

RESEARCH ARTICLE

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The impact of reference groups on the purchasing behavior of the final consumer (A field study on the purchase of jeans wearers)

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Received: 23/06/2025 ; Accepted: 24/11/2025 ; Published: 17/01/2026

Abstract

This study aimed to highlight the impact of reference groups on the purchasing behavior of the final consumer of jeans clothing. This study aimed to highlight the impact of reference groups on the purchasing behavior of the final consumer of jeans clothing.

The study was conducted on a purposive sample of 391 individuals from all over Algeria, through an electronic questionnaire that was placed on social media platforms, and the (SPSS V26) program was used in the analysis process. The study concluded that there is a comparative effect and a varying normative effect of reference group determinants on purchasing behavior, led by opinion leaders with both comparative and normative effects. The study recommended the need to work on developing a marketing communication strategy that aims to stimulate the role of consumer protection associations and invest in the expertise of influencers and opinion leaders in promotional activities.

Keywords: Consumer behavior, reference groups, comparative influence, normative influence, jeans clothing.

Introduction:

The consumer is the main reason for the existence, growth and development of the institution. Which requires her to know his desires, satisfy his needs and achieve his satisfaction, which requires increased interest in understanding his purchasing behavior and trying to determine what has not been satisfied. This has put marketers in front of a complex process represented in studying an individual who is considered a black box whose contents overlap, and whose tendencies and preferences differ from one individual to another, which makes it difficult to understand what is going on inside him, especially with the multiplicity of influences to which he is exposed. Factors are numerous and varied in terms of their degree of influence. Consumer purchasing behavior is the result of multiple environmental motivations. Controlling purchasing behavior requires knowledge and understanding of the various influences surrounding it. So that marketers can predict it, adapt to it, or modify it by formulating appropriate marketing strategies that affect it directly or by influencing the groups that contain it, and from which it derives its

purchasing decisions. Based on the relationship that links the consumer to reference groups, his interaction with them, and the possibility of their behavior being reflected on. **To what extent do reference groups influence the purchasing behavior of jeans consumers?**

- Sub-questions: To simplify the problem, we have developed a set of sub-questions as follows:

- Do reference groups have a comparative statistically significant effect on the purchasing decision of jeans consumers at a significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$)?
- Do reference groups have a standard statistically significant effect on the purchasing decision of jeans consumers at a significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$)? him, we are faced with the following question:

- Hypotheses: To address the problem of the study, we propose the following main hypotheses.

- Reference groups have a comparative effect on the purchasing behavior of jeans consumers with a statistical significance at a significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$).
- Reference groups have a normative effect on the purchasing behavior of jeans consumers with a statistical significance at a significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$).

Importance of the study: The importance of the study is as follows: - Trying to reach new knowledge about reference groups and their impact on purchasing behavior and presenting it to marketing institutions.

- Benefit from the results obtained, represented in a set of suggestions directed to marketing institutions to highlight how to benefit from new consumer cultures.

- Study objectives: This study aims in general to determine the relationship between reference groups and consumer purchasing behavior by highlighting the impact of reference groups in changing consumer behavior. It also aims to achieve other objectives, which are as follows:

- Determine the comparative and normative impact of reference groups on consumer purchasing behavior.
- Determine the most important element influencing purchasing behavior within reference groups.

Study Methodology: To cover the various aspects of the study topic and in order to reach a solution to its main problem and answer the surrounding questions and verify the validity of the hypotheses, the inductive method was relied upon, in order to analyze the various effects of reference groups on purchasing behavior, and this is in line with the case study method to project the theoretical study onto the field study.

Previous studies: These include:

- Study (Tumewu Ferdinand and others, 2017, Indonesia): It is an article entitled "The influence of reference groups, family, roles and status on consumer purchase intention of wristwatches in Manado", where the study aimed to understand the influence of reference groups, family, roles, status and consumer purchase intention of replica watches in Manado based on (100) items about purchasing replica watches, and the study concluded that role and status have a significant impact on consumer purchase intention to purchase replica watches in Manado, and the study recommended that the original brand institution or retailer improve their knowledge of how to attract consumer

intention in Manado to consume the original product.

- Study (Thailand, 2019, Panjarat Pransopon Danupol Hoonsopon): It is an article entitled "The Impact of Reference Groups on the Purchase Intentions of Sports Products: A Case Study of the Audience and Practitioners in Thailand." The study aimed to know the impact of reference groups on the purchase intentions of sports products for sports consumers and fans through a sample of (593) respondents who have an interest in watching or practicing sports. It was analyzed by structural equation modeling, and it concluded that there is an impact of private groups on the purchase intentions of sports products for practitioners and the impact of public groups and strangers on the purchase intentions of fans.

