.
Witt and Bruce 1970	Survey	University students	Membership/informal	Shopping and convenience	3	Products vary in susceptibility to group influence.
Coonaugher and Bruce 1971	Survey	University students	Aspirational	Specialty	1	Secondary groups are influential on the aspirations of university students.
Sireli 1972	Survey	Medical doctors	Membership/informal	Industrial	1	Opinion of friends is considered the second most important factor for the trial of new medicine.
Witt and Bruce 1972	Survey	House-wives	Membership/informal	Convenience	7	Perceived group expertise, product risk and need for social approval contribute positively to reference group influence.
Woodside 1972	Survey	House-wives	Membership/informal	Shopping	8	Group discussion is used as a risk reduction tool.
Koc 1972	Survey	House-wives	Membership/informal	Shopping	1	Friends are the most effective source of influence in the search stage of the decision process for durables.
Burnkrant and Couseneau 1975	Experiment	House-wives	Membership/informal	Convenience	1	Consumers use others' product evaluations as product information however they attribute brand choice similarity to product excellence.



TABLE 1  
Continued

Moschis 1976	Survey	Female cosmetic users	Membership/informal	Shopping	1	Reflective-comparative appraisal	Group influence is affected by the similarity between the individual and the group.
Park and Lessig 1977	Survey	House-wives and students	Membership/informal	Shopping and convenience	20	Susceptibility to group influence	Housewives and students differ in terms of susceptibility to group influence.
Tapon 1979	Survey	University students	Membership/informal	Shopping	1	Decision process/group influence	Friends are the most effective source of influence in problem recognition and search stages of the decision process and female students are more susceptible to group influence.
Ford and Ellis 1980	Experiment	House-wives	Membership/informal	Convenience	1	Visibility/complexity/perceived risk/testability	Products that are low in visibility, complexity and perceived risk; and high in testability are not susceptible to group effect.
Beardon and Etzel 1982	Survey	Upscale Households	Membership/informal	Shopping	16	Public-private consumption/luxury-necessity	Reference group influence varies between publicly and privately consumed products and between luxuries and necessities.



## THE RESEARCH

### Objectives

The need for the study of reference group influence in information processing, evaluation of alternatives and eventual decision making is pointed out in consumer behaviour literature (Bearden and Etzel 1982). This study investigates the effects of reference groups in consumption decision making for consumer goods. The study is limited to the examination of the existence of reference group effect in exchange behavior and explanation of reference group behavior is not intended. The effects of primary and secondary reference groups in every stage of buying decision process is determined for two categories of consumer goods. The classification schemes served generations of practitioners and scholars of marketing and proved useful in product, pricing, promotion and distribution problems. The combination of the elaborate decision process model with the simple classification scheme permits a richness of analysis not often possible in studies assessing the role of a single variable. Investigation of the effects of internal factors like psychological and physiological make up of the decision maker, as well as the physical and other environmental factors like culture and social class are beyond scope. It is believed however, that these social factors are implicit in the reference group concept which incorporates psychological needs within social influences and relates social and cultural phenomena to psychological phenomena.

The following hypotheses were developed to formulate some generalizations about reference group effect in consumption decision making.

1. In any given stage of consumption decision process for consumer goods the degree of reference group effect varies by

- the nature of the product
- the nature of the reference group.

2. In any given stage of consumption decision process for consumer goods, direct reference group effect has a significant role in explaining the variations in the importance of that stage.

Convenience and shopping goods are the two categories of consumer goods used in the study. By definition convenience goods are purchased frequently and immediately, and with the minimum of effort in comparison and buying. Shopping goods are evaluated and compared on suitability, quality, price and style in the process of selection and purchase (AMA 1960). Soft drinks and furniture were chosen to represent these two types of goods. In order to select products for testing a questionnaire was developed to assess perceptions of 38 products as shopping or convenience goods. The questionnaire was administered on a convenience sample of 30 respondents.



