

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Textiles, Merchandising and Fashion Design:
Dissertations, Theses, & Student Research

Textiles, Merchandising and Fashion Design,
Department of

5-2015

Influence of Parents, Peers, Internet Product Search and Visual Social Media on College Students' Purchase Behavior: A Mixed Methods Study

Jennifer E. Johnson

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, jennybeth.johnson@huskers.unl.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/textilesdiss>



Part of the [Fashion Business Commons](#), and the [Home Economics Commons](#)

Johnson, Jennifer E., "Influence of Parents, Peers, Internet Product Search and Visual Social Media on College Students' Purchase Behavior: A Mixed Methods Study" (2015). *Textiles, Merchandising and Fashion Design: Dissertations, Theses, & Student Research*. 7. <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/textilesdiss/7>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Textiles, Merchandising and Fashion Design, Department of at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Textiles, Merchandising and Fashion Design: Dissertations, Theses, & Student Research by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

INFLUENCE OF PARENTS, PEERS, INTERNET PRODUCT SEARCH AND
VISUAL SOCIAL MEDIA ON COLLEGE STUDENTS' PURCHASE BEHAVIOR:
A MIXED METHODS STUDY

by

Jennifer Elizabeth Johnson Jorgensen

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of
The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Major: Human Sciences
(Textiles, Merchandising, and Fashion Design)

Under the Supervision of Professor Rita Kean

Lincoln, Nebraska

May 2015

INFLUENCE OF PARENTS, PEERS, INTERNET PRODUCT SEARCH AND
VISUAL SOCIAL MEDIA ON COLLEGE STUDENTS' PURCHASE BEHAVIOR:

A MIXED METHODS STUDY

Jennifer Elizabeth Johnson Jorgensen, Ph.D.

University of Nebraska, 2015

Advisor: Rita Kean

Visually-oriented online social networking websites (VSNS) have become frontrunners in the race for popularity among all other online social networks. Pinterest, Instagram, Wanelo, and Snapchat have allowed for consumers to share their everyday lives, as well as the products that define their personal cultures. Products that require less financial and social risk tend to not only be influenced by online social networking websites, but also by peers (Kim & Sung, 2008). Products that require more financial and social risk tend to be influenced by family members and the amount of Internet product search behavior (Drozdenko, Jensen, & Coelho, 2012). Little research has been conducted on the influences of VSNS, as well as its relationship to family communication, peer communication, and Internet product search behaviors.

The Consumer Socialization Theory was used as a theoretical framework to guide the quantitative phase of this study. Socialization agents, or influences on attitude and purchase intention of a product, include peers, family members, VSNS, and Internet product searches. Each of these influences were found to determine the attitude and purchase intention of a product.

This mixed methods study consisted of an explanatory sequential research design. Quantitative data was collected through 236 responses to an online survey for

undergraduate college students. Based on the results of the quantitative phase, interview questions were created for 10 face-to-face interviews to modify the Consumer Socialization Theory. This study addresses which influences young adults use, as well as how and why young adults use the influences of family members, peers, VSNS, and Internet product searches when purchasing products.

Quantitative results indicate that participants are influenced by each socialization agent when searching for information about products. Thus, individuals sought information from family members, peers, information found online, and VSNS before purchasing a product. Qualitative results revealed that participants turn to VSNS and peers when searching for ideas of products to purchase, whereas they turn to family members and Internet product searches for products that they intend to purchase. The results and findings of this study demonstrate that the participants' lifestyles have led them to be more informed consumers.

Copyright 2015, Jennifer Elizabeth Johnson Jorgensen

Dedicated to my wonderful family

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A deep, heart-felt thank you must go to my advisor, Dr. Rita Kean, for her tireless encouragement, patience, and thoughtful advice toward my graduate coursework and dissertation. I cannot express how much I appreciate her guidance and support. Her passion for academia, as well as the retail industry, is contagious and has taught me that learning and knowledge always prevails. A sincere thank you must also be given to my other committee members, Dr. Wayne Babchuk, Dr. Shuba Bennur, and Dr. Diane Vigna. I owe each member of the dissertation committee an immense amount of gratitude for their encouragement and thoughtful contributions. I am truly lucky to have gotten to work with each of them. Drs. Kean, Babchuk, Bennur, and Vigna have been exceptional exemplars of the professor I hope to become.

I must also thank my family for their support, love, and encouragement. My parents, Curt and Carol Johnson, have always supported my dreams and without them, I would not have accomplished any of my goals. My sister, Tamara, has continually encouraged my interest in marketing and business, and continues to inspire me to reach for the stars. A great thank you must also be given to my husband, Christopher, for providing reassurance, love, and support. After completing this research, I have found that positive family communication is essential and I am so fortunate to have just that.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Statement of Problem.....	2
Purpose of Study.....	2
Significance of Study.....	3
Research Questions.....	4
Definition of Terms.....	5
Ethical Considerations.....	6
Researcher Positioning and Reflexivity.....	7
CHAPTER II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	9
Social Learning Theory.....	9
Consumer Socialization Theory.....	10
Low and High Risk Products.....	14
Online Social Network Usage.....	15
Visual Social Networking Websites.....	20
Pinterest.....	21
Instagram.....	23
Wanelo.....	23
Snapchat.....	24
Peer Communication.....	24
Internet Product Search.....	27
Online Product Reviews.....	29
Familial Communication.....	30

Attitude and Purchase Intention.....	34
CHAPTER III. STUDY DESIGN AND METHODS	36
Mixed Methods Design.....	36
Definition and Rationale for Mixed Methods Research	36
Phase I: Quantitative Methods	38
Theoretical Framework.....	38
Hypotheses.....	38
Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis.....	41
Statistical Analysis.....	42
Survey Instrument Design.....	42
Phase II: Integration of Qualitative Results for Qualitative Inquiry..	44
Mixed Methods Integration.....	44
Phase III: Qualitative Methods	44
Definition and Rationale for Grounded Theory	44
Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis.....	45
Phase IV: Interpretation	47
Mixed Methods Interpretation	47
CHAPTER IV. RESULTS AND FINDINGS	49
Phase I: Quantitative Results	49
Reliability.....	49
Hypothesis Testing.....	51
Phase II: Integration of Qualitative Results of Qualitative Inquiry ...	61
Phase III: Qualitative Findings	61

Mom Knows Best For Most Things	65
Friends' Opinions Are Not Always Taken	68
VSNS are Glorified Ads, But Provide Product Ideas	70
Customer Reviews Are Important, Proceed With Caution....	73
Resources Are In Short Supply. Consult Many Sources.	77
Phase IV: Interpretation and Joint Analysis.....	80
CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS	82
VSNS Usage	82
Peer Communication.....	86
Product Search on the Internet.....	87
Familial Communication	90
Implications.....	93
Limitations	94
Future Research	94
Conclusion	96
REFERENCES	98
APPENDICES	120
Appendix A: Quantitative Recruitment Email.....	120
Appendix B: Quantitative Informed Consent	121
Appendix C: Quantitative Reminder Email.....	122
Appendix D: IRB Approval Letter for Quantitative Phase.....	123
Appendix E: Qualitative Recruitment Email	125
Appendix F: Qualitative Informed Consent.....	127

Appendix G: Qualitative Reminder Email.....	129
Appendix H: Qualitative Transcript Email.....	131
Appendix I: IRB Approval Letter for Qualitative Phase	132
Appendix J: Design of Study	134
Appendix K: Records and Registration Approval Letter.....	135
Appendix L: Previous Survey Instruments	136
Appendix M: Quantitative Survey Questions	138
Appendix N: Qualitative Interview Questions.....	147

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1: Hypotheses and Sub Hypotheses	39
Table 4.1: Demographic Frequencies and University Statistics	50
Table 4.2: Reliabilities for Variable Scales	51
Table 4.3: Hypothesis 1 Regression Statistics	52
Table 4.4: Hypothesis 1 Statistics	53
Table 4.5: Hypothesis 2 Regression Statistics	54
Table 4.6: Hypothesis 2 Statistics	55
Table 4.7: Hypothesis 3 Regression Statistics	56
Table 4.8: Hypothesis 3 Statistics	57
Table 4.9: Hypothesis 4 Regression Statistics	58
Table 4.10: Hypothesis 4 Statistics	59
Table 4.11: Situational Map of Main Concepts	63
Table 4.12: Joint Analysis for Quantitative and Qualitative Phases.....	81

TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1: Consumer Socialization Model	11
Figure 2.2: Theory Adaptation of the CST	13
Figure 3.1: Model of Relationships Between Hypotheses	38
Figure 4.1: Hypothesis 1 Model.....	51
Figure 4.2: Hypothesis 2 Model.....	53
Figure 4.3: Hypothesis 3 Model.....	55
Figure 4.4: Hypothesis 4 Model.....	57
Figure 4.5: Statistical Findings for Theoretical Model.....	60
Figure 4.6: The Process by which Individuals Seek Information.....	64

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The World Wide Web has changed consumer behavior extensively. Not only has the Internet provided a plethora of information to individuals around the world, but has also allowed for the creation of user-generated content. Some of the most popular means of user-generated content include online social networking sites (VSNS). Such websites include Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, Wanelo, and Snapchat.

In recent years, VSNS have gained widespread popularity (Pew Research Center, 2013). VSNS includes Pinterest, Instagram, Wanelo and Snapchat. Pinterest is a photo-organizing VSNS that allows users to upload their own photos, “pin” items from other websites, and comment on friend’s “pins” or posts. According to a Rich Relevance (2013) study, Pinterest has increased in traffic, as well as having increased the amount of products purchased online through “click-throughs.” Click-throughs are achieved when an individual clicks on a product within Pinterest and is brought to the website where the product can be purchased (MarketingCharts.com, 2013).

Instagram, Wanelo, and Snapchat have also gained popularity in recent years. The increase in acceptance is attributed to the heightened usage of smartphones and corresponding applications (or apps). Instagram is a photo-sharing app that posts pictures to an individual’s profile. Like other VSNS, Instagram allows for users to follow their friend’s profiles and comment on their friend’s pictures. Wanelo provides pictures of trending products on a “trend feed” that users can save to a profile wish list. Wish lists are shared among peers, which disseminates new trends quickly. All items on Wanelo can also be purchased through the social network (Strugatz, 2014). Snapchat is “a photo- and video-

sharing app that automatically deletes messages soon after they are received” (Pew Research Center, 2013, p. 11). Instagram, Wanelo, and Snapchat contribute to how a consumer learns about products, as pictures of products are shared through these media.

A study conducted by Pew Research Center (2013) found that 54% of adult Internet users have posted their own photos on SNS, while 47% have reposted photos and products on SNS. Of individuals aged 18-29, 68% repost photos and products on SNS. A study conducted by Rich Relevance (2013) hypothesized that social media “tends to act more as an ‘assist’ than ‘last’ interaction along the online customer journey” (MarketingCharts.com, 2013).

Statement of Problem

The topic of communication among individuals has been revolutionized by the usage of online social networking websites. As described by Lim, Ting, Puspitasari, Prasetya, and Gunadi (2012), social networking sites “have changed the way consumers communicate with each other, the way consumers organize their social lives, and most exciting of all, they provide an avenue for attention seeking consumers to gain attention” (p. 32). New technology continues to evolve at a fast pace, causing individuals to be socialized using different methods than in the past. Fifty five percent of consumers between the ages of 18-29 years of age spend time on the Internet every day, which is a larger percentage than any other age group (Lyons, 2004).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to explore the socialization of undergraduate, college-aged consumers using an explanatory sequential mixed methods design. The overall aim of this study is to explain and understand the changes in how

undergraduate students make informed decisions about consumer goods. First, quantitative data was collected. An online survey was used to collect data from randomly-selected undergraduate college students at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to test the theory of Consumer Socialization (Mochis and Churchill, 1978). This theory assesses whether peers, family members, or mass media usage relates to an individual's attitude and purchase intention.

Second, qualitative data were gathered from undergraduate students via in-depth, face-to-face interviews which were used to extend the Consumer Socialization Theory. Criterion sampling was used for the qualitative phase of the study, as participants were selected based on their responses within the quantitative phase of the study. All qualitative interviews were conducted in a private room located on either of the university's two campuses for the participants' convenience. Thus, the qualitative phase was conducted as a follow up to the quantitative results to help explain the quantitative results and to revise the process of consumer socialization and its corresponding theory. In this exploratory follow-up, the tentative plan was to explore the process in which undergraduate college students at a large mid-western university are socialized to be consumers.

Significance of Study

It is anticipated that the results of this study will offer retailers and marketers more guidance reaching college students. As technology becomes an integral part of young consumers' lives, socialization inevitably changes (Gregorio & Sung, 2012). Retailers and marketers must stay in touch with changes in consumer behavior or failure would inevitably ensue. Researchers will also be impacted by this study through the testing of the Consumer Socialization Theory. Based on the results of this study, researchers will be able to gauge

how interactive technologies may affect the theory and influence young consumers. Overall, very few studies have used mixed methods to understand the topic of consumer socialization. Past studies have focused on influences that impact behavior; however, an integrated approach delving into how and why influences impact behavior is needed. For these reasons, this study contributes significantly to the body of literature on consumer socialization, as well as the use of mixed methods within the field of consumer behavior.

Research Questions

The following are the research questions developed for this study.

Quantitative: Through which VSNS and/or personal interactions do undergraduate college students use to develop an attitude and purchase intention for the products they purchase?

Qualitative: Why and how do undergraduate college students seek out specific VSNS and/or personal interactions when developing an attitude and purchase intention on the products they purchase?

Sub-question 1: What process do individuals undertake when searching for product information?

Sub-question 2: Why are certain forms of VSNS and/or personal interactions sought for product information?

Sub-question 3: How do undergraduate students use VSNS and/or personal interactions to inform their attitude and purchase intention?

Mixed Method: In what ways does the qualitative research further inform the understanding of consumer socialization through media and personal interactions as identified by quantitative data?

Definition of Terms

Attitude- A set way of thinking that reflects an individual's behavior.

Communication- "...an interactive and collaborative process in which the two parties work together to establish a message and reach a mutual understanding of the knowledge contained within" (Elliott & Polyakova, 2014, p.163).

Consumer Socialization- "The processes by which young people develop consumer-related skills, knowledge, and attitudes" (Moschis & Churchill, 1978, p.599).

Familial Influence- An "external" force by family members which affect an individual's attitude or behavioral outcome.

Hedonic Motivation- An individual's drive to achieve enjoyment and fun (Poyroy et al., 2013).

High Risk Products- Products that have great financial and social consequences.

Low Risk Products- Products that have little financial and social consequences.

Normative Influence- An individual's conformity to a social group.

Online Community- A group of individuals that gather to communicate online.

Peer Influence- An "external" force by friends which affect an individual's attitude or behavioral outcome.

Purchase Intention- An individual's plan to buy a product.

Social Structural Variables - Attributes (e.g., gender, ethnicity, income, education level) that affect socialization agents or outcome behaviors directly or indirectly.

Socialization Agent- “a person or organization that has frequent contact with the learner, primacy over the individual, and control over rewards or punishments given to the learner” (Moschis & Churchill, 1978, p.600).

User-Generated Content- Information that is created by a single individual for his or her own expression.

Utilitarian Motivation- An individual’s drive to achieve a goal and behavior rationally (Poyroy et al., 2013).