First - Consumer behavior and reference groups:

(Hawikns, Coney, 2009) considers consumer behavior as the study of individuals and groups and the processes they undertake to identify, secure and use products to meet needs, and these processes have an impact on the individual and society. As defined by (Lambin, 1999) it is the sum of activities that precede, accompany and follow the purchase decision, through which the individual makes the choice process by knowing the reason that prompted him to make the purchase. It is a set of actions and deeds that individuals perform in order to satisfy different needs and desires through a set of activities that precede and accompany his purchasing decision, represented in choosing an alternative from several alternatives in a specific period of time with the individual being aware of each choice and the results that result from it and being able to distinguish the characteristics and details of each option, and to choose the best alternative for him.

This decision is influenced by the environment surrounding the consumer, especially reference groups, which are a reference in determining the beliefs, attitudes and behavioral patterns of an individual, whether he is a member of this group or not. They are reference landmarks that determine the judgments, preferences, beliefs and behaviors of the consumer, which can be used as a reference frame for individuals in their purchasing decisions and shaping their attitudes and behavior.

The influence may be normative on the individual's attitudes, values and beliefs in order to unite with its standards and values. It pressures to achieve harmony and conformity that affects the individual's choice of products and brands. The influence of reference groups on the consumer varies according to the type of product. The more complex and expensive it is, the more the influence of reference groups on the individual's behavior increases and he becomes more inclined to be convinced to buy it. "Also, the subjection of members to punishment and penalty in the case of neutrality and compliance with the group's standard is considered the means by which the group can influence individuals who wish to join it." The effect may be comparative. When the consumer buys a certain type of product, he feels that he will:

- Reinforce and strengthen the image that others form of him.
- Help him show it to others as it should be.
- Have the characteristics and qualities that he would like it to have.
- Be similar to the model of the person that the advertisements show using this product.

Second - The applied aspect: This aspect includes the field study to verify the validity of the study hypotheses by subjecting them to

testing using appropriate statistical tools, to reach results that achieve the study objectives, and to provide suggestions that may help institutions active in this field. A field study was conducted on the impact of reference groups on the purchasing behavior of consumers of jeans clothing in Algeria, where this type of clothing enjoys wide consumption in the field of clothing.

1- Study tool and sample:

This study relied on a facilitated sample from the study community represented by the youth category under (35) years old, and with the difficulty of determining the population of this community, it is based on Rousseau's theory, which states that the sample size is limited to between (30) and (500) individuals, which is suitable for all studies. Accordingly, our study

Table No. 01: Averages of the study scale axes.

| The axis | Number of paragraphs | Average | Rank | Direction |
|--------------------|----------------------|---------|------|-----------|
| Reference groups | 28 | 3,62 | 3 | High |
| Comparative effect | 03 | 3,67 | 2 | High |
| Normal effect | 05 | 3,68 | 1 | High |
| Weighted average | \ | 3,58 | \ | High |

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on the outputs of (Spss26).

The results of Table No. 01 indicate that the averages of the study axes ranged between an average of (3.62) for the reference groups axis with a high level of acceptance, and an average of (3.68) with a high level of acceptance for the standard influence axis, with the comparative influence axis in the middle with an average of (3.67) with a high level of acceptance, while the weighted average for the study scale reached (3.58) with a high level of acceptance.

3- Hypothesis Testing: The study contained two main hypotheses as shown below:

was satisfied with a sample estimated at: (391) individuals from different regions of the country,

To analyze the data and test the validity of the hypotheses, the five-point Likert scale was relied upon, where a questionnaire was prepared and subjected to apparent validity and internal consistency and to ensure the stability of the questionnaire, where the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was (0.90)

-Description of study variables

The study data is derived from the responses of the target sample, and in order to be able to analyze it, the nature and characteristics of this sample must be known. The following table shows the frequencies and averages of the study sample.

The first main hypothesis.

H0: Reference groups do not affect the purchasing behavior of jeans consumers with a comparative statistically significant effect at a significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$).

H1: Reference groups affect the purchasing behavior of jeans consumers with a comparative statistically significant effect at a significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$).

To test this hypothesis, we use the multiple linear regression test (ENTER) with the axis represented by reference groups.