Two types of group used were closed membership and aspirational groups representing primary and secondary reference groups. The individual is in frequent face to face relationship with the close membership group. He has a liking and an appreciation for the aspirational group, wants to be a member of or be associated with it. Reference group effect was defined as the subjects opinion regarding the existence of the primary and aspirational group effects in the given stage of the buying decision process for convenience and shopping goods.

The importance of a particular stage of the buying decision process was defined as the subjects opinion about the relative amount of time and effort spent for that stage in the buying decision process for a given product. The five stage consumption decision process used in the research is adopted from Engel, Blackwell and Kollat model (1978). The stages are problem recognition, information search, alternative evaluation, choice and outcomes. In the first stage of the decision process, the degree of reference group effect in recognizing a need and creating an awareness of a possibility of purchase was measured. The importance of this stage was measured as the relative time taken to reach this awareness for a given type of good. In the search stage, reference group effect as an information source was determined. The degree of the importance of this stage was determined by measuring the relative time taken to acquire the information believed to be necessary. In the alternative evaluation stage the degree of reference group effect as an evaluative criteria for determining the desired product was measured. In the choice stage, the degree of reference group effect in determining the retail outlet from which the product will be purchased was measured. The relative time taken to determine the product to be purchased and the store from which it will be purchased were the measures of the importance of these stages. The outcome of the purchase may be a doubt about the fitness of the decision taken or being content with it. The role of reference group effect, and the relative time taken in reaching either one of these mental states were the measures of the degree of reference group effect and the importance of this stage respectively. The subjects reported the relative time taken for and the existence of the influences of two types of groups in the stages of the decision process on five point scales for two types of goods.

#### **Data Collection Procedure**

Data on the importance of the stages of decision process; and the effects of two types of reference groups in every stage of the consumption decision process for two categories of consumer goods were collected by the use of a questionnaire developed for this purpose. The questionnaire consisted of three parts. Every part was preceded by a brief explanation about the contribution expected from the respondent as well as some information about points which may need clarification. Part one measured the meanings of the concepts "present



self", "ideal self", "primary group" and "aspired group" for each subject by the use of semantic differential scale. This part consisted of four items each with 20 scales. Data from this part of the questionnaire was used for selecting those respondents who can consciously differentiate between two types of reference groups. As the effects of two types of reference groups were questioned separately in the following parts it was necessary to make sure that the respondents perceived the two types of groups correctly. The instructions used for the semantic differential were adopted from Osgood's typical instructions (1957, p. 82,84). The names for the concepts measured were determined by a pretest in which 62 business students suggested suitable names for the given definitions. The most, commonly suggested names were chosen. These were "ideal self", "present self", "primary group" and "aspired group". The scales used in the items were derived from Osgood's Thesaurus Analysis (1957, p. 53-61). A list of 44 word pairs were chosen according to the relevance to the concepts criterion. This list was further shortened to 20 pairs in a pretest filled by 29 business students. The scales which were marked neutral for all the concepts by a great number of students were eliminated.

Part two of the questionnaire measured the importance of each stage of the buying decision process for two products. Five interval semantic scales were used. The intervals ranged from "it takes very long" to "it takes very short". Part three measured the effect of primary and aspired groups in five stages of the buying decision process for the two products. Five interval semantic scales ranged from "very effective" to "not effective at all". The phrases used in the second and third parts of the questionnaire expressed the relative time taken for, or the strength of the effect of two types of groups in the stages of the buying decision process for soft drinks and furniture. A number of phrases were developed. These were reduced to two for each stage and the final phrases used were determined after a pilot study. The scales indicated the direction and strength of the opinion. Numbers from 1 to 5 were placed with equal intervals along the scale to assure perception of equally spaced response categories by the respondents.

#### **Sample and Data Analysis**

The questionnaire was completed by a sample of 340 medical doctors. A purely random sample of 418 was drawn from the list of 4180 doctors in private practice, medical schools and state hospitals. The list is provided by the Chamber of Medical Doctors. Among this 418, 6 doctors did not qualify for the sample because they did not have a purchase experience for one or more of the products investigated. A total of 72 doctors were eliminated from the sample because it was not possible to reach them, or they refused to answer or they did not complete the questionnaire in an acceptable manner. 340 questionnaires were satisfactorily completed.