Visual Social Networking Websites (VSNS)- A website that allows users to generate visual content on public profiles, which is able to be shared within one’s social group.

Ethical Considerations

The review and approval of the proposal for this research project was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. To meet IRB protocol, the purpose and procedures of the study were provided, along with copies of the consent forms and written contacts with the participants for both quantitative and qualitative phases of the study. The recruitment email and consent form are available in Appendix A and Appendix B. One week after the recruitment email was sent to participants, a reminder email was sent. The reminder email is available in Appendix C. There was minor risk to participants in this study, as the topic does not contain sensitive information from the perspective of most individuals. The responses to the quantitative phase were kept anonymous through the assigning of numbers to responses. The IRB approval letter for the quantitative phase is available in Appendix D.

The IRB was consulted for the qualitative portion of the full-scale study. The qualitative recruitment email, informed consent, and reminder email is available in Appendix E, Appendix F, and Appendix G. A follow-up email was sent to each participant asking for their review of the transcript, available in Appendix H. Research questions and probes were submitted and approved to not only the IRB, but to a committee of professors for approval. Imbalances of power between the researcher and participants were minimized in the qualitative phase by ensuring that the researcher and participant did not have a relationship with one another; thus, current or former students of the researcher were not selected to participate. Anonymity was maintained through the use of pseudonyms, when necessary, when reporting the findings of the qualitative phase. The researcher took great measures to not disturb the research site during the qualitative interviews and spent a limited amount of time at these sites. Information was provided at this stage regarding the monetary token of appreciation that qualitative participants would receive. The IRB approval letter for the quantitative phase is available in Appendix I.

Researcher Positioning and Reflexivity

During the quantitative phase of this study, the researcher embraced a postpositivist worldview suggesting that theories should be tested and verified, variables should be reduced to enable a focus, and cause and effect should be able to be inferred. During the qualitative phase of the study, a constructivist worldview was adopted. Constructivism focuses on participants' viewpoints on the phenomena and meanings acquired from interviews are broadened to provide a more all-encompassing understanding (Creswell & Plano Clarke, 2011). Philosophical assumptions for this study were based around the ontological assumption, thus meaning that multiple perspectives are gained and reflected in the themes of

the study (Creswell, 2013). A social science theoretical lens also guided this research through the use of the Consumer Socialization framework developed by Moschis and Churchill (1978).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Social Learning Theory

Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977) has been the basis for many theoretical frameworks on human behavior. Bandura argues that "except for elementary reflexes, people are not equipped with inborn repertoires of behavior. They must learn them. New response patterns can be acquired either by direct experience or by observation" (Bandura, 1977, p. 16). An individual's experience is gained through the positive or negative effects that his or her actions produce. This type of reinforcement, such as positive or negative social influence, guides individuals to use the type of behavior deemed as successful and abandon ineffectual behavior for a given task. Thus, response consequences convey information, motivate the individual, and reinforce automatic responses.

The Social Learning Theory is guided by the premise that learning does not only include the effects from one's own actions, but also from the observation of others. Observation is considered a form of modeling, which is defined as "...observing others one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action" (Bandura, 1977, p.22). The Social Learning Theory also considers the social context which is beneficial for learning to take place. Learning consists of experiencing the phenomena through interaction with others (Howorth, Smith, & Parkinson, 2012). This theory also views socialization, such as the construct elicited in the Consumer Socialization Theory, as an outcome of one's environment (Moschis, 1987).

Consumer Socialization Theory

“The process by which young people develop consumer-related skills, knowledge, and attitudes” is defined by the Consumer Socialization Theory (CST) (Moschis & Churchill, 1978, p.599). There are three main components of the CST: antecedents, socialization processes, and behavioral outcomes. Antecedents of the consumer socialization model involve both personal attributes and environmental surroundings (Moschis & Churchill, 1978). Personal attributes can include, but are not limited to, family structure, socioeconomic status, educational level, age, gender, and ethnicity (Bush et al., 1999; Moschis & Churchill, 1978). Antecedent variables can directly and indirectly affect a consumer and how they interact with socialization agents and influence behaviors (Moschis & Churchill, 1978).

Socialization agents influence an individual to develop similar norms, attitudes, and behaviors through socialization processes. Socialization agents “can be a person or organization that has frequent contact with the learner, primacy over the individual, and control over rewards or punishments given to the learner” (Moschis & Churchill, 1978, p.600). Thus, socialization agents are viewed as the primary influential force on the behaviors of an individual, who is considered to be inactive in the socialization process (Bush, Smith, & Martin, 1999). Socialization agents can include family members, peers, mass media, teachers, and mentors (Moschis & Churchill, 1978).

Antecedents and socialization agents influence the outcomes within the CST. Not only do the socialization agents influence the outcome, but their personal attributes and environment have been found to be influential as well (Moschis & Churchill, 1978). The

original consumer socialization model developed by Moschis and Churchill (1978) is available in Figure 2.1.

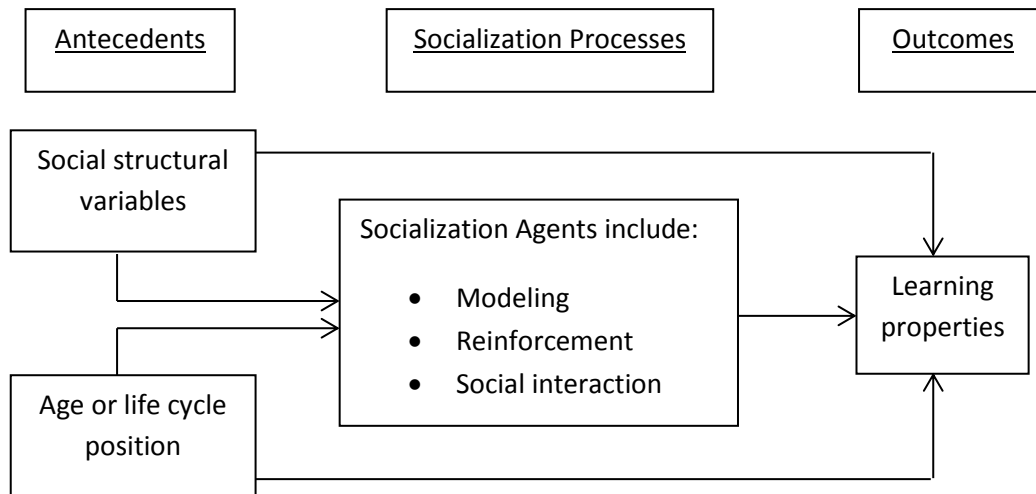


Figure 2.1. Consumer Socialization Model (Moschis & Churchill, 1978)

The consumer socialization theory (CST) was chosen for this study to understand how peers, family, and visual online social networks influence purchase behavior through the consumers' socialization process. By studying the socialization agents of peers, family members, Internet product search and visual online social networking websites including Pinterest, Wanelo, Snapchat and Instagram, an in-depth understanding as to how these influences affect the behavioral outcome of purchase intention was expanded. Results and findings from this study provided insight on the influences affecting purchase intention, along with how and why these influences functioned.

Young college-aged consumers, emerging from their childhood homes fairly recently, were the focus for this study, as previous literature has indicated that the CST is applicable to this age group (John, 1999; Gregorio & Sung, 2010). Socialization agents also tend to have a greater influence on a majority of individuals during this time in their lives (Moschis &

Churchill, 1978). Although many studies utilizing the CST evaluate young children or teens, previous studies have also suggested that the process of consumer socialization occurs as a young adult (Bush et al., 1999). Young adults also tend to be more involved in socialization practices, such as actively engaging in personal interactions with family and peers, along with an increased use of mass media (Gregorio & Sung, 2010).

For this study, the CST was adapted from previous models to include updated forms of visual social media and Internet product search as socialization agents. Further, social networking sites (SNS) will be defined as websites that have an interactive format for communication among others (Cusumano, 2011). This additional socialization agent is essential to include as a mass media agent due to the statistic that 60% of Internet users who search for product information online, learned more about the merchandise from a SNS (Nielsen, 2011).

Socialization agents will also include peer and family influences alongside the usage of VSNS and Internet product search. Many previous studies have confirmed the continued influence of these two socialization agents (Bush et al., 1999; Gregorio & Sung, 2010). When viewing the additions of many forms of mass media, it is clear that the model provides the study at hand a high level of specificity and a better look at the complicated web of possible results (Gregorio & Sung, 2010; Bush et al., 1999; Lachance, et al., 2003; Moschis & Churchill, 1978; Ozmete, 2009).

The consumer socialization model is important in this study to understand how the socialization agents of peers, family, Internet product searches and VSNS affect consumer behavior. Previous studies have shown that these four agents are significant when examining behavioral outcomes (Bush et al., 1999; Mangleberg & Bristol, 1998; Nelson & McLeod,

2005). However, little research has been done on the influences of VSNS or Internet product searches, alongside peer communication and familial communication on purchase intention. An adapted framework is demonstrated in Figure 2.2 to include the visual forms of SNS and Internet product searches within the model.

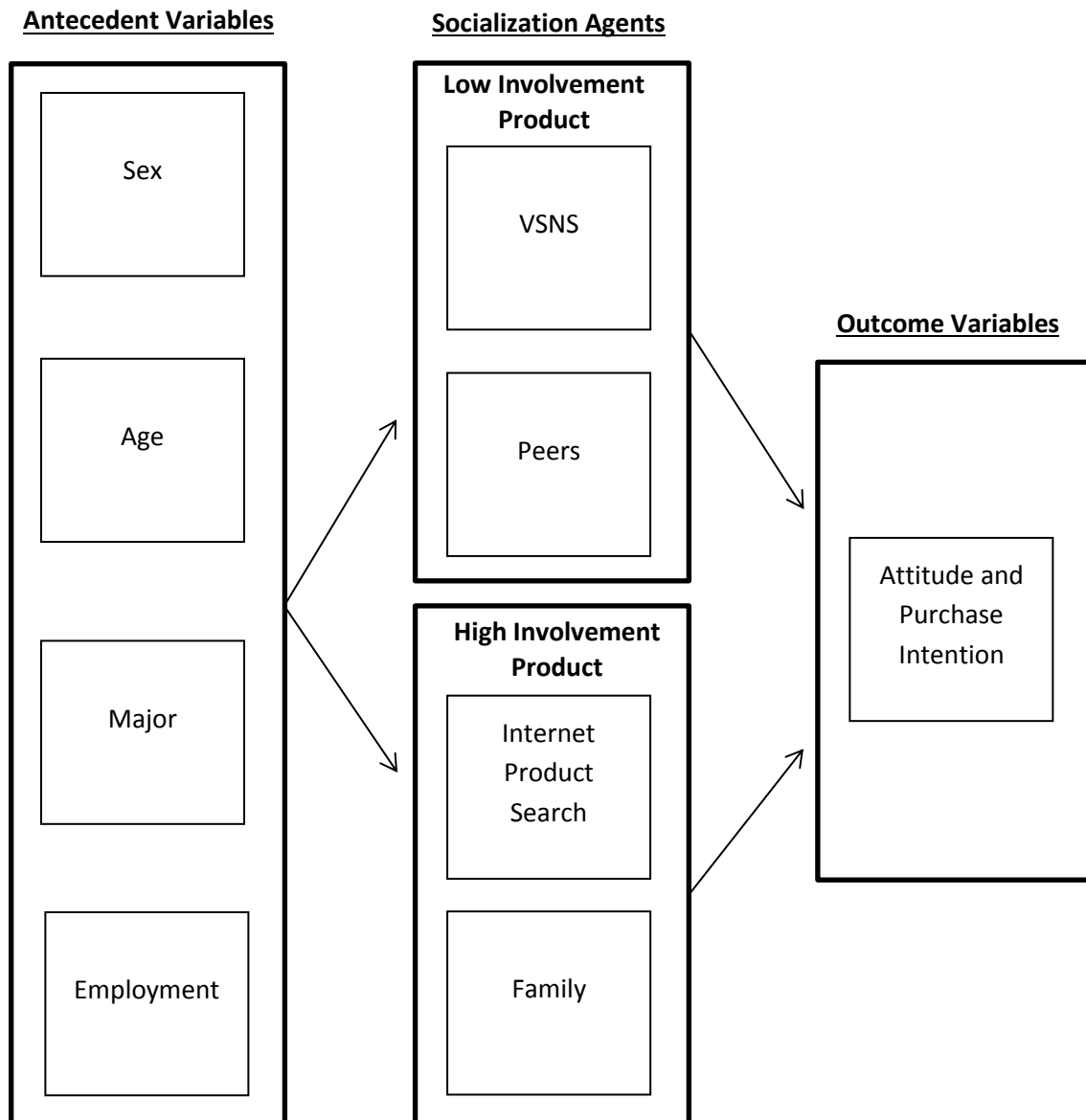


Figure 2.2. Theory Adaptation of the Consumer Socialization Theory

Low and High Risk Products

A study by Demangeot and Broderick (2009) found that shopping value is determined through exploration of product offerings. An individual's comfort level with risk reflects their attitude toward the amount of risk taken. When an individual has a high level of uncertainty, usually a "safe" decision is selected, whereas when there is a low level of uncertainty, individuals are willing to take more risks (Perlman, 2013). Low risk products tend to be purchased in the absence of family members (Moschis & Moore, 1979). Items such as eating out at a restaurant and buying groceries are considered to be low risk product purchases (Erasmus, Donoghue, & Dobbstein, 2014). Kim and Sung (2008) also identified that low risk product purchases caused consumers to turn to brand reputation to help make the purchase decision.

High risk items include purchasing homes or cars, which are purchases that involve high financial and social risk. A study by Kim and Sung (2008) found that consumers purchasing a car, or other items of high social and financial risk, tend to be more cognitively involved in decision-making for both the functional attributes of the car, as well as the brand attributes. Since individuals are conducting a more in-depth search for product information for high risk items, a larger percentage savings was reported for high risk items (Drozdanko, Jensen, & Coelho, 2012). Overall, products that present an individual with low psychosocial and financial risks are preferred over high risk (Wang, 2010).

While using online communities, hedonic and utilitarian motivations determine how an individual utilizes an online community. Individuals who are motivated hedonically participated more in the community, whereas utilitarian motivated individuals browsed for product information. Thus, it is important for online communities and retailers to distinguish

between the two motivational factors of hedonic and utilitarian shoppers (Poyry, Parvinen, & Malmivaara, 2013), as the type of risk does have an effect on shopping preference (Wang, 2010).

A high value is placed on hedonic motivations for online shoppers when determining if the individuals will revisit the website. Brand image also plays a role in the perceived risks an individual comprehends. Product brand image also was found to have a direct influence on online purchase intention, specifically for apparel products. It was also found that an item high on financial risk does not stop individuals from purchasing that item online (Aghekyan-Simonian, Forsythe, Kwon, & Chattaraman, 2012).

In the study conducted by Wang (2010), hedonic shoppers were found to have higher purchase intent than intent to search for product information. Since hedonic shoppers have a higher intent to purchase, they also were found to repeat purchases with the same retailer. Utilitarian shoppers were found to have similar levels of intent to purchase and search for product information (Wang, 2010). Online consumers are reluctant to purchase products from pure e-tail websites over omnichannel retailers, as the risk is higher (Korgaonkar & Karson, 2007).