Table No. 02: Results of the multiple linear regression test for the comparative effect of reference groups on the purchasing behavior of jeans consumers.

| Variable | Value (T) | Value (Beta) | Value (B) | Constant | Significance level (Sig) |
|----------------------------------|-----------|--------------|-----------|----------|--------------------------|
| Family | -2.090 | -0.051 | -0.034 | 4.953 | 0.002 |
| Friends | 3.511 | 0.056 | 0.064 | | ,0000 |
| Coworkers | 3.237 | 0.138 | 0.077 | | 0.001 |
| Shopping partners | 3.885 | 0.084 | 0.052 | | 0.000 |
| Influencers | 4.156 | 0.264 | 0.120 | | 0.000 |
| Opinion leaders | 4.318 | 0.263 | 0.176 | | 0.000 |
| Consumer protection associations | 0.302 | 0.013 | 0.002 | | 0.763 |

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on the outputs of (Spss26).

Table No. 02 indicates that the calculated (T) values are greater than their tabular value (1.69), which means that the statistical significance of the influence of reference groups, except for consumer protection associations, is proven. Their influence is insignificant. Accordingly, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the modified alternative hypothesis, which states: "Reference groups affect the purchasing behavior of jeans consumers, except for consumer protection associations, with a comparative influence that is statistically significant at a significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$).

The second hypothesis.

H0: Reference groups do not affect the purchasing behavior of jeans consumers with a statistically significant standard effect at a significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$).

H1: Reference groups affect the purchasing behavior of jeans consumers with a statistically significant standard effect at a significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$).

Table No. 03: Results of the multiple linear regression test (ENTER) for the influence of reference groups on the purchasing behavior of jeans consumers

| Variable | Value (T) | Value (Beta) | Value (B) | Constant | Significance level (Sig) |
|-------------------|-----------|--------------|-----------|----------|--------------------------|
| Family | -2.504 | -0.064 | -0.072 | 6.325 | 0.003 |
| Friends | 2.563 | 0.164 | 0.110 | | 0.000 |
| Coworkers | 4.571 | 0.177 | 0.170 | | 0.000 |
| Shopping partners | 3.286 | 0.133 | 0.143 | | 0.001 |

| | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--|-------|
| Influencers | 4.037 | 0.233 | 0.182 | | 0.000 |
| Opinion leaders | 6.228 | 0.345 | 0.396 | | 0.000 |
| Consumer protection associations | 0.059- | 0.002- | 0.004- | | 0.953 |

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on the outputs of (Spss26).

Table No. 03 indicates that the calculated (T) values are greater than their tabular value (1.69), which means that the statistical significance of the influence of reference groups, except for consumer protection associations, is proven, as their influence is insignificant. Accordingly, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the modified alternative hypothesis, which states: "Reference groups affect the purchasing behavior of jeans clothing, except for consumer protection associations, with a standard statistically significant influence at a significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$).

Conclusion:

The consumer is the basis of marketing activity. The marketing process starts from him by knowing and identifying his apparent and latent needs and desires. With him, it ends with providing products that satisfy his needs and achieve his satisfaction and the ability to maintain him. With his subjection to his social environment and the groups surrounding him that he takes as a reference for his purchasing decisions, the subject of our study came to strengthen and highlight the relationship between reference groups and the purchasing behavior of jeans consumers.

The study concluded that the determinants of reference groups affect the consumer's purchasing behavior, a comparative effect and a normative effect whose strength varies according to the components of the reference groups.

- Reference groups also have a comparative impact on the purchasing behavior of jeans, as the influence of reference groups on purchasing behavior varied in strength

according to the following descending order: (opinion leaders, influencers, shopping colleagues, friends, work colleagues (study), family (negative effect)), with the absence of a comparative impact of consumer protection associations on purchasing behavior.

- Reference groups also have a normative impact on the purchasing behavior of jeans, as the influence of reference groups on purchasing behavior varied in strength according to the following descending order: (opinion leaders, influencers, friends, work colleagues (study), shopping colleagues, family (negative effect)), with the absence of a normative impact of consumer protection associations on the purchasing decision. Shopping colleagues and celebrities generally have a greater impact on the purchasing decision of residents of eastern Algeria than residents of other regions.

Suggestions: Based on the results of the study, we propose the following suggestions to institutions:

- Reference groups are an important factor in making the purchasing decision, which requires giving them great importance in preparing marketing strategies for institutions, especially clothing-producing institutions, by planning a promotional mix based on the opinions of these groups.
- Directing great attention to the family through marketing communications to modify its position on products that undergo development innovations and try to attract them.
- Attracting the attention of consumer protection associations by introducing them to these modern clothing products by holding

seminars and open days in their honor, thus activating their role by highlighting the advantages of these products and exploiting these associations as opinion leaders.

- Directing the consumer to work on the advice and instructions of friends, celebrities and opinion leaders by intensifying advertising campaigns based on these categories.

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