In order to attain the desired validity, the data obtained from the 340 respondents was subjected to a screening process based on re-



sponses given to the first part of the questionnaire. In the third part of the questionnaire respondents were asked to state their opinions about the effects of two types of reference groups separately. It was decided that only those subjects who has consciously differentiated between these two groups would give healthy responses based on their own experiences rather than making guesses.

The first part of the research instrument determined the meanings of the concepts present self, ideal self, primary group and aspired group for each subject. It was assumed that those subjects for whom the meanings of the concepts

- present self and ideal self were different
- primary group and aspired group were different
- ideal self and aspired group were similar

would be able to differentiate correctly the effects of the two types of groups. The difference in the meaning of two concepts is a function of the multidimensional difference between two points (Osgood 1957, p. 26). Generalized distance formula provides a measure of the linear distance between the points in a semantic space representing the concepts (Osgood 1917, p. 91). Differences between the three pairs of concepts (present self-ideal self; primary group-aspired group; ideal self-aspired group) for each subject were calculated. Those subjects who met the above mentioned constraints of perceiving the concepts as different were included in the sample. Operationally for any pair of concepts, a D value less than half the size of a scale (3.5) was considered small and the two concepts were regarded similar for that subject. A D value greater than 3.5 indicated a difference in meaning. The imposition of these constraints reduced the final sample from 340 to 115 subjects.

Mean effects of the two types of reference groups for each stage of the buying decision process for convenience and shopping goods were calculated. t statistics were used for determining the significance of the difference between mean group effects in stages of the decision process for convenience and shopping goods; and for the difference between mean effects of primary and aspirational groups in the stages of decision making for convenience and shopping goods. Multiple regression analysis was performed for determining the roles of two types of reference group effects in explaining the variations in the importance of any stage of the decision process for convenience and shopping goods. The interpretation of the results to be presented are valid for a professional group (medical doctors) in a given geographical region.

### **Results and Discussion**

The reference group influence scores for soft drinks and furniture were compared in every stage of buying decision process by using t tests. These comparisons were performed separately for primary and



aspired groups. The effects of both types of reference groups varied significantly between convenience and shopping goods (Table 3). In all stages of buying decision process the influences of both types of reference groups for furniture were stronger relative to soft drinks (Table 2).

The degree of influence of primary and aspirational groups were compared in stages of buying decision process for soft drinks and furniture by the same method. It was found that the effects of the two types of reference groups varied significantly in every stage of consumption decision process for both shopping and convenience goods (Table 4). For the sample investigated, the effects of primary groups were stronger relative to aspired groups in the decision process of both type of goods (Table 2). The hypothesis that the degree of reference group effect varies by the nature of the product; and by the nature of the reference group were confirmed by these results.

The time spent for the consumption decision of a product has important implications for marketing. In explanations of consumer behavior - both the classification schemes and the process models- the specified behaviors of consumers vary in terms of time. By definition, consumers spend more time for shopping goods, relative to convenience goods. The second hypothesis in this study investigates the explanatory role of reference group effects (primary and aspired) in involvement with the buying decision. The importance of stages of buying decision (measured in terms of amount of relative time spent for that stage) was taken as the dependent variable and the effects of two types of reference groups as the independent variables. A multiple regression analysis for every stage of the buying decision process of both convenience and shopping goods was performed. It was found that the direct combined effects of primary and aspired reference groups were significant in explaining the variations in the importance of all stages of the buying decision process for furniture; and all that but the first (problem recognition) stage of decision process for soft drinks (Table 5).

The coefficients of determination for the relationship between the importance of a stage of consumption decision and the effects of primary and aspired groups range from .02 to .19 (Table 5) These  $R^2$  values are not high, however, they represent only the direct group effect of which the subjects are consciously aware. Also, group effect is one of the numerous variables determining the time spent for the buying decision process.