Online Social Network Usage

The use of SNS is highest among individuals between the ages of 20-39 (Kim, Sung, & Kang, 2014). Females also tended to use SNS more often than males (Drozdenko et al., 2012; Feng & Xie, 2014). As described by Li (2014), “social networking sites have somewhat blurred the line between direct contact and indirect contact” in a social sense (p. 168). In particular, culture was found to be positively correlated with the intensity of the individuals’ Facebook usage. Thus, our culture is changing to include these technological

social environments. However, Facebook did not have an effect on attitude formation (Li, 2014), which can be considered a socialization outcome.

Bae and Lee (2011) recommend that retailers create online communities for consumers, as this will allow for the discussion and dissemination of product information and online reviews among peers and family members. It is believed that females are more frequent users of these communities (Bae & Lee, 2011), even though total time of use of the Internet is higher for males (Joiner et al., 2005). Females have also been found to communicate more with retailers via various methods, such as retailer's email address or live chat links, or through an online community (McMahan et al., 2009).

The larger a SNS, the more an individual desires to join (Henkel & Block, 2013). The experience one receives on an SNS was found to significantly relate to the strength of one's social media habit and deficient self-regulation. Habit strength, a term Khang, Han, & Ki (2014) used to describe how regularly SNS are used, was also found to be significantly influenced by past SNS usage. Khang et al., (2014) described social media as having "more interactive and collaborative features, this finding (habit strength) suggests that social media use is considered a habitual manner of behavior in which one's conscious attentive capacity is limited" (p. 53). Habit strength is found to be an antecedent of social media use. Self-efficacy was not found to correlate with social media usage (Khang, Han, & Ki, 2014). The high satisfaction one has with a SNS was found to decrease the intention of users to switch SNS accounts. The main four reasons for individuals to leave a SNS include peer pressure, convenience, information content, and recommendations for new SNS from friends (Wu, Tao, Li, Wang, & Chiu, 2014).

A new revelation among consumers includes the importance of one's social online popularity. Certain celebrities have been discovered on SNS and are viewed by some individuals to be an opportunity to gain popularity among existing friends and strangers. It is perceived that achieving popularity online is easier than gaining popularity in face-to-face situations (Lim et al., 2012). However, Maghrabi, Oakley, & Nemati, (2014) found the more an individual strives to fit within the social confines of an SNS, the less strong ties the individual has within the SNS. As a member of a SNS, individuals must balance between maximizing the number of social contacts and maintaining existing social contacts. Not surprisingly, however, individuals with more social contacts are able to disseminate information more quickly throughout their social network (Maghrabi et al., 2014). SNS members may share common goals, such as retrieving and disseminating information, discussing brands and products, and influencing peers (Sung, Kim, Kwon, & Moon, 2010). In addition, the formation and maintenance of social capital has been learned through being a member of a SNS, mainly Facebook (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007).

Facebook is the largest SNS involving many countries from around the world. Studies involving the use of Facebook have found that community users portray both an actual and ideal self through the brands that they "like" or talk about. The selection of brands shown on the SNS were found to be consistent with highlighted personal characteristics that maintain both the ideal and actual self. Seventy percent of individuals were reported to choose and discuss brands that emphasized their ideal self. Both the ideal and actual self-aim to protect and enhance the individual from peers. By selecting which peers, family members, and brands to be associated with online, consumers can portray an actual and ideal self that is visibly controlled by the consumer themselves. This opportunity allows for the consumer to

simultaneously express multiple attributes of themselves. Therefore, members of SNS must constantly consider whom they would like to represent online (Hollenbeck & Kaikati, 2012).

Since SNS involves so many cultures, Li (2014) states that it is likely that SNS has created its own cultural value systems. The development of more mobile technologies has also helped to advance the usage of SNS, as mobile, tablet, and computer wifi or 3G/4G access is available to many individuals (Kim et al, 2014). With its increased convenience, it has become more than just a SNS; that is, a way to keep up with both friends and brands (Channel Advisor, 2014).

SNS use many different formats by which to disseminate information to a social group. Despite the diverse formats available, an individual highly involved in SNS can overcome inferior online tool and website design when searching for products (Bowman, Westerman, & Claus, 2012; Elliot & Polyakova, 2014). In a similar study, the technology used to socialize individuals had more impact than the technology used to fit the usage situation (Lu & Yang, 2014). These individuals help to disseminate information to not only the SNS, but to their social circle, they still found useful in connecting with friends (Elliot & Polyakova, 2014).

Within a SNS, it is difficult to discern which individuals are providing accurate information. To build trust, some SNS and product reviews provide sponsored recommendation posts. The attitude an individual has toward the sponsored post, however, depends on one's experience with the product (i.e. high versus low risk goods) and by brand awareness (Lu, Chang, & Chang, 2014). Current events disseminated on SNS have proven to be successful, as these websites are able to provide timely news as customized or screened by friends with similar concerns. Some amounts of stimulation overload may still occur,

however. This phenomenon is called the “social news consumption,” as obtaining the news is now integrated with social communication and outcomes (Pentina & Tarafdar, 2014).

Reasons individuals use SNS include being the first to know about a specific brand, to identify with a specific brand, to get more information quickly, and convenience (Kim et al., 2014). An additional reason individuals rely on SNS is when other channels of communication are unavailable, financially consuming, and inconvenient (Davis et al., 2014). Other researchers believe that the influence of SNS includes the site being social, functional, emotional, and epistemic (Aladwani, 2014). Interestingly, some individuals, those high in extraversion and neuroticism, felt more comfortable expressing themselves on SNS instead of face-to-face interactions (Marriott & Buchanan, 2014).

Being a part of an SNS community helps retailers establish brand trust, brand identification, as well as community commitment and membership intention (Kim et al., 2014). SNS helps establish communication with a brand more easily and conveniently than any other means. From these interactions with the brand, consumers can gain information on products and discern how the company treats consumers (Davis et al., 2014). Retailers are now expected to pay continuous attention to all SNS accounts consistently (Channel Advisor, 2014).

Retailers benefit from creating virtual brand communities on SNS, as it allows consumers to share opinions with the brand more readily and extends the consumers’ relationship with the brand. By connecting consumers through virtual brand communities, a higher motivation to remain connected has been detected. These connections also allow for consumers to seek information from other virtual community members, provide a convenient way to connect to other consumers, as well as to seek incentives, such as sales promotions

and sweepstakes. Virtual community members to have goals which they would like other community members to fulfill, such as providing information about products (Sung et al., 2010).

According to the study conducted by Davis, Piven, and Breazeale (2014), five categories of brand consumption in a SNS were created based on qualitative interviews. The five categories consisted of functional, emotional, social, self-oriented, and relational. Each of the categories demonstrates how SNS connects brands and individuals together. The reason individuals reach out to brands includes taking care of issues with products, feeling recognized, and gaining a level of escapism and possible co-creation (Davis et al., 2014). Brands hope to engage consumers via online interaction and to increase consumers' social interaction in online groups (Luczak & Younkin, 2012).

Visual Social Networking Websites. Online visual cues provide more social information when compared to text-only formats, thus low context online cues can serve as a problem to social exchange. Social information is distinguished through the organization and format of the online space, which prompts memories from past experiences and alters an individual's perception (Stromer-Galley & Martey, 2009). The process of spatial influence online is just as powerful as offline communication (Benedikt, 1991; Harrison & Dourish, 1996; Stromer-Galley & Martey, 2009). When ample amounts of visual cues are present, individuals' memories are slow to employ, which maximizes perceptual engagement (Caljouw, van der Kamp, Lijster, & Savelsbergh, 2011).

Visual cues are created via computer code and determine-the interactions available upon a website. In an online context, visual cues act as a physical space, such as a brick-and-mortar retailer (Stromer-Galley & Martey, 2009). Such visual cues create an aesthetic which

web users find convenient. Creating pleasing visual cues include the attributes of balance, symmetry, movement, rhythm, contrast, proportion, unity, simplicity, density, regularity, and cohesion (Park, Choi, & Kim, 2005). All visual attributes contribute to the success of the online social networking website, Pinterest.

Pinterest. Currently, Pinterest has over 25 million active users and is the third most popular SNS in the U.S. (Morgan, 2013). The concept behind Pinterest is to create a visual “pinboard” of items, pictures, and other tidbits of information thus creating a unique social environment. These items and pictures are “pinned” from other websites onto the Pinterest feed and virtual pinboard. The virtual pinboard concept is very popular due to its entertainment value (Mull & Lee, 2014).

Millions of new pins are displayed on Pinterest every week. Most items are visual in nature, but are accompanied by short comments from the pinner. A pinner is an individual that participates in adding visual pins or repins on Pinterest (Carpenter, 2013; Zhong, Salehi, Shah, Cobarenco, Sastry, & Cha, 2014). There are many themes Pinterest users exhibit, including art, photography, pets, recipes, wedding ideas, fashion, quotes, crafts, and workout plans. Pinboards are shared with friends, thus communicating with a social network through visual means (Carpenter, 2013). As Carpenter (2013) suggests, the focus “on consolidating interesting images from across the web in an aesthetically pleasing manner is a large part of the appeal of Pinterest” (p. 11). Pinterest appeals to individuals due to its extensive visual content and its passive method of communication among members (Ottoni, Pesce, Casas, Franciscani, Meira, Kumaraguru, & Almedia, 2013).

Pinterest has been making its mark as an overwhelming force among SNS (Morgan, 2013). Mull and Lee (2014) suggest that Pinterest’s five motivations include fashion, crafts,

entertainment, virtual exploration, and organization. Such visual image sharing SNS are found to have unique characteristics when compared to primarily text-oriented SNS, such as Twitter and Facebook (Mull & Lee, 2014). The reason for its expansive growth includes its entertainment value and it is found to be highly addictive. Brands are quickly expanding their social media coverage to include Pinterest, and are using the visual nature of the SNS to disseminate company information (Morgan, 2013). A study conducted by Ottoni et al. (2013) found that females use Pinterest more than males and tend to engage in creating content on the SNS.

In a study conducted by Baggett and Gibbs (2014), Pinterest metrics were investigated to see how often college students accessed museum information on the VSNS. "Impressions" and "reach" were able to be determined. Impressions indicate the number of times a pin is displayed on the Pinterest main page, within search results, and on the virtual pinboards. Reach is described as the number of new, unique users that seek pins. Due to Pinterest's format, both impressions and reach are influenced by the number of repins. Individual and item popularity is demonstrated by the number of times an item is repinned (Baggett & Gibbs, 2014).

As Pinterest is used as a discovery tool, many images are passed without comprehension even if displayed on the dashboard feed. Most recent pins always appear on the feed, which are influenced by friends on the SNS, as well as all of the individuals whose items were repinned to an individual's virtual pinboard. The best times to pin items to gain exposure, are between 2:00 P.M and 4:00 P.M., as well as between 8:00 P.M. and 1:00 A.M. within the local time zone. During these peak times, a 600% reach can be maintained (Baggett & Gibbs, 2014). Reach describes the number of individuals exposed to a message

within a given amount of time. Thus, a commercial reach is now established and credited for the fashion motivation on Pinterest, in which individuals are searching and shopping for items (Mull & Lee, 2014).

Instagram. A study conducted by Piper Jaffray in 2014 identified Instagram as the teen's most important social network, even trumping Twitter and Facebook. In 2014, it was estimated that 40.5 million users would use Instagram, and 10.4 million of those individuals would be between the ages of 18-24 (MarketingCharts, 2014). One third of these individuals use Instagram every day, while one fourth use the SNS several times a day. Women are also more likely to post pictures than men (Pew Research Center, 2014).

The type of images disseminated through Instagram can be set to a visual-rhythm or number of beats based on time of day and day of the week. More images are exchanged on weekends and consist of darker-colored settings or details. Consolidating Instagram images over time creates three repeating rhythms which continue to transpire (Hochman & Schwartz, 2012).

Wanelo. Wanelo has created a digital community of members and retailers that combine the benefits of online social networks and online shopping, being dubbed as a mix of Twitter and Pinterest (Leahy, 2013). Over 11 million members and 300,000 retailers participate in this particular social network. Members can follow both stores and friends to create their own profile with a wish list of their favorite products. Products can be purchased through a direct link to the retailer's website, creating a seamless online purchase experience. Many of the products on Wanelo are selected by members, but some retailers are choosing to add their products for quick dissemination among members. Wanelo creates viral method of exposure to trending items among peer groups (Strugatz, 2014).

Snapchat. In less than three years, Snapchat has grown to include 25 million participants. These participants are also sending around 400 million photos per day. These photos are sent to participant's friends who are also on the SNS. Photos appear for a short amount of time, as determined by the sender, and then completely disappear from every user profile. Due to the short-lived nature of this SNS, it is hypothesized to have replaced texting for teens and young adults (Hempel & Lashinsky, 2014).

Peer Communication

Each individual creates an environment around themselves which serves as a basis for social interaction (Oakley & Salam, 2014). Individuals tend to conform to peer expectations once they are able to consume certain goods without parental guidance (Shim, Serido, & Barber, 2011), which is an important status once children reach adolescence (Wooten, 2006). Young individuals choose to shop with friends with whom they have a connection. Peers also influence the way young individuals evaluate products (Mangleberg, Doney, & Bristol, 2004). More information is sought from peers for products that are essential for acceptance in a peer group. Such items can include clothing and accessories (Moschis & Moore, 1979). Product characteristics are influenced by peer group communication and it has been found to enhance purchase intention. The stronger the bond and identification with peers, the more positive influences on peer communication (Wang, Yu, & Wei, 2012). Peers continue to reinforce group norms by drawing attention to violations of such norms (Wooten, 2006). However, young individuals with supportive peers are less materialistic mediated by a high self-esteem (Chaplin & John, 2010).

The more a group of friends converses about shopping and consumption, the more social motivation and materialistic viewpoints an individual in that group will have (Moschis

& Moore, 1979; Shim et al., 2011). The higher levels of materialism that a peer group has are correlated to higher levels of individual materialism (Chaplin & John, 2010). Not surprisingly, peer communication had a significant correlation to both materialism and compulsive consumption (Moschis, Mathur, Fatt, & Pizzutti, 2013). Those individuals with high levels of peer communication tended to correlate negatively on uniqueness (Wang et al., 2012). Moore and Bowman (2006) found that many individuals stated the desire to have an equal amount of material goods as their friends, using their peers as a benchmark of individual success.

Among teen girls, shopping provides a way to socialize with both girls and boys (Haytko & Baker, 2004; Shim et al., 2011). Girls tend to be more susceptible to normative influence, as well as going shopping more frequently with peers (Huang, Wang, & Shi, 2012). Normative influence is defined as the conformity of peers (Wang et al., 2012). The more normative pressure that an individual feels, the more the individual values the information gained for oneself, as well as the peer group. In connection, an individual who feels normative pressure is also more likely to identify themselves apart from their peer group. If normative pressure is held constant, product evaluation is subject to an influence from the social context in which the product is being consumed (Sohn, 2014). Attachment anxiety was also found to be positively correlated with normative pressure susceptibility. Attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance are a part of each individual's being. Attachment avoidant individuals are less likely to shop with friends and adhere to the peer group's social strata (Huang et al., 2012).