The tentative conclusions drawn from this study are that (1) reference group influence varies according to the nature of product purchased; (2) according to the nature of the group operative in a purchase decision; and (3) the effects of primary and aspirational groups are significant in explaining the time spent for the buying decision. For the population investigated the effects of primary groups were stronger relative to aspirational groups. This result may be explained by the



TABLE 2  
MEAN SCORES FOR REFERENCE GROUP EFFECT

Stage of buying decision	Type of reference group	Type of good	
		convenience	shopping
Problem Recognition	Primary	3.896	2.470
	Aspirational	4.122	3.243
Search	Primary	3.365	2.270
	Aspirational	3.687	3.017
Alternative Evaluation	Primary	3.626	2.470
	Aspirational	3.861	3.139
Choice	Primary	3.670	2.583
	Aspirational	3.843	3.200
Outcomes	Primary	3.852	3.165
	Aspirational	3.983	3.565

Note: N = 115 subjects.

TABLE 3  
t VALUES FOR DIFFERENCES OF GROUP EFFECTS BETWEEN CONSUMPTION DECISIONS  
FOR CONVENIENCE and SHOPPING GOODS

Stage of buying decision	Type of reference group	Difference between means	
			t Value
Problem Recognition	Primary	1.426	11.54 <sup>a</sup>
	Aspirational	0.878	6.81 <sup>a</sup>
Search	Primary	1.095	8.74 <sup>a</sup>
	Aspirational	0.669	5.51 <sup>a</sup>
Alternative Evaluation	Primary	1.156	10.99 <sup>a</sup>
	Aspirational	0.721	7.16 <sup>a</sup>
Choice	Primary	1.080	8.73 <sup>a</sup>
	Aspirational	0.640	5.52 <sup>a</sup>
Outcomes	Primary	0.680	5.44 <sup>a</sup>
	Aspirational	0.410	3.73 <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Significant at .001.



TABLE 4  
 t VALUES FOR DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE EFFECTS OF PRIMARY AND ASPIRATIONAL GROUPS IN  
 CONSUMPTION DECISIONS FOR CONSUMER GOODS

Stage of buying decision	Type of reference group	Type of good	
		means	t Value
Problem Recognition	Convenience	0.220	2.64 <sup>b</sup>
	Shopping	0.770	7.14 <sup>a</sup>
Search	Convenience	0.320	3.46 <sup>a</sup>
	Shopping	0.740	6.95 <sup>a</sup>
Alternative Evaluation	Convenience	0.230	2.76 <sup>b</sup>
	Shopping	0.660	5.82 <sup>a</sup>
Choice	Convenience	0.170	2.28 <sup>b</sup>
	Shopping	0.610	5.91 <sup>a</sup>
Outcomes	Convenience	0.130	2.09 <sup>b</sup>
	Shopping	0.400	4.46 <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Significant at .001.

<sup>b</sup> Significant at .05.

TABLE 5  
 VALUE OF R<sup>2</sup> IN REGRESSION OF IMPORTANCE OF STAGE OF CONSUMPTION DECISION ON EFFECTS OF  
 PRIMARY AND ASPIRATIONAL GROUPS

Stage of buying decision	R Decision for	
	Convenience good	Shopping good
Problem Recognition	.025	.098 <sup>b</sup>
Search	.056 <sup>b</sup>	.149 <sup>b</sup>
Alternative Evaluation	.067 <sup>b</sup>	.196 <sup>b</sup>
Choice	.069 <sup>b</sup>	.192 <sup>b</sup>
Outcomes	.076 <sup>b</sup>	.166 <sup>b</sup>

<sup>b</sup> Significant at .05.



high level of prestige medical doctors enjoy in the Turkish society. Group influences for furniture - conspicuous socially important high involvement good - were stronger relative to soft drinks. It is believed that these conclusions partially contribute to the fulfillment of the need for empirical generalizations in marketing and consumer behavior (Leone and Schultz 1980); and to the need for classification systems for types of decisions and choices (Kollat, Engel and Blackwell 1970).

The results summarized above are tentative and partial answers to the question of the extent of reference group influence existence in a buying situation and its impact on consumer behavior. Conditions under which consumers are influenced by groups were determined regardless of the identification of operative groups. The products used to represent consumer goods were limited in number. Susceptibility of the consumption decision to group influence may vary across products within the same category. The characteristics which vary according to the individual making the decision and which may have effect in his susceptibility to group influence were also beyond scope and only situation specific characteristics were considered.

Reference groups establish desired and/or approved patterns of life styles which are a major determinant of the goods and services demanded. Determination of reference group relevance in a purchase situation has potential benefits for marketing management in promotion and distribution policies as well as for market segmentation. Semantic differential and t measures may be useful tools in identifying relevant groups. Reference group phenomena must be further investigated despite the difficulties of conducting research in this area.

### ÖZET

#### TÜKETİM MALLARI SATINALMA SÜRECİNDE DANIŞMA GRUBU ETKİSİ

Bu çalışmada iki çeşit tüketim malı (beğenmeli ve kolayda mallar) satılma karar süreci aşamalarında, danışma gruplarının etkisi araştırılmıştır. Sonuçlar, danışma grubu etkisinin mal türleri için farklılık gösterdiği; ve danışma grubu türlerinin değişik derecelerde etkili olduğu yönünde belirlenmiş olan hipotezleri doğrulamıştır.



## REFERENCES

- Andreasen, Alan R. (1965), "Attitude Change and Customer Behavior," in **New Research in Marketing**, ed. Lee Preston. Berkeley, California: Institute of Business and Economic Research, University of California.
- Arndt, Johan (1967), "Role of Product Related Conversations in the Diffusion of a New Product," **Journal of Marketing Research** 4 (August), 291-295.
- Aspinwall, Leo V. (1962), "The Characteristics of Goods Theory," in **Managerial Marketing: Perspectives and Viewpoints**, revised ed., eds. William Lazer and Eugene J. Kelley, Richard D. Irwin, 294.
- Asch, S.E. (1951), "Effects of Group Pressure Upon the Modification and Distortion of Judgements," in **Groups, Leadership, and Men** ed. Harold Geutzkow, Pittsburg, Pa: Carnegie Press.
- Bearden, William O. and Michael S. Etzel (1982), "Reference Group Influence on Product and Brand Purchase Decisions", **Journal of Consumer Research**, 9 (September), 183-194.
- Bettman, James R. (1979), **An Information Processing Theory of consumer choice**. Mass: Addison-Wesley.
- Bucklin, Louis P. (1963) "Retail Strategy and the Classification of Consumer Goods," **Journal of Marketing**, 27 (January), 50-55.
- Burnkrant R.E. and Alain Cousineau (1975), "Informational and Normative Social Influence in Buyer Behavior," **Journal of Consumer Research**, (December), 206-215.
- Bourne, Francis S. (1957), "Group Influence in Marketing and Public Relations," in **Some Applications of Behavioral Research**, ed. Rensis Likert and Samuel Hayes, Basle: Unesco.
- Campbell, Ernest Q. (1964), "The Internalization of Moral Norms" **Sociometry**, 27, 391-412.
- Charters, W.W. Jr., and Theodore M. Newcomb (1958) "Some Attitudinal Effects of Experimentally Increased Salience of a Membership Group", in **Readings in Social Psychology**, 3rd ed., Eleanor E. Maccoby, Theodore M. Newcomb, and Eugene L. Harley, eds. New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston.
- Cocanougher, Benton, and Grady D. Bruce (1971) "Socially Distant Reference Groups and Consumer Aspirations" **Journal of Marketing Research**, 8 (August), 379-81.
- Committee of Definitions of the American Marketing Association (1960), **Marketing Definitions: A Glossary of Terms**. Chicago: A.M.A.
- Coleman, James S, Elihu Katz and Herbert Menzel (1966), **Medical Innovation: A Diffusion Study**, Indiana Police: Bobbs - Merrill.
- Copeland, Melvin T. (1923), "Relation of Consumers' Buying Habits to Marketing Methods," **Harvard Business Review**, 1 (April), 282-289.