West, Lewis, and Currie (2009) found that using SNS with friends can cause issues as public and private contexts become blurred. For individuals who have widely dispersed

online peer groups, the value of information received is perceived to be of greater importance, even if it is positive or negative information. Individuals in dense peer groups tend to have a low level of attention to information due to their consideration of many other attributes (West et al., 2009). However, an individual's degree of knowledge determines the way an individual copes with the value of information sought (Sohn, 2014). In addition, Lim et al. (2012) found that comments from friends in an online social networking context, allows individuals to express themselves and gain confidence.

A large number of individuals are also communicating with their friends only in an online context. Pempek, Yermolayva, and Calvert (2009) found that Facebook is used as a communication tool for a large majority of college-aged students, as many of their friends are located in distant areas due to a move for a college education. Peer groups are also found to be highly influential on the adoption of technology usage (Gallivan, Spitler, & Koufaris, 2005).

The consumption of products can lead to the exclusion of individuals. Peers may state why the individual cannot be a part of the peer group through ridicule. Some participants in the study by Wooten (2006) stated that strict parenting rules, such as not allowing the purchase of inappropriate clothing or refusing to pay high prices for clothing, led to inappropriate peer ridicule. If the individual did not try to conform, he or she was further teased by peers and the individual further engaged in protective responses. Such responses include ignoring peer ridicule, defending items of importance, concealing the item of ridicule, adopting popular items, increasing surveillance of environment, and seeking a more comfortable environment. In some instances, parents were blamed by the peer group

for the noncompliance of the individual (Wooten, 2006). In addition, individuals tend to engage in risky behaviors if their friends exhibit those behaviors (Sasson & Mesch, 2014).

Peer influence has been found to have a significant effect on online purchase behavior, and such behavior is continually re-enforced by the individual's peer group (Niu, 2013). Peers are more influential and viewed as knowing more about products if an individual fears that he or she will not be accepted into the peer group. When individuals want to be accepted into a peer group, they tend to spend more money while shopping with friends (Huang, Wang, & Shi, 2012).

After a product is purchased and is in the process of being evaluated, peer influence tends to be lower and is equivalent to the influence of advertising and store reputation (Moschis & Moore, 1979). Peer conformity was also found to have both direct and indirect effects on product attributes. A significant direct effect was also found between peer communication and purchase intention (Wang et al., 2012). However, in terms of movie theater consumption, Moretti (2011) found that individuals will update their consumption behavior based upon a peer group's purchase decision. In addition, a study conducted by Moore and Bowman (2006) stated that "peers are readily evoked benchmarks against which our informants' experiences within their own families can be understood" (p. 538).

Internet Product Search

As described by Shim, Serido, and Barber (2011), young people are playing an important role in society by adopting rapidly changing Internet technology and consumer behavior deviations. Interestingly, global adoption of the Internet was positively correlated with the attributes of extraversion, neuroticism, and conscientiousness (Mark & Ganzach, 2014). The top three reasons that consumers use the Internet is to gain information, contact

others via email, and to research products and other information (Stafford & Stafford, 2004). Those who identify more strongly with the Internet, tend to use the Internet more often (Gavin, Duffield, Brosnan, Joiner, Maras, & Scott, 2007).

In a study conducted by Bae and Lee (2011), both genders were found to be willing to use the Internet and purchase items online. Both genders also did not differ in owning a computer or personal email address (Joiner et al., 2005) or how they use the Internet to complete a variety of tasks, such as online communication, shopping, and finances (Helsper, 2010). Gender differences were found, however, in how each gender perceived the information online product reviews exhibited (Bae & Lee, 2011). Males tended to be both utilitarian and hedonic shoppers, whereas females tended to be more utilitarian shoppers when the goal is gaining product information (Wang, 2010).

Females have been found to use the Internet more readily and have more confidence when purchasing items online. Some confidence is gained for females through their higher reliance on recommendations from other individuals and through their perceived opinions from peers and family members. Word-of-mouth has also been found to be more influential on females when compared to males, as females have been found to be more socially connected. (Bae & Lee, 2011). Females also actively search for technical information about products before purchase (McMahan, Hovland, & McMillan, 2009). Both genders have been found to communicate at the same rate online (Joiner et al., 2005).

Since the use of the Internet and SNS continues to grow world-wide, consumers prefer to use SNS as a channel for self-expression. The wide availability of accessing the Internet and SNS has led individuals toward self-expression and fulfillment of consumer

needs (Lim et al, 2012). Thus, Ahmed, Sidin, and Omar (2011) emphasized the need for the Internet to serve as a consumer socialization agent within the consumer socialization process.

Online Product Reviews. In a study conducted by Mudambi and Schuff (2010), moderately-stated online product reviews were found to be more helpful than extremely-stated online reviews for products that consumers have had previous experience using. Searching for product information online also has yielded a higher return on investment for retailers. Different websites are used to search for product information than those a consumer would frequent for hedonic reasons, with the exception of directly consulting the retailer's website. Consumers who used SNS for product information were found to make more impulse purchases (Drozdenko, Jensen, & Coelho, 2012).

Online product reviews have been found to spark word-of-mouth advertising between females (Bae & Lee, 2011) and tend to be more positive than negative (Schindler & Bickart, 2012). When a review is negative, it has a significant adverse impact on helpfulness of the review (Lee, 2013). When reviews are anonymous, grammar used in the product review is important to establishing a positive perception and influence a purchase (Ludwig, Ruyter, Friedman, Bruggen, Wetzels, & Pfann, 2013). A longer-length product review is also viewed as more credible, but only to a certain point (Mudambi & Schuff, 2010; Schindler & Bickart, 2012). Reviews that are too long tend to lead to product confusion. Factually-focused reviews also were found to help individuals make a purchase decision (Schindler & Bickart, 2012).

The use of online product reviews is growing and is considered a form of interpersonal communication. Online product reviews are usually not controlled by the retailer and has been found to greatly influence a consumers' purchase decision (Sridhar &

Srinivasan, 2012). Online product reviews also differ depending upon the type of product. If the product has likely been purchased in the past (i.e. shoes, toothpaste) and the consumer has prior experience with it, the amount of detail within the product review was not found to be of importance in terms of purchase intention. In addition, the more online reviewers agreed about a product, the higher the purchase intention for individuals seeking that information. For individuals who are searching for product information on an item that they have not purchased in the past, the amount of detail in the product review was positively related to the intention to purchase. Highly detailed reviews led to higher purchase intention (Jimenez & Mendoza, 2013).

Familial Communication

By the age of 13, individuals are capable of being fully-functioning consumers (Benn, 2004). Despite this statement, the development of consumer skills is a lifelong process as demonstrated by their parents (Ahmad, Sidin, & Omar, 2011). Familial influences primarily include parental observation and modeling of consumption behavior for children (Shim, Serido, & Barber, 2011). A parent's communication about consumption of products was found to be positively correlated to attitudes about advertising (Bush, Smith, & Martin, 1999). According to Moschis (1985), "Parents appear to play an important role in the consumer socialization of their offspring, and they are instrumental in teaching them the rational aspects of consumption" (p. 910). The process of consumer socialization involves many consumption-related skills (Moschis, 1985).

According to Moschis (1985), "Parents influence their children's consumer learning directly through several communication processes (both overt and cognitive), including overt interaction about consumption matters, using reinforcing mechanisms, and providing

opportunities for the child to observe their own consumer behaviors” (p. 910). Familial influence on consumer socialization can influence a child indirectly (Moschis, 1985).

Parents are also viewed as models for the teaching of financial management to their children (Moore & Bowman, 2006).

A family plays more than just the role of a sole socialization agent. Family members can indirectly influence a child’s interaction with other socialization agents (Moschis, 1985). Online consumer skills are also influenced by parents, as parents’ routine use of the Internet demonstrates parental consumer socialization. The outcome of parental consumer socialization is defined as “the learning properties (both cognitions and behaviors) that parents develop through socialization, including a wide variety of consumer skills, knowledge and attitudes” (Ahmad et al., 2011, p. 10). Thus, consumer socialization not only applies to children, but also applies throughout one’s life cycle.

Parents’ routine use of the Internet correlates with their attentiveness to their children’s use of the Internet. A parent’s acceptance of their children’s opinions when making a decision is correlated with the parent’s acceptance of the use of Internet (Ahmad et al., 2011). Similarly, parents who were familiar with the risks of the Internet, protected their children through various surveillance methods and provided guidance for use on the Internet (Sasson & Mesch, 2014). Although parents tend to be more concerned with their children’s Internet usage than is the child, the more a parent is concerned, the more the child becomes concerned as well. If a parent is concerned with a child’s use of a SNS, their privacy concerns tend to be more pronounced (Feng & Xie, 2014). Ahmad, et al., (2011) concluded that both children and the workplace are credited with informing parents of the importance of the Internet. Thus, not only is the Internet considered a socialization agent for children, it is

also considered an agent for the continual socialization of individuals at all ages (Ahmad et al., 2011).

In a study focused on parental communication and the Internet, researchers found that the quality of communicative interaction lowered the rate of verbal aggression in adolescents if the parents used the Internet. The more adolescents communicated face-to-face with their parents in a positive way, the less verbal aggression occurred (Appel, Stiglbauer, Batinic, & Holtz, 2014). Children who have a closer relationship with their parents engage in fewer risky behaviors (Sasson & Mesch, 2014).

Interestingly, not only do parents influence their children, the children also influence the parent's concept of self, as well as their behavior (Shim et al., 2011). When children are included in family decision making, they become more accepting of the decision and learn more from the experience (Shim et al., 2011). In terms of materialism, adolescents with more supportive parents are less materialistic, which is also mediated with self-esteem. The more materialistic the parent, the more materialistic the adolescent (Appel, et al., 2014). An individual's family structure has been found to relate to materialism, as well as to impulse purchasing (Rindfleisch, Burroughs, & Denton, 1997). A family's level of wealth, however, was not viewed as important when compared to parental involvement (Moore & Bowman, 2006).

Parental advice is specifically sought when product performance, social acceptance, and price are of great concern to the individual. These products also tend to be purchased while in the presence of a family member. However, if the product has a brand name or is at a heavily discounted price, parental advice is not the main consideration (Moschis & Moore, 1979). Thus, as Moschis (1985) suggests, the amount of influence a parent has is based on

the situation facing the child. The situation can include the product itself, the different stages in the consumer decision making process, and consumer characteristics (Moschis, 1985). When an individual is faced with a certain product, the situation is based on whether the product is considered high risk or low risk.

In the United States, mothers tend to have higher consumer expectations for their children at an earlier age than mothers in other countries. Children who develop consumer-related skills later than other children, tend to not communicate about consumption as often. Within U.S. households, there is more communication with others about consumption, but restriction of consumption is not emphasized as much when compared to other countries (Rose, 1999). Joint decision making within the family and the amount of information seeking was not determined by social class (Moschis & Moore, 1979). However, more socio-oriented family communication happens when there is a depletion of familial resources, as there is more discussion about such financial behaviors. Compulsive buying was negatively correlated with socio-oriented family communication (Moschis, Mathur, Fatt, & Pizzutti, 2013).

A parent's communication style affects how children learn about consumption (Rose, 1999). Different family communication processes influence different socialization agents (Moschis, 1985). Parents who exhibit high levels of communication are considered to either exhibit authoritative or permissive communication styles. Permissive and indulgent parental communication styles have greater influence on their children's purchases, whereas authoritarian parents have less influence on their children's purchases. However, permissive parents did not place as many restrictions on their children's consumption when compared to

the three other groups. Interestingly, both authoritative and permissive parents demonstrate more autonomy during consumption as observed by their children (Rose, 1999).

Attitude and Purchase Intention

Attitude has been found to be significantly influenced by the brand name of the product (MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989). A higher level of trust in online shopping leads to a more positive attitude and higher intention to purchase (Cho & Jialin, 2008). Those persons with previous exposure to a product tend to be more certain of their attitude toward the product. When made unsure of their attitudes, confidence was reduced. (Mourali & Yang, 2013).

A study conducted by Erasmus, Donogue, and Dobbstein (2014) found that purchase decisions depend on the complexity of the purchase situation. They found that demographic groups were not a significant influence on purchase decisions; however, the researchers suggested that certain product groupings can be identified (Erasmus et al., 2014). Similarly, Kim, Haley, and Koo (2009) found that the more an individual is involved in finding a product in a certain product category, the higher the intention to purchase.

In terms of communication, product recommendations elicited from family members and peers influence purchase intention (Hsiao, Lin, Wang, Lu, and Yu, 2010). The more involved consumers were in interactive blogging websites, the higher purchase their intentions. Higher purchase intentions were also found with niche blogs and blogs with high popularity (Chiang & Hsieh, 2011). Content on SNS are generated by individuals that are viewed as opinion leaders by others and are generally trusted over company-generated reviews (Cheong & Morrison, 2008). Similarly, trust is a mediator between content on SNS and the intention to purchase (Ng, 2013). Word of mouth tends to provide trust and

confidence to a consumer when gaining information about a product (Choi, Lee, & Kim, 2009), which can be generated by blogs and SNS. Online product reviews have also been found to influence purchase intention (Bae & Lee, 2011). The more reviewers agree about a product, the higher an individual's purchase intention (Jimenez & Mendoza, 2013).

Decision-making styles are significantly related to the individual's online purchase behaviors (Niu, 2013). Brand names have been found to invoke a feeling of trust among consumers and heighten the purchase intention for that product (Aghekyan-Simonian et al., 2012). Online word-of-mouth has also been found to influence purchase intention, as it conveys trust, communicates with many in a group, and allows for the co-creation of content (See-To & Ho, 2014). Further, attitudes are found to be derived from social interactions and influence the intention to purchase a product (Bian & Forsythe, 2012).

CHAPTER III

STUDY DESIGN AND METHODS

Mixed Methods Design

The selection of the four visual online social networking websites (VSNS) for this study, Pinterest, Instagram, Wanelo, and Snapchat, were chosen based on the popularity of the VSNS, the social interaction allowed through the VSNS, and the visual basis of the VSNS.

Definition and Rationale for Mixed Methods Research

Several definitions have been used to explain mixed methods research. For the purposes of this study, mixed methods is defined as a collection and analysis “of both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study in which the data are collected concurrently or sequentially, are given a priority, and involve the integration of the data at one or more stages in the process of research” (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2008, p. 165). Thus, in this study, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected and analyzed. Results were connected between the first, quantitative phase and the second, qualitative phase of the study.

An explanatory design “is a mixed methods design in which the researcher begins by conducting a quantitative phase and follows up on specific results with a second phase. The second, qualitative phase is implemented for the purposes of explaining the initial results...” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 82). Therefore, a qualitative phase connected to the quantitative phase of the study is essential, as it provides an in-depth view of how and why undergraduate students use VSNS and/or personal interactions to determine their purchase behavior.

The explanatory sequential design used the results from quantitative data to guide the collection of qualitative data, thus the methods build upon one another and integrate both quantitative and qualitative data. Integration occurred between the first, quantitative phase and the second, qualitative phase. A diagram demonstrating the study's design is available in Appendix J. The use of qualitative data provided a more complete picture of how and why different media and/or personal interactions are used beyond the quantitative data on which media and/or personal interaction is used.