- Definitions Committee, American Marketing Association (1948), "Report of the Definitions Committee", **Journal of Marketing**, 13, (October) 207-217.
- Denzin, Norman K. (1966), "The Significant Others of a College Population," **Sociological Quarterly**, 7, 298-310.
- Dommermuth, William P. (1965), "The Shopping Matrix and Marketing Strategy," **Journal of Marketing Research**, 2 (May), 128-132.
- Engel, James F., Roger D. Blackwell, and David T. Kollat (1978), **Consumer Behavior**. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- , David T. Kollat and Roger D. Blackwell (1968), **Consumer Behavior**. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- , and Roger D. Blackwell (1982), **Consumer Behavior**, 4th ed. Chicago: The Dryden Press.
- Fendrich, James M. (1967) "Perceived Reference Group Support: Racial Attitudes and Overt Behavior." **American Sociological Review**, 32 (1967), 960-70.
- Festinger, Leon (1954), "A Theory of Social Comparison Processes," **Human Relations**, 7, 117.
- Fisk, George (1967), **Marketing Systems: An Introductory Analysis**. New York: Harper and Row, 128.
- Ford, Jeffrey D. and Elwood A. Ellis (1980), "A Reexamination of Group Influence on Preference," **Journal of Marketing Research**, 17 (February), 125-132.
- Grubb, Edward L. and Harrison L. Grathwohl (1967), "Consumer Self Concept, Symbolism and Market Behavior: A Theoretical Approach", **Journal of Marketing**, 31, (October), 22-27.
- Hansen, Fleming (1970) "Primary Group Influence and Consumer Conformity," in **Marketing Involvement in Society and The Economy**, ed. P.R. Mc Donald. Chicago: American Marketing Association.
- Holbrook, Morris B. and John A. Howard (1977), "Frequently Purchased Non-durable Goods and Services," in **Selected Aspects of Consumer Behavior**, ed. Robert Ferber, Washington, DC: National Science Foundation, 189-222.
- Holton, Richard H. (1958), "The Distinction Between Convenience Goods, Shopping Goods Shopping Goods and Specialty Goods" **Journal of Marketing**, 23 (July), 53-56.
- , (1959), "What is Really Meant by Specialty Goods", **Journal of Marketing**, 24 (July), 64-66.
- Howard, John A. (1963), **Marketing Management: Analysis and Planinng**, rev. ed. Homewood, Illinois: Richard D. Irwin.
- , (1977), **Consumer Behaviour: Application of Theory**, New York: McGraw Hill.



- , and Jagdish N. Sheth (1969), *The Theory of Buyer Behavior*, New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Hyman, Herbert H. (1942), "The Psychology of Status," *Archives of Psychology*, 269.
- , and Eleanor Singer (1968), *Readings in Reference Theory and Research*, New York: The Free Press, 7.
- Jackson, Jay M. (1959), "A Space for Conceptualizing Person-Group Relationships", *Human Relations*, 12, 3-15.
- James, William (1890), *Principles of Psychology*, vol. I, New York: Henry Holt and Co.
- Kaish, Stanley (1967), "Cognitive Dissonance and Classification of Consumer Goods", *Journal of Marketing*, 31 (October), 28-31.
- Kaplan, Norman (1954), "Reference Groups and Interest Group Theories of Voting," in *Voting*, Bernard R. Berelson, Paul F. Lazarsfeld, and McWilliam N. McPhee, eds., Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Kanin, Eugene, J. (1967), "Reference Groups and Sex Conduct Norm Violations", *Sociological Quarterly*, 8, 495-504.
- Katz, Elihu and Paul F. Lazarsfeld (1964), *Personal Influence* 3rd ed., New York: The Free Press of Glencoe.
- Kelley, Harold H. (1947), "Two Functions of Reference Groups" in *Readings in Social Psychology*, eds. Guy E. Swanson, T.M. Newcomb and E. L. Hartley, New York: Henry Holt and Company.
- , (1955), "Salience of Membership and Resistance to Change of Group Anchored Attitudes," *Human Relations*, 8, 275-89.
- Kelman, Herbert C. (1958), "Compliance, Identification and Internalization: Three Processes of Attitude Change," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 2, 51-60.
- Kemper, Theodore D. (1966), "Self Conceptions and the Expectations of Significant Others," *Sociological Quarterly*, 7, 323-43.
- , (1968), "Reference Groups, Socialization and Achievement", *American Sociological Review*, 33, 31-45.
- Kleimenhange, Arno K. (1966-67), "Shopping, Specialty or Consumer Goods." *Journal of Retailing*, (Winter) 32-39.
- Koç, Ahmet N. (1975), *Tüketim Kararlarında Aile Rol Yapıları ve Pazarlama İçin Önemi*, (İstanbul: University of Boğaziçi Press, 1975).
- Kollat, David T., James F Engel and Roger D. Blackwell (1970), "Current Problems in Consumer Behaviour Research", *Journal of Marketing Research* 7 (August), 327-32.
- Kuhn Manfold (1964), "Reference Group", in Julius Gould and William L. Kolb, eds., *A Dictionary of the Social Sciences*. New York: Free Press of Glencoe.
- , (1964), "The Reference Group Reconsidered," *Sociological Quarterly*, 5, 5-21.



- Leone, Robert P. and Randoll L. Schultz (1980), "A Study of Marketing Generalizations", **Journal of Marketing** 44 (Winter) 10-18.
- Lewin, Kurt (1952), "Group Decision and Social Change," in **Readings in Social Psychology**, 3rd. ed., G.E., Swanson, M. Newcomb and E. L. Hartley, eds., New York: Henry Holt and Co.
- Luck, David S. (1959), "On the Nature of specially Goods", **Journal of Marketing**, 24 (July) 61-64.
- Markin, Rom J. (1974), **Consumer Behavior: A Cognitive Orientation**, New York: MacMillan Publishing Co. Inc.
- Mayer, Morris L., J. Barry Mason, and Morris Gee (1971), "A Reconceptualization of Store Classification as Related to Retail Strategy Formulation", **Journal of Retailing** 47 (Fall) 27-36.
- McClosky, Herbert and Harold W. Dahlgren (1964), "Primary Group Influence on Party Loyalty," in **Social Organization and Behavior**, eds., Richard C. Simpson and Harper Simpson, New York: John Willey and Sons.
- Merton, Robert K. and Alice S. Kitt (1950) "Contributions to the Theory of Reference Group Behavior," in **Continuities in Social Research: Studies in the Scope and Method of "The American Soldier"**, Robert K. Merton and Paul F. Lazerfeld eds., Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press.
- Miracle, Gordon E. (1965), "Product Characteristics and Marketing Strategy," **Journal of Marketing** 29 (January) 18-24.
- Mirande, Alfred M. (1968), Reference Group Theory and Adolescent Sexual Behavior, " **Journal of Marriage and the Family**, 30 572-77.
- Murphy, Patrick E. and Ben M. Enis (1986), "Classifying Products Strategically," **Journal of Marketing** 50 (July) 24-42.
- Moschis, George P. (1976), "Social Comparison and Informal Group Influence," **Journal of Marketing Research** 13 (August) 237-44.
- Nelson, Harold A. (1961), "A Tentative Foundation for Reference Group Theory," **Sociology and Social Research** 45, 274-80.
- Newcomb, Theodore M. (1947), "Attitude Development as a Function of Reference Groups: The Bennington Study," in **Readings in Social Psychology**, Eleanor E. Maccoby, T.M. Newcomb and E.L. Hartley, eds. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- , Kathryn E. Koenig, Richard Flacks, and Donald P. Warwick (1967), **Persistence and Change: Bennington College and Its Student After Twenty Five Years**, New York: Wiley.
- Nicosia, Francesco M. (1966), **Consumer Decision Process: Marketing and Advertising Applications**. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Osgood, Charles E. George J. Suci and Percy H. Tannenbaum (1957) **The Measurement of Meaning**, Urbana: University of Illinois Press..