The nature of mixed methods research lends itself to a process of triangulation as multiple methods of data collection are used (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Quantitative and qualitative research can offset each other, as the weaknesses from one method are covered by the strengths of the other method (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Hesse-Biber, 2010). Mixed methods bring a high level of completeness, utility, credibility, context, explanation, and an ability to build upon each method's results or findings. Mixed methods also allows for different, but related, research questions to be answered forming a more complete conclusion for this study. This method also allows for diverse views from both the researcher in the quantitative phase and the participants in the qualitative phase (Bryman, 2006).

This study utilized mixed methods research to gain 1) an understanding on the impact each VSNS and/or personal interaction has upon consumer socialization and 2) a deeper understanding of how and why consumers use each VSNS and/or personal interaction. Knowledge on both the impact and a deeper understanding of SNS is essential due to new uses of technology and the widespread use of those technologies among the demographics being studied.

Phase I: Quantitative Methods

Theoretical Framework. The Consumer Socialization Theory (CST) was adapted from Moschis and Churchill's (1978) and Gregorio and Sung's (2010) models. Relationships between hypotheses are depicted in Figure 3.1.

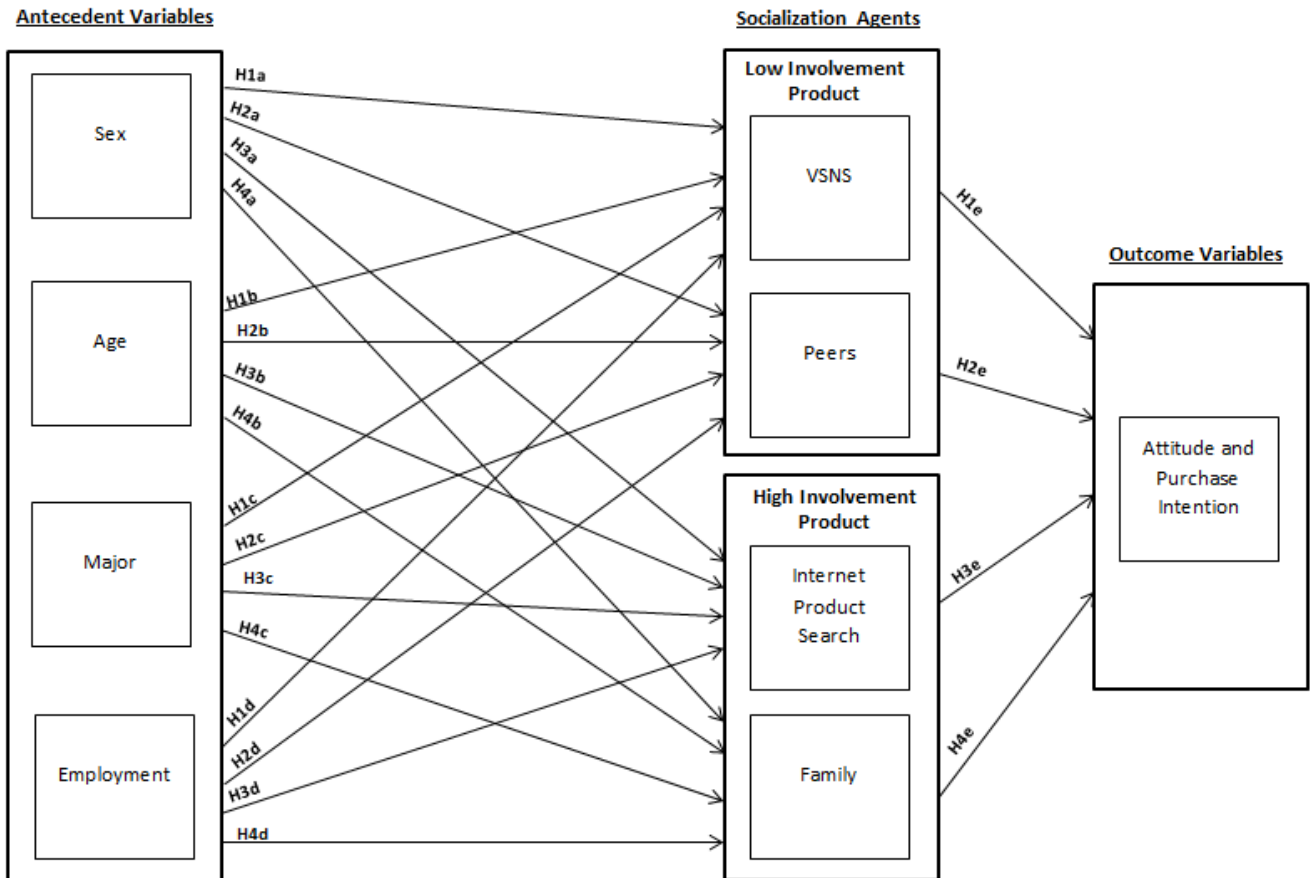


Figure 3.1 Model of Relationships Between Hypotheses

Hypotheses. Hypotheses for this study were developed based on Moschis and Churchill's (1976) and Gregorio and Sung's (2010) theoretical framework of the CST, as well as existing literature. Differences between older and younger students were determined by equally dividing participants based on the median age of the sample. Hypotheses for this study are available in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Hypotheses and Sub Hypotheses

Main Hypothesis	Sub Hypotheses
VSNS will have an impact on college students	<p>H1a: VSNS usage has a greater impact for females than males for low risk product information searches.</p> <p>H1b: VSNS usage has a greater impact for younger participants than older participants for low risk product information searches.</p> <p>H1c: VSNS usage has a greater impact for certain majors for low risk product information searches.</p> <p>H1d: VSNS usage has a greater impact for employed participants than unemployed participants for low risk product information searches.</p> <p>H1e: VSNS positively influences the individual's attitude and purchase intention toward a product.</p>
Peer communication will have an impact on college students	<p>H2a: Peer communication has a greater impact for females than males for low risk product information searches.</p> <p>H2b: Peer communication has a greater impact for younger participants than older participants for low risk product information searches.</p> <p>H2c: Peer communication has a greater impact for certain majors for low risk product information searches.</p> <p>H2d: Peer communication has a greater impact for employed participants than unemployed participants for low risk product information searches.</p> <p>H2e: Peer communication positively influences the individual's attitude and purchase intention toward a product.</p>
Internet Product Search will have an impact on college students	<p>H3a: Internet product search has a greater impact for females than males for high risk product information searches.</p> <p>H3b: Internet product search has a greater impact for younger participants than older participants for high risk product information searches.</p> <p>H3c: Internet product search has a greater impact for certain majors for high risk product information searches.</p> <p>H3d: Internet product search has a greater impact for employed participants than unemployed participants for high risk product information searches.</p> <p>H3e: Internet product search positively influences the individual's attitude and purchase intention toward a product.</p>

Main Hypothesis (Continued)	Sub Hypotheses (Continued)
Familial communication will have an impact on college students	<p>H4a: Familial communication has a greater impact for females than males for high risk product information searches.</p> <p>H4b: Familial communication has a greater impact for younger participants than older participants for high risk product information searches.</p> <p>H4c: Familial communication has a greater impact for certain majors for high risk product information searches.</p> <p>H4d: Familial communication has a greater impact for employed participants than unemployed participants for high risk product information searches.</p> <p>H4e: Familial communication positively influences the individual's attitude and purchase intention toward a product.</p>

Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis. Data was collected from 236 randomly selected undergraduate students currently enrolled at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, leading to a response rate of 13.1%. These individuals are identified as students over the age of 19 and actively enrolled in at least one course at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) with an undergraduate status (i.e. freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior) regardless of college, major, or any other demographic information. The sample was randomly selected and obtained through permission from the UNL Office of Records and Registration. The approval letter from the Office of Records and Registration is available in Appendix K. The only information that was provided to the researcher was the email address to recruit the participant for the online survey. All other information was kept anonymous. An online consent form was supplied to all participants, and the form indicated that clicking from the consent screen to the next, survey screen, they were allowing for their electronic consent. The survey was identical for all participants as the delivery of the survey was standardized.

To reduce sampling errors, a simple random sample was conducted. Each individual in the sampling frame had an equal chance of being selected. According to the Survey Sample Calculator, a sample size of 377 individuals should be obtained ($Np=19,376$ undergraduate students, $B=.05$). However, based on the inability for some individuals to participate due to age restriction (age 19 in the state of Nebraska), the researcher initially hoped to collect 250 usable responses. The coverage error was minimal, as all UNL undergraduate students were a part of the sampling frame from which the simple random sample is selected. The only possible issue is that the researcher is not aware if the Office of Records and Registration's student email database is up-to-date and free of errors or repeated individuals due to the researcher only receiving the students' email addresses. A check of

duplicates among email addresses was conducted once the list of email addresses was received.

Statistical Analysis. Data was automatically coded through the Qualtrics program and exported into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. None of the survey questions were in need of reverse scoring. The Excel spreadsheet was uploaded and statistical analyses was conducted using the SPSS program. Significant results were identified and the survey instrument was statistically measured for reliability, validity, and goodness-of-fit.

Multiple regression analysis was used to test hypotheses H1, H2, H3, and H4, including all of their sub-hypotheses. These hypotheses were tested for the relationships between peer communication, familial communication, visual online social networking usage, product and product search behavior on attitude and purchase intention. Multiple regression analysis was used as these hypotheses test “whether the regression of Y on X’s is statistically significant” (Pedhazur, 1997, p. 99).

Survey Instrument Design. All measures were adapted from previous studies focusing on the socialization of consumers. Appendix L conveys a variety of measures utilizing the CST that other researchers have utilized since Moschis and Churchill’s (1978) original survey instrument was created. Appropriate measures were selected for this study based on past validity, reliability and appropriateness of fit between variables in this study compared to prior studies. All items were adapted in accordance to Dillman, Smyth, and Christian’s (2007) methods. The survey instrument for this study is available in Appendix M. The measure of attitude, purchase intention, and each socialization agent’s relationship to the antecedent variables were adapted from Lueg, Ponder, Beatty, and Capella’s (2006) study on the use of alternative shopping channels for teens. A Likert, five point scale asked

participants to decide between the continuum of “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree.” An example from this measure includes “I spend a lot of time talking with my family about purchasing an expensive item” and “My peers encourage me to make inexpensive purchases.” These measures have yielded a coefficient alpha of $0.88 \leq \alpha \leq 0.96$ in past research studies (Bush et al., 1999, Belch et al., 2005, Lueg et al., 2006, Mangleburg et al., 1997, Mochis, & Moore, 1979).

The frequency in which a participant engages with a socialization agent of family, peers, VSNS, and product search was adapted from Mangleburg, Grewal, and Bristol’s (1997) study on the use of product labels. Participants were asked to select how often they communicate or use certain socialization agents by indicating that they use it “Every day,” “5-6 times per week,” “3-4 times per week,” “1-2 times per week,” and “I did not use.” An example question was “During the past week, how often did you talk to your friends online?” A coefficient alpha of $0.68 \leq \alpha \leq 0.8$ was achieved (Mangleburg et al, 1997, Moschis, & Mitchell, 1986).

Reliability of this study’s survey instrument was tested using the coefficient alpha. Validity was measured based on content validity, as a panel of experts on the topic were asked to review the survey’s questions and the study’s purpose. Anonymity was maintained, as email addresses were the only form of identification and there was no physical contact between the researcher and the participants due to the online nature of this phase of the study. Each response received a number to ensure further anonymity. Confidentiality of responses were also set by the researcher through the Qualtrics software. Participants provided their personal email address at the end of the survey only if they were willing to participate in the qualitative phase of the study; however, the participant’s name was split from the response

and the corresponding response number was replaced. The names of willing participants for the qualitative phase was kept in a password protected file separate from the password protected survey response data file and will remain in the protected file for one year after the study is complete. All statistical tests were considered significant when the probability was less than or equal to .05 with a 95% confidence interval. During statistical analysis, the NEAR Center was consulted.

Phase II: Methods for Integration of Quantitative Results for Qualitative Inquiry

Mixed Methods Integration. Information obtained in the quantitative phase was used to guide the qualitative phase of the study. Results from the quantitative section were used primarily for two reasons. The first was to select participants from Phase 1 for the qualitative phase of the study. Participants were selected for the qualitative phase based on significant results indicating which socialization agents are influential on purchase intention. The second reason was to generate research and sampling criteria based on the quantitative results. Based on the quantitative results, criterion sampling was determined to further guide and create a more focused purpose for the qualitative phase. Due to the qualitative phase relying on the results from the quantitative phase, it was anticipated that the data connected the two phases (Creswell, 2013).

Phase III: Qualitative Methods

Definition and Rationale for Grounded Theory. The qualitative portion of this study was based on the foundations of the grounded theory approach. Grounded theory is defined as a method of qualitative research that “ consists of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories ‘grounded’ in the data themselves” (Chamaz, 2014, p. 2). To further explain the process of how and why

consumers are socialized in particular ways, a modified grounded theory approach was utilized for the qualitative portion of this study. Grounded theory is an excellent way to research a sequential process and generate a theory, or expand upon an existing theory, through data gathered in the field (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Creswell, 2013; Litchman, 2013). In addition, the use of memoing, coding, and the constant comparative method ensured that all coded data was considered, thoroughly thought through, and constructed into a theory of the process (Charmaz, 2014; Litchman, 2013).

Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis. The researcher hoped to collect data from at least ten individuals who also participated in the first, quantitative phase of the study. Thus, participants were a criterion sample of undergraduate students over the age of 19 involved in at least one course at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. To aid in selecting participants for the qualitative phase, responses from the quantitative phase were tracked. A text box was also placed at the end of the survey to collect first names and email addresses if survey participants were interested in participating in a face-to-face interview in exchange for a \$10 gift certificate to Amazon.com. After voluntary responses were obtained, participants were further selected to volunteer based on criteria developed based on the results of the online survey. Thus, significant results determined in the quantitative phase were further investigated in the qualitative phase.

Qualitative data were collected through face-to-face interviews conducted by the researcher in a private room located on either UNL City Campus Love Library or the East Campus CY Thompson Library for the participants' convenience. A private room located in each library was selected by the researcher based on perceived comfort, ease, and level of privacy for the participant, and also availability for the researcher. Interviews consisted of

open-ended questions and the researcher probed for more information when necessary. Interviews did not exceed one hour and all interviews were digitally recorded. The researcher started the recording after the initial greeting and description of the purpose of the study. The written consent form was also discussed with the participant and signed for the researcher's records. A copy of the consent form was given to each participant, which included contact information of the researcher. The recording included questions from the researcher and participant answers. The recording was turned off by the researcher at the conclusion of the interview.

Digital recordings were used for transcription and will be kept by the researcher one year after the study is completed in a secure, password protected location. During the interview, the researcher also took notes as a backup in case of technical difficulties. All interviews concluded by answering any questions the participant may have, stating when the transcripts would be available for their review, asking if they would like a copy of the results, and thanking them for their time with their token of appreciation. Interviews continued until a point of saturation occurred. Recorded interviews were transcribed, prepared, and organized.

Transcribed interview data was analyzed using MAXQDA software. MAXQDA assists in storing and organizing interview data. Initially, the researcher completed a preliminary exploratory analysis through the completed transcribed interviews for each participant. In this initial analysis, transcripts were read multiple times to gain a general sense of the data collected.

To begin, items were initially coded. The coding process was used to divide and label interview information to further understand participants' viewpoints. A situational

analysis was conducted to identify potential codes, categories, themes, and relationships (Clarke & Friese, 2007). A constant comparative method was also employed through the use of on-going memos throughout the coding process. Memos are notes that a researcher composes between data collection and writing of the final report, to guide thought processes and the creation of themes (Charmaz, 2014). Finally, the researcher reviewed coded items, developed in-depth descriptions of the information, and selected themes based on the codes identified within the software program. Only one researcher was available to work on this project, so inter-coder reliability checks were not possible. Themes selected addressed the major research questions stated at the beginning of this study using the multiple perspectives gained from each participant. Information which contradicted selected themes were noted and analyzed for further information.

The findings for this study were validated through member checking. Member checking occurred, as all participants in the qualitative phase were asked to review their transcript for errors and were asked to review the completed themes for accuracy. In addition, once the qualitative themes were identified, the researcher further connected both qualitative and quantitative phases of this study through a joint display, although not required to perform an explanatory sequential research design. A joint display is defined by Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) as “a figure or table in which the researcher arrays both quantitative and qualitative data so that the two sources of data can be directly compared. In effect, the display merges the two forms of data” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 412).

Phase IV: Interpretation and Joint Analysis

Mixed Methods Interpretation. Both the quantitative results and qualitative findings were interpreted into a single joint display and discussion section. The discussion

section describes how the qualitative findings explain the quantitative results. Although interpretations are discussed at the conclusion of both the quantitative and qualitative phases, an overall interpretation or “meta-inference,” is discussed at the end of the entire study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Phase I: Quantitative Results

For the quantitative phase of this study, 1800 recruitment emails were sent to potential participants and 236 participants responded to the online survey, leading to a response rate of 13.1%. Participants ranged in age from 19 to 51 years, with a median age of 20. This study focused upon the typical age range of college students, ages 19-24, thus seven outliers were eliminated from the analyzed data set. Female participants marked the majority of participants at 47.5% as compared to 29.7% male and 0.8% who would rather not specify. Sophomores and seniors represented the highest percentages per class at 22.9% and 20.3%, respectively. Participants from the College of Arts and Sciences were the largest percentage at 19.1%, while participants from the College of Education and Human Sciences were the second largest at 15.7%. Fifty-three point eight percent were currently employed and 55.1% felt that they had money to spend on items that they desire. Descriptive statistics regarding all variables in this study, as well as a comparison to the university's population of 19,979 undergraduate students are shown in Table 4.1.

Reliability. As expected, the scales measuring family communication, peer communication, VSNS usage, and Internet product search were found to be reliable. Attitude and purchase intention were not found to be as reliable as a subset, but were found to be reliable when combined and correlated to the corresponding socialization agent. Reliabilities for each variable scale are available in Table 4.2. Due to the lower reliability of attitude and purchase intention, four multiple regressions were completed based on the four socialization agent variables to account for this discrepancy (Thorndike & Thorndike-Christ, 2010).

Table 4.1 Demographic Frequencies (N=236) and University Statistics (N=19,979)

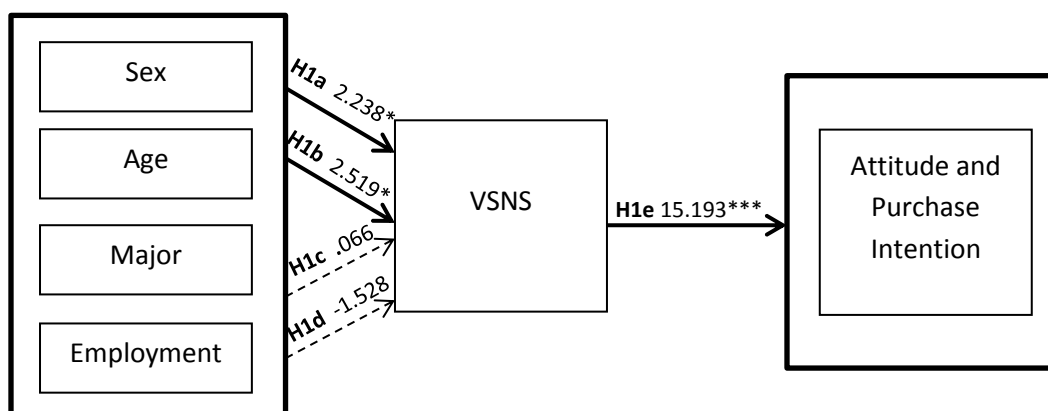
Variable	Categories	Current Study Sample		University Population	
		Frequencies	Percent	Frequencies	Percent
Age	19-20	93	39.4	7649	30.6
	21-22	49	20.7	5617	22.5
	23-24	12	5.0	1230	4.9
	25+	7	2.8	716	2.9
Gender	Male	70	29.7	10654	54.13
	Female	112	47.5	9325	45.87
	Not Specified	2	.8	N/A	N/A
Academic Standing	Freshman	35	14.8	5702	28.5
	Sophomore	54	22.9	3733	18.7
	Junior	42	17.8	4826	24.2
	Senior	48	20.3	5554	27.8
	Other	4	1.7	164	.8
College	Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources	23	9.7	2254	11.3
	Architecture	2	.8	391	2
	Arts and Sciences	45	19.1	4664	23.3
	Business Administration	29	12.3	3547	17.8
	Education and Human Sciences	37	15.7	2954	14.8
	Engineering	20	8.5	2993	15
	Fine and Performing Arts	7	3	638	3.2
	Journalism and Mass Communications	9	3.8	1011	5.1
	Undecided	12	5.1	1348	6.7
Employed	Yes	127	53.8	N/A	N/A
	No	54	22.9		
	Not Specified	3	1.3		
Money to Spend on Desired Products	Yes	130	55.1	N/A	N/A
	No	48	20.3		
	Not Specified	6	2.5		

Note. University Statistics obtained from Institutional Research and Planning (2014)

Table 4.2 Reliabilities for Variable Scales

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha
VSNS	.926
Peer Communication	.863
Internet Product Search	.903
Familial Communication	.792

Hypotheses Testing. The SPSS program was used to analyze all hypotheses. All hypotheses utilized multiple regression statistical analyses. Hypothesis 1 was tested by utilizing multiple regression. This hypothesis tested the relationships between VSNS and attitude and purchase intention. A model for Hypothesis 1 is available in Figure 4.1.



Note. * $p < .05$, *** $p < .0001$

Figure 4.1 Hypothesis 1 Model

Retailers are choosing to disseminate information via VSNS as it is viewed as an entertaining way in which to gain information (Baggett & Gibbs, 2014). Thus, the following sub-hypotheses were analyzed.

Main Hypothesis	Sub-Hypotheses
VSNS will have an impact on college students	<p>H1a: VSNS usage has a greater impact for females than males for low risk product information searches.</p> <p>H1b: VSNS usage has a greater impact for younger participants than older participants for low risk product information searches.</p> <p>H1c: VSNS usage has a greater impact for certain majors for low risk product information searches.</p> <p>H1d: VSNS usage has a greater impact for employed participants than unemployed participants for low risk product information searches.</p> <p>H1e: VSNS positively influences the individual's attitude and purchase intention toward a product.</p>

The results indicate that this sub-model predicted 64.9% of the variance for the attitude and purchase intent when using VSNS ($F(7, 152) = 40.107, p < .05$). Thus, the more an individual uses VSNS, the more positive their attitude and purchase intention. A significant effect was also found for age ($t=2.519, p < .05$), indicating that older individuals tend to have a more positive attitude and purchase intention while using VSNS. Sex was also a significant predictor ($t=2.238, p < .05$), as females were more likely to have a more positive attitude and purchase intention when using VSNS. Therefore, H1a, H1b, and H1e were supported. Table 4.3 and 4.4 outlines the statistics of each variable within Hypothesis 1.

Table 4.3 Hypothesis 1 Regression Statistics

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
VSNS	.916	.060	.754	15.193	.000***
Age	.036	.014	.142	2.519	.013*
Sex	.255	.114	.111	2.238	.027*
Major	.004	.068	.005	.066	.948
Employment	-.183	.119	-.075	-1.528	.128

Note. * $p < .05$, *** $p < .0001$

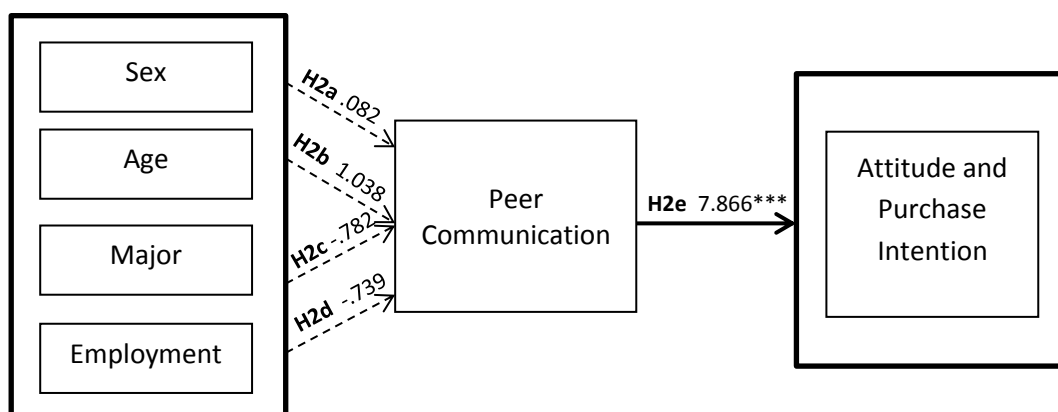
Dependent variable: Attitude and Purchase Intention for VSNS

Table 4.4 Hypothesis 1 Statistics

Variable	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Regression	124.552	7	17.793	40.107	.000***
Residual	67.434	152	.444		
Total	191.986	159			

Note. * $p < .05$, *** $p < .0001$

Hypothesis 2 consists of four sub-hypotheses that were measured using multiple regression. This hypothesis was studied to determine the impact that peer communication has upon attitude and purchase intention. A model for Hypothesis 2 is available in Figure 4.2.



Note. * $p < .05$, *** $p < .0001$

Figure 4.2 Hypothesis 2 Model

Individuals tend to conform to their peer groups at a greater rate once consumption decisions are not dictated by family members (Shim et al., 2011). Peers have also been found to influence the evaluation of a product, as they tend to shop in groups (Mangleberg et al., 2004). Females tend to shop with their peers more often and are tend to be influenced by

peers at a greater rate than males (Huang et al., 2012). Below are the sub-hypotheses that were tested.

Main Hypothesis	Sub Hypotheses
Peer communication will have an impact on college students	<p>H2a: Peer communication has a greater impact for females than males for low risk product information searches.</p> <p>H2b: Peer communication has a greater impact for younger participants than older participants for low risk product information searches.</p> <p>H2c: Peer communication has a greater impact for certain majors for low risk product information searches.</p> <p>H2d: Peer communication has a greater impact for employed participants than unemployed participants for low risk product information searches.</p> <p>H2e: Peer communication positively influences the individual's attitude and purchase intention toward a product.</p>

The model created for this hypothesis predicted 35.6% of the variance for peer communication's relationship with attitude and purchase intention. Peer communication was found to have a significant relationship with attitude and purchase intention ($F(7, 151) = 11.922, p < .001$). Thus, only H2e was supported. Tables 4.5 and 4.6 show the statistical results for Hypothesis 2.

Table 4.5 Hypothesis 2 Regression Statistics

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Peer Communication	.528	.067	.550	7.866	.000***
Age	.015	.014	.097	1.038	.301
Sex	.008	.092	.005	.082	.935
Major	-.091	.116	-.058	-.782	.435
Employment	-.072	.098	-.049	-.739	.461

Note. * $p < .05$, *** $p < .0001$

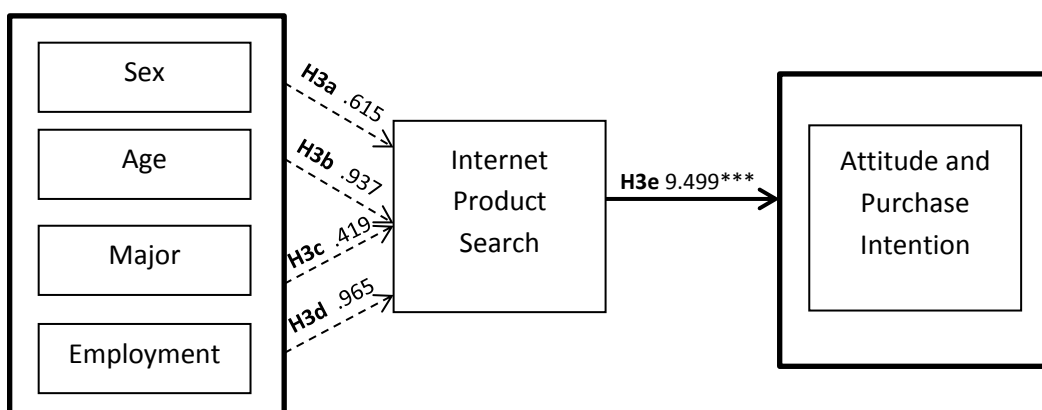
Dependent variable: Attitude and Purchase Intention for Peers

Table 4.6 Hypothesis 2 Statistics

Variable	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Regression	24.374	7	3.482	11.922	.000***
Residual	44.101	151	.292		
Total	68.475	158			

Note. * $p < .05$, *** $p < .0001$

Hypothesis 3 measured the impact of Internet product search on attitude and purchase intention. A model for Hypothesis 3 is available in Figure 4.3.



Note. * $p < .05$, *** $p < .0001$

Figure 4.3 Hypothesis 3 Model

One of the top reasons individuals use the Internet is to gain information and research products (Stafford & Stafford, 2004). Individuals tend to utilize online customer reviews, as they contain additional sources of information (Sridhar & Srinivasan, 2012). Females tend to search for more information online than males (McMahan et al., 2009). The following sub-hypotheses were measured using multiple regression.

Main Hypothesis	Sub Hypotheses
Internet Product Search will have an impact on college students	<p>H3a: Internet product search has a greater impact for females than males for high risk product information searches.</p> <p>H3b: Internet product search has a greater impact for younger participants than older participants for high risk product information searches.</p> <p>H3c: Internet product search has a greater impact for certain majors for high risk product information searches.</p> <p>H3d: Internet product search has a greater impact for employed participants than unemployed participants for high risk product information searches.</p> <p>H3e: Internet product search positively influences the individual's attitude and purchase intention toward a product.</p>

The model created for the impact of Internet product search on attitude and purchase intention predicted 41.2% of variance. Interestingly, only Internet product search was a significant predictor on attitude and purchase intention ($F(7, 152) = 15.185, p < .001$). Thus, individuals that conduct higher levels of searching the Internet for product information have a more positive attitude and purchase intention toward a product. Statistics for Hypothesis 3 are available in Table 4.7 and 4.8. Hypothesis H3e was supported.