- Park, C. Whan and V. Parker Lessig (1977,) "Students and Housewives: Differences in Susceptibility to Reference Group Influence, **Journal of Consumer Research** 4 (September) 102-110.
- Reiss, Ira L. (1967), **The Social Context of Premarital Sexual Permissiveness**, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Runciman, Walter Garrison (1966), **Relative Deprivation and Social Justice: A Study on Attitudes to Social Inequality in Twentieth Century England**, Berkeley: University of California Press, 16.
- Sherif, Muzaffer (1953), "The Concept of Reference Groups in Human Relations," in **Group Relations at the Crossroads**, M. Sherif and M. O. Wilson, eds., New York: Harper and Row.
- , (1964), **Reference Groups: Exploration into Conformity and Deviation of Adolescents**, New York: Harper and Row.
- , (1967), **Social Interaction: Process and Products**, Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co.
- Shibutani, Tamotsu (1955), "Reference Groups as Perspectives," **American Journal of Sociology** 60 562-69.
- Siegel, Alberta Engvall and Sidney Siegel (1957), "Reference Groups, Membership Groups and Attitude Change," **Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology** 55 360-64.
- Simon, Julian L. (1967), "Doctors, Smoking and Reference Groups" **Public Opinion Quarterly**, 31, 646-47.
- Sireli, Aykut (1972), **Sosyo Psikolojik Cephesi ile Mal Politikası** Istanbul: University of Istanbul Press, No. 1738.
- Stafford, James E. (1966), "Effects of Group Influences on Consumer Brand Preference," **Journal of Marketing Research** 3 (February) 68-75.
- , (1971), "Reference Theory as a Conceptual Framework for Consumer Desicions," in **Marketing Models: Behavioral Science Applications**, Raph C. Day and Thomas E. Ness, eds., Scranton, Pennsylvania: Intext Educational Publishers.
- Stouffer, Samuel A., Edward A. Suchman, Leland C. Devinney, Shirley A. Star and Robin M. Williams, Jr. (1949), **The American Soldier Adjustment During Army Life**, vol.1., Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press.
- Tapan, Sema (1979), "Satın alma Kararlarında Arkadaş Gruplarının Etkinliği Üzerine Bir Araştırma", **Pazarlama Dergisi** 4 (June) 31-38.
- Turner, Ralph H. (1956), "Rol Taking, Role Standpoint, and Reference Group Behavior," **Amircan Journal of Sociology** 61, 316-28.
- Venkatesan, M. (1966), "Experimental Study of Consumer Behavior, Conformity and Independence," **Journal of Marketing Research**, 3 (November) 384-87.



- Whyte, William H. Jr. (1954), "The Web of Word of Mouth," **Fortune** (November) 140-146.
- Williams, Margaret, Aaesterud (1970), "Reference Groups: A Review and Commentary," **Sociological Quarterly** 11 545-54.
- Wind, Yoram (1977), "Retrospective Comment to Group Influence in Marketing," in **Classics in Consumer Behavior**, Louis E. Boone, ed. Tulsa, Oklahoma: Petroleum Publishing Company.
- Witt, Robert E. (1969), "Informal Social Group Influence on Consumer Brand Choice," **Journal of Marketing Research**. 6 (November) 473-76.
- , and Graby D. Bruce (1970), "Purchase Decision and Group Influence", **Journal of Marketing Research** 7 (November) 532-35.
- , (1972), "Group Influence and Brand Choice Congruence," **Journal of Marketing Research** 9 (November) 440-43.
- Woelfel, Joseph and Arembald O. Haller, (1971) "Significant Others the Self Reflexive act and Attitude Formation Process," **American Sociological Review** 36, 74-87.
- Woodside, Arch G. (1972), "Informal Group Influence on Risk Taking," **Journal of Marketing Research** 9 (May) 223-25.