Table 4.7 Hypothesis 3 Regression Statistics

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Internet Product Search	.572	.060	.630	9.499	.000***
Age	.001	.009	.005	.079	.937
Sex	-.041	.082	-.033	-.504	.615
Major	-.103	.127	-.060	-.811	.419
Employment	-.004	.086	-.003	-.044	.965

Note. * $p < .05$, *** $p < .0001$

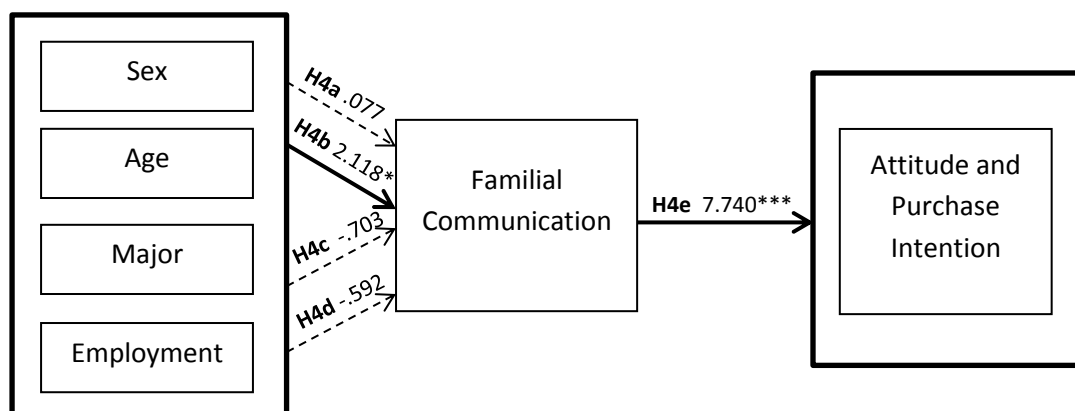
Dependent variable: Attitude and Purchase Intention for Internet Product Search

Table 4.8 Hypothesis 3 Statistics

Variable	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Regression	23.888	7	3.413	15.185	.000***
Residual	34.160	152	.225		
Total	58.048	159			

Note. * $p < .05$, *** $p < .0001$

Hypothesis 4 was measured using multiple regression to determine the impact that familial communication has upon attitude and purchase intention. A model for Hypothesis 4 is available in Figure 4.4.



Note. * $p < .05$, *** $p < .0001$

Figure 4.4 Hypothesis 4 Model

Learning consumer skills is a role parents fulfill throughout their child's life (Ahmad et al., 2011). Advice is usually sought from parents for more expensive items that need to perform and be accepted by others (Moschis & Moore, 1979). Located below are the sub-hypotheses that were tested.

Main Hypothesis	Sub Hypotheses
Familial communication will have an impact on college students	<p>H4a: Familial communication has a greater impact for females than males for high risk product information searches.</p> <p>H4b: Familial communication has a greater impact for younger participants than older participants for high risk product information searches.</p> <p>H4c: Familial communication has a greater impact for certain majors for high risk product information searches.</p> <p>H4d: Familial communication has a greater impact for employed participants than unemployed participants for high risk product information searches.</p> <p>H4e: Familial communication positively influences the individual's attitude and purchase intention toward a product.</p>

The model created accounted for 32.8% of the variance for familial communication's relationship with attitude and purchase intention. Familial communication was found to have a positive influence on an individual's attitude and purchase intention ($F(7, 152) = 10.583$, $p < .001$). This indicates that the more an individual communicates with their family about a product, the more positive attitude and purchase intention that individual has toward that product. The interaction between family communication and age was also found to be significant ($t=2.118$, $p < .05$). Thus, H4b and H4e were supported. Table 4.9 and 4.10 represents the results for Hypothesis 4.

Table 4.9 Hypothesis 4 Regression Statistics

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Family Communication	.752	.097	.540	7.740	.000***
Age	-.005	.015	-.029	-.345	.731
Sex	.008	.107	.005	.077	.939
Major	-.072	.103	-.052	-.703	.483
Employment	-.069	.117	-.041	-.592	.554
Family and Age	.064	.030	.177	2.118	.036*

Note. * $p < .05$, *** $p < .0001$

Table 4.10 Hypothesis 4 Statistics

Variable	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Regression	30.400	7	4.343	10.583	.000***
Residual	62.375	152	.410		
Total	92.775	159			

Note. * $p < .05$, *** $p < .0001$

Based on the results of this study, the scales for family communication, peer communication, VSNS usage, and Internet product search demonstrate that they were very good predictors of a positive attitude and purchase intention. However, the antecedent variables in this study have failed to demonstrate any significant predictive quality. Figure 4.5 represents the statistical findings for this study as demonstrated through the model. As this study represents an under-researched area in consumer behavior, both significant and insignificant findings are of interest and is discussed comprehensively with the discussion.

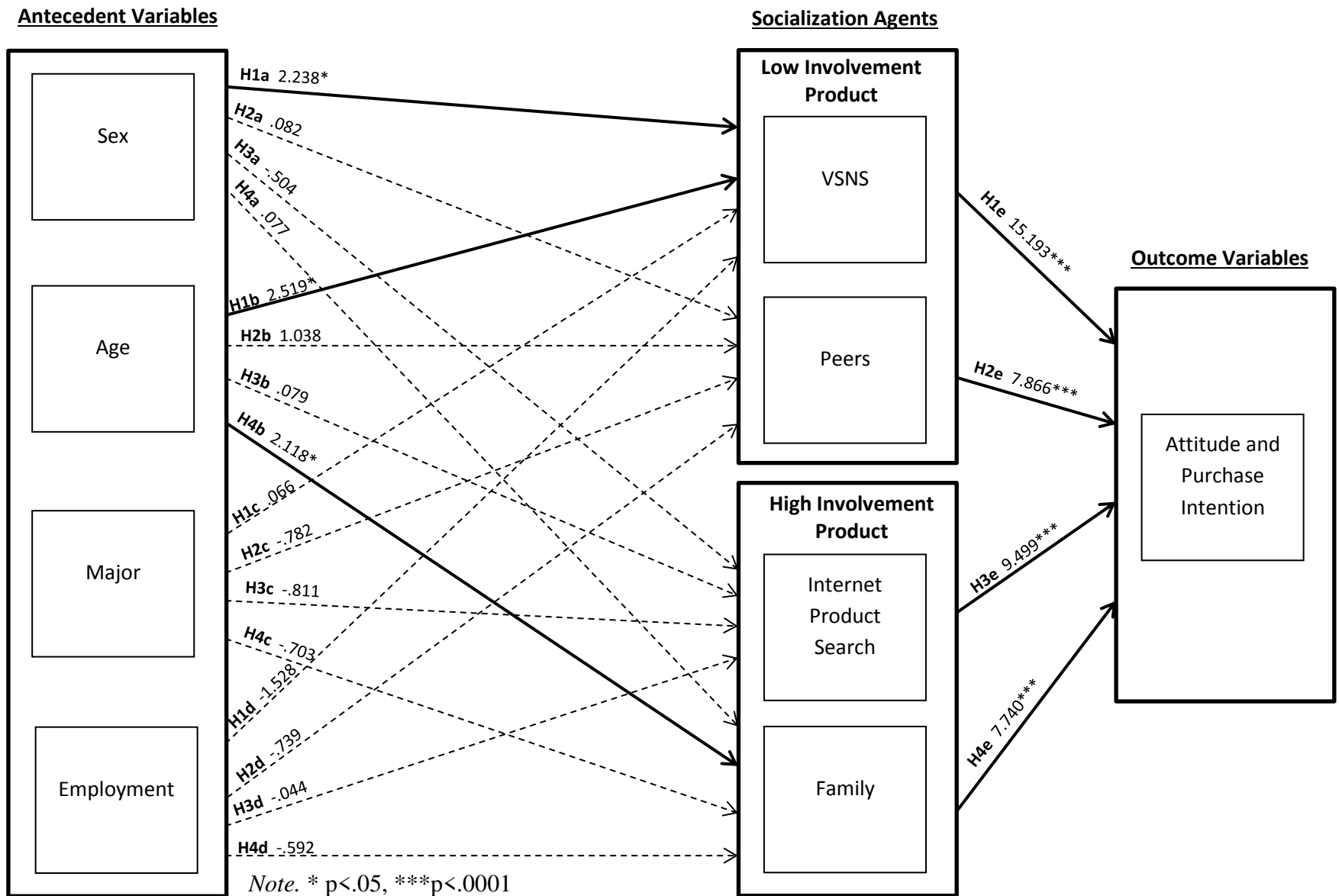


Figure 4.5 Statistical Findings for Theoretical Model

Phase II: Integration of Quantitative Results for Qualitative Inquiry

Based upon the results of the quantitative phase of this study, all socialization agents have been found to be significant predictors of attitude and purchase intention. The socialization agents include familial communication, peer communication, VSNS usage, and Internet product search. Therefore, creation of the qualitative interview questions encompassed all four socialization agents focused upon in this study.

Interview questions were developed under guidance from Dillman et. al (2009), Creswell (2005), Charmaz (2014) and Strauss and Corbin (1998). Dillman et. al (2009) provided expertise on the order in which questions should take place., such as grouping related questions together , starting with a question that participants can easily answer, and ordering questions in a logical succession. Creswell (2005) and Charmaz (2014) provided insight into how interview questions should be created using an appropriate structure to obtain in-depth findings. To create a group of such questions, Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggested that interview questions should include sensitizing, theoretical, structural, and guiding inquiries. As an example, an interview question from this study is “Which do you believe have more influence over what you purchase: families, friends, information you found online or online social media?” followed by “Why?” which signifies a theoretical question. Structural and guiding questions in this study include the probing questions that participants received based on their in-depth responses. The interview questions created for the qualitative phase are available in Appendix N.

Phase III: Qualitative Findings

At the end of the quantitative survey in Phase 1, participants were asked if they would volunteer to take part in an interview. Ninety-nine individuals provided an email

address for participation in the qualitative phase. Of the 99 volunteers, 11 participants were recruited and interviewed for this study. Three participants were male and eight participants were female, all of which were either 19 or 20 years of age. Nine participants were also employed. Participants were from various majors across the university, including Marketing, Fisheries and Wildlife, Math, Computer Science, Biology, Journalism, Biochemistry, Mechanical Engineering, Veterinary Science, Secondary Education, and Agriculture Education. The 11 interviews did reach saturation.

Males and females in this study were similar in most instances, except for the frequency in which certain products are purchased, such as electronics or fashion items. Females were also found to mention and discuss VSNS more than males. Differences were not observed between age and major. Saturation occurred when the same properties among the consumer socialization patterns continued to emerge based from participant's responses.

Interviews were transcribed using Dragon NaturallySpeaking and were checked for errors as audio and text were matched once the initial transcription was created. Member checking was employed and no requests for change were sought by participants. Once transcriptions were complete, the coding process began. MaxQDA was used to manage codes throughout open coding, focused coding, and themed coding. During open coding, 41 codes were created resulting in 264 coded items within the 11 transcripts. Some examples of open coded items include: mom's emotional connection, texts with pictures, new experiences, free shipping, financial family connections, lack of communication on VSNS, and friends' opinions in person.

Focused coding, the second level of coding, further reduced the number of codes utilized based on a more in-depth understanding and reflection of the data collected. Such codes provided more direction toward the major process and concepts presented within this study. The number of codes were thoughtfully considered and consolidated into 11 codes. Some examples of focused coded items include: customer reviews, family member specialties, and participants being as informed as possible. A situational map was created throughout the open coding and focused coding stages, which is available in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11. Situational Map of Main Concepts

Main Concept	Conceptual Elements
Human/Physical Interaction	College living situation (i.e. limited transportation) Lack of funds Family member specialties Mom knows best Convenience Reject friends' opinions Rely on family when resources are short Emotional connection to family Physical proximity to friends when shopping
Technological/Virtual Interaction	Customer reviews most used source on Internet Skepticism toward customer reviews Free shipping is important (i.e. save money) Social networks provide ideas for products Lack of communication on VSNS with family/friends Social networks seen as glorified ads
Relationships between Technology and Physical Contact	Online research and family work hand-in-hand Text with pictures to family Informed as possible about product through multiple mediums Many opinions sought on a product Newness of items purchased require research

Theoretical coding, the third level of coding, provided a deeper analysis of the coded data. Based on this in-depth emulsion into the data, four themes and one overarching theme became evident. The four themes reflect the process in which individuals learn about the information they seek for products, while the overarching theme provides insight into the ideas in which participants engaged in the process of obtaining consumer information. The process by which individuals seek information is demonstrated in Figure 4.6.

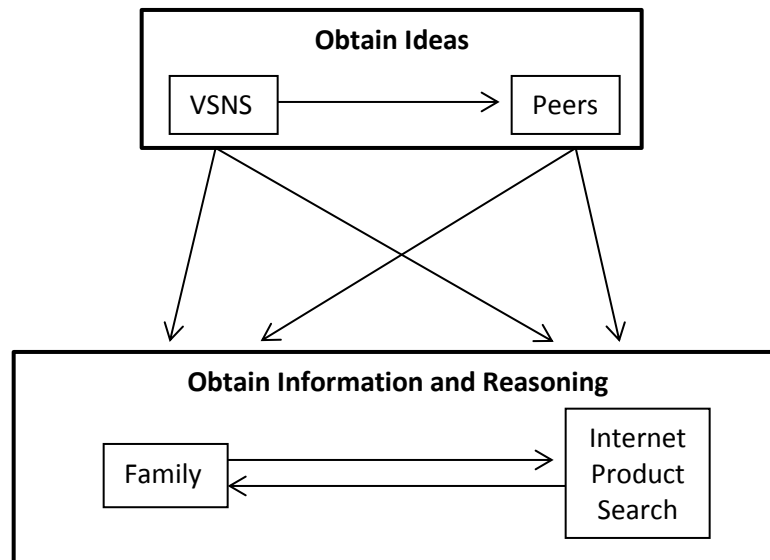


Figure 4.6 The Process by which Individuals Seek Information

Themes were created to reflect the process by which individuals learn about the products that they purchase. Four main themes and one overarching theme best reflected the ideas that participants in this study presented. The four themes include participants' reliance on his or her mother, not always taking friends' opinions, utilizing but being weary of customer reviews, and the use of VSNS as product ideas, but can also be

glorified ads. The overarching theme is that when resources are in short supply, more informed consumers are the result.

Mom knows best for most things. Many participants cited their mom as the most influential member of their family. In many instances, his or her mom was deemed to be the most financially responsible, and also to be the most emotionally involved. One participant outlined how her mother is the financial pinnacle in her life.

“I usually talk more to my mom about any kind of financial stuff. She's better at that than my other family members”

The following quote demonstrates the financial responsibility and experience that parents emulate for this participant.

“...I'll go to my mom or my dad when it comes to big purchases like that. Just to make sure that I'm spending my money wisely, because they have a lot more experience with that than I do. I might as well ask.”

A few other participants discussed how there is a dependence on family members for monetary support while attending college.

“Also if I spend the money, I'm working, but I can't afford to buy all things. My parents will pay for that, so I kind of tell them that I want to buy that because it is good.”

One participant discussed how her mom encourages her to save her money instead of purchase wanted items.

“She is really good at saving money and if it is not necessary, not to buy objects. Occasionally, she does think “Oh, you should get a new pair of jeans” or “Your shoes are getting really old. You should replace those.” There are a few things like that, but for the most part it's more about spending money only if you really need that.”

Many participants described a relationship with their mothers that helped them to determine whether they should purchase a product. Moms were described as knowing whether an item is really wanted or needed.

“Even after all of that research and everything, if my mom says “I really don't think you need that” or “You probably shouldn't purchase that,” then usually I don't. She is usually the deciding factor in it, just because I value her opinion the most. So even if the product reviews say it is super great, if she says she hasn't heard good things about it, I usually listen to her.”

Emotionally, a mother's opinion was found to be important to participants. One participant described how her mother's opinion would affect her.

“I know if I were to purchase something and my mom thinks it is a bad purchase, she will say something about it and it will make me feel bad.”

Honesty was found to be a reason in which participants sought their family's advice. A few participants discussed how they expected their mothers to tell them the truth about products and potential purchases.

“The most influential is my mom. For example, for clothes I am a super undecided person, so I ask for her to tell me the truth.”

Another participant discussed how he wanted his parents to be aware of this thoughtfulness toward purchasing items.

“I usually tell them that I've thought about purchasing it, so that they can see that I have given it some thought and I've made my options of what I want to do and now I'm coming to them. So they don't think they're the first person I'm going to about it and that I haven't thought it through.”

Participants were found to contact their mothers via phone calls or text messages accompanied by pictures of the product.

“It was higher end and more expensive, and I wasn't sure if I wanted to buy it. I couldn't decide. I took pictures of it and sent it to my mom and asked her what her thoughts were on it.”

Mothers also serve as a sounding board for decisions.

“I called her and said “I think I am going to start looking to buy a laptop.” She talked me through it and strongly encouraged me in her direction.”

Mothers in this study were found to provide an open forum for communication about products.

In contrast, some individuals commented that for some products, his or her mom was not the most knowledgeable. One participant described how her mom wasn't the family member to ask when it comes to fashion items.

“My mom, sometimes she is old-fashioned. Maybe I will like one thing and she won't.”

Another participant discussed how she goes to different family members for different items.

“For the most part, I will ask my mom, just because we are super close. But if it is some electronic device or something, I will ask my dad because he is sort of a tech guru and I'll ask him about groceries and stuff. Anything current, like current music or stuff like that, I will usually ask my brother because he is more current on that than I am.”

Another participant discussed how for most items, his family was not knowledgeable on the products that he purchases.

“Anything big that I buy, I usually do my own research on it, because either my family doesn't know too much about it, like my dad had a lot of computer stuff, but a lot of his knowledge about that is outdated. It depends on what I'm buying, whether or not I go to them.”

Mothers were found to be the most influential immediate family member for the participants in this study. Most participants deemed family one of the most important influences on the products that he or she purchases. When discussing how she talks about products with friends, one participant even stated that she will text her mother while shopping with friends, while she will not text her friends about such decisions.

“It is always in person. I don't text them. Sometimes when I am out with friends I will text my mom.”

Friends’ opinions are not always taken. Lack of honesty was found to be of concern to many participants, especially when the item was clothing.

“I trust less my friends, because they can sometimes be jealous of something and say “No, not really.” I believe my mom’s opinion more than them. It depends on which friend.”

Four other participants discussed how they don’t always take their friend’s advice.

“...it is not always the best advice.... They'll all give you advice and it'll contradict itself. How do you pick who's right and who's wrong?”

Another participant simply stated that he chooses to make his own decisions when being influenced by friends.

“I try to purposely not listen to what they say.”

If friends’ advice was not taken, one participant described how this untaken advice still provides valuable information.

“Even if you don't end up taking the same; like if they said “Oh, I used that and it was awful” and then you end up buying it, I feel like you go into a purchase knowing as much as you can and that makes it better I think. If I go in knowing that somebody else didn't like it but I am trying it out anyway, I have a different attitude about what I am expecting out of that product.”

Another participant believed that family members were more conscientious of his or her financial situation than friends.

“I'm closer to my family though than friends. Normally friends, they'll give you advice, but probably not as conscientious as your family.”

Information and advice about products were overwhelmingly sought in person, as shopping was deemed a social activity.

“Most of them are clothes. Because when you go shopping, you need someone to bring.”

Questions about products were found to be asked in the moment, instead of planned conversations.

“In person normally. Just when I see them and it comes up in a conversation or something. I don't normally go out of my way to.”

For products in which family members have little to no experience, friends were found to provide experiences for such products.

“I actually talk to my friends a lot more about buying stuff than my family, because a lot of electronics that I buy, most of my friends own similar electronics. I know one of my friends is really into computer stuff, so he knows more about it than I do at any given point because he actually keeps up with it.”

Another participant discussed how her friends have helped her find products to aid in adjusting to a change in climate.

“Because I am from a country that has no winter, I don't have the four seasons in my home country, so I seek their advice for things like winter coats; things that I did not normally buy in my home country, so like winter coats, some moisturizers and creams, such things like that.”

Friends were also found to confirm participants' existing attitudes on products. Many participants also discussed how they sought friends' advice for smaller priced products. When asked if she thinks asking friends for advice on products was important, one participant described the confidence received by discussing items with her peers.

"I don't know if it's exactly important. I guess it makes you feel good about your purchase, but because it's such small stuff, it doesn't matter much."

Friends were also found to be easier to ask than other methods of communication.

"It's also a lot easier to ask them versus asking online because I can give my own question versus having to kind of figure it out from reviews."

VSNS are glorified ads, but provide product ideas. All participants stated that social media was not their first choice when it comes to finding product information. However, many participants stated that they found ideas for what they would like to purchase on such sites.

"I don't search for the item, but I search Pinterest for pictures that influence, like "Oh I want to buy that." I don't buy within the social media. It makes me want to buy it."

Being exposed to products on VSNS creates more interest in certain products.

"To see if a lot of people are wearing this product or posting about it on social media and they think it is super cool, then maybe it is worth another look at."

However, it is more difficult to purchase the items, because some VSNS do not have links to a buyable product.

"So I see the picture and I want to buy it, but I don't have the button to buy it. I have to search for that, so it is more lazy. I just get the idea."

Another participant described how she uses Pinterest and Instagram. Both have two different missions that help individuals find products.

“I would go more to Pinterest for products, because it's more what it's geared toward. Instagram also has a lot of stuff. That's more like application of things rather than products.”

For some items, one participant discussed how it is easier to search for items on VSNS.

“Yeah, I definitely think it's a good resource. It is sometimes faster than just general searching. If you go to the place where you know you have it. Like, if you go to Pinterest and you search in that kind of language, then you're going to get more of what you're looking for. It's a good resource.”

It also provides a more realistic representation of an item. One participant described how she likes to see products on VSNS so that she can see how the item functions in a real context.

“Instagram, I like to follow the people who are wearing the clothing, but they're not models who just take the pictures to promote the brand. I like that; I'm like “Oh, that is really cute and it looks great on her and she's a similar body type.” I like that. So, Instagram too.”

There were mixed views on whether sponsored advertisements on VSNS and Facebook were helpful or hindrances. Some participants described how they found information through sponsored ads and enticed them to look at different or new types of products.

“Usually, I am searching for one thing, and then I saw this ad for another thing and it was just like “Okay, maybe I will switch.” I'll switch from product A to product B, just because of the ads or the information on it was more exciting than the first one.”

Other participants discussed how sponsored ads are to be ignored and do not affect one's attitude or choices toward purchasing a product.

“Social networks are made to be ads, pretty much. They are made for advertisers, so I don't think that's very good for buying stuff. I don't pay attention to ads as much on social networks. It doesn't really affect me.”

Some participants discussed how they follow brands on VSNS. As some VSNS have tried to connect items with websites in which individuals can purchase the product, this provides a level of convenience for the participant.

“I follow on Instagram boutiques and different smaller boutiques that sell their stuff through Instagram. Then you can scroll through their products and they have on their website what sizes they have and how much it is and you can click on it and go straight to their website too. That's really nice to have.”

One participant discussed how he doesn't always follow a brand, but will spontaneously look at the brand when the desire arises.

“I try to minimize all of my likes and follows. For certain brands, yes. But, like a snooping mentality, I just kind of go and look at them but not follow them on Twitter or something; but go and read their tweets every so often.”

Using VSNS was found to be a time-filler for most participants in this study. Many participants described how they will spend a few minutes on a VSNS site per time, but will access VSNS sites multiple times per day. Access to the VSNS usually happens through one's smartphone.

“Usually through my phone. When I am waiting for class to start, I will just hop on Pinterest and just look through things.”

Another participant mentioned how social networks, particularly Facebook, were always open on his computer.

“It's like, I'll be doing something else on my computer and I'll just have Facebook on my other monitor. I don't consciously think that this is Facebook time. I go on Facebook for 5 minutes and then I get off. I just kind of leave it open. Usually if I am on the computer, it is usually open in the background.”

One participant discussed her frustration toward VSNS, as she found that it filled too much of her time and attempted to wane her usage of such sites.

“I used to spend a lot more time on Twitter and all of those sites, and Instagram. Just within the past year, I try to avoid that, so I deleted my Twitter and then I got rid of all of my friends on Instagram. I just follow clothing sites now. I follow my family and then retailers, basically, which is kind of silly.”

Communication among friends and family members on VSNS was not found in this study, as many participants discussed their desire for privacy when obtaining or disseminating information about products.

“I will tell you about my vacation or I will tell you what I am doing in school, but not really like “Oh I went out and bought a new shirt today.” I see some of those on Facebook and I'm just like, really? We don't care. I don't care at least. I suppose if you bought a new car, I would care or the new iPhone.”

Discussing products using this method was not as convenient as messaging friends or family members, which are not displayed upon one's social network profile.

“I will message somebody about something, but that's more of the thing with asking your friends about what they think. It's not like I am posting on their wall, like “Hey man. I found this awesome product. What do you think about it?” It's more like I message them, “Is this any good?” It's not like this sneaky ad or anything.”

Other means of finding information were found to be more beneficial for the participants in this study.

“Usually not, because I've already asked my family or friends or I've Google it. Social media doesn't have that much influence over me.”

Customer reviews are important, but proceed with caution. Every participant discussed their reliance on customer reviews for product information. Participants sought necessary information by reading through the reviews and viewing the ranking system,

such as the number of stars a product received. Many felt as if they trusted information within customer reviews, as individuals that review such products have made an investment of money and time.

“I think it's because other people have already experienced it and I guess I am kind of taking a leap of faith in trusting their judgment, but I figure if enough people had a bad time with a particular product then I shouldn't waste my time.”

Participants in this study also mentioned that the star ranking system is not as reliable as the written review.

“I definitely do the read through more than the stars, just because the stars depend on the person's opinion. It might be four stars, but what does that one star actually mean type thing? I definitely like reading the customer reviews, because they'll usually tell you “Oh, I like this product because of this” or “There are some issues with this.””

One participant even described that a certain star ranking may be better than the other star rankings.

“If it's something big, I use Amazon reviews to look at the low scores, because low scores are usually people who know things or have found problems with them. If you want to buy something, a lot of people are not very knowledgeable about what they're buying, so they will just say that it works and give it five stars. So I look at the two and three star reviews, because the one star reviews are usually something stupid, like it never came or the box was bent. The two and three stars are pretty good. I like reading those; those are a lot more fun. Not more fun, more useful.”

When asked how often she used customer reviews, a participant mentioned that her desire for a product may be stronger than the negative reviews she found.

“Usually a lot, because for some things I need to know whether it will fit my needs. I need to look at the customer reviews, unless it is something that I really, really want, then I don't care what others think. This is for me.”

Participants discussed how, for larger purchases, information that they sought online was the most beneficial. Many mentioned that certain experiences with the product were key to their attitudes and decisions. When asked for what type of purchases he would seek customer reviews on the Internet, one participant stated that larger purchases needed more attention to quality.

“If it's a big purchase, I think it's important. I think it's better to buy something that's good and will last a while then something that you have to replace in two years or whatever. If you can figure out what is actually going to be the best value, I think it's worthwhile to do that.”

One participant also mentioned that, if time allows, he will use customer reviews for smaller purchases as well.

“If I have nothing else to do, I can spend a lot of time just looking up stuff online about something I want to buy. It could even be something for 50 bucks and I could spend three hours looking at reviews. It's too much. I end up buying something good, so it works. It works out.”

To find reviews or products, participants sought information from Google, Amazon, or used search engine optimization to find a website which best fit their needs. When asked the process in which she searched for information, one participant discussed how she searched for websites about the product, as well as looking at the reviews.

“I first do a general Google search to just try and find as much information about the products as I can and then sometimes look at the reviews for certain products and see what other people think about it. If it's a terrible review and nobody likes the products, obviously it's probably not good to get.”

As many participants pointed out, individuals need to be wary of the information that they see online. Information is not always deemed as accurate, as retailers may not be honest about the product's attributes or individuals reviewing the item may be paid by the retailer as a reward for completing the review.

“The one thing about product reviews that you have to be careful about is that there is actually more bought traffic than human traffic on the Internet, so you have to be really mindful of what the reviews are saying to tell if they are legitimate or not.”

Credibility of information on a website was also a concern.

“The Internet is not always the best for most things, but it has gotten a lot better because there are more customer reviews and there are different ways to check the credibility of the site.”

Since each individual's needs are different, one participant mentioned how she takes her own needs into consideration.

“... I always keep in mind that people on the Internet, they not have the same needs as me. I will go through a couple of reviews and decide if it is really that bad, then I will not buy it. If it is still affordable, still within my range of what I need, and it will still do what I need, so I will go ahead and buy it.”

One participant pointed out, that you never truly know what the product is until you receive it.

“It is good to help decide, but it sometimes cannot really be true. You really have to read and see if there are too many people or too many pages say that it is bad. When they argue, it can just be a difference of opinion, you don't really know until you have it.”

All participants mentioned the use of consumer reviews. Some participants mentioned that they tend to lean toward the consensus that they see online more than other resources in their lives.

“I think I’ll kind of, it’s really strange to think about, but I’ll kind of discount real people and go more for consensus that I see online. I feel like people are more truthful or they’ve taken time to write about it, so they may be care a little more.”

The sheer amount of information available online also provides information to participants over other forms of information.

“If I want to look up something, there are tons and tons of information online. If I want to look up something on Amazon, I can go and there are 500 reviews for any product and I can see this is what this person has to say. These people actually have used it.”

Resources are in short supply. Consult many sources for information. All participants in this study were new consumers for many items, as they had left their family homes within the past two to three years, and were learning about certain products for the first time. Family members, in particular, were consulted for such items, as they were deemed to have more experience within those product categories, such as household cleaners and food.

“When I first moved out on my own, I definitely asked a lot about grocery purchases and things like that, because I wasn’t used to it. So anything that I haven’t purchased frequently before. If it is a new type of clothing that I didn’t used to wear, I would ask for advice or if it is something that I wanted to make for dinner, I would ask. I guess most frequently, I ask advice on clothing and makeup.”

Due to busy schedules and, in some instances, a lack of transportation, convenience of knowing which items would best suit an individuals' need was evident.

"I lived on campus but didn't have a car, so a lot of the purchases I made were online purchases. Having the Internet there to reference and look at things helped me decide what I wanted and where I was going to get it from. When I didn't have a car, I couldn't travel to all of the different retailers and look there. I had to do it all at my desk."

Free shipping helped to solve these issues, as well as help to save money. When asking a participant if free shipping was important, she mentioned the benefits of such as service.

"Yes. Very big. It's like going to the store and I'm not wasting any money, so yes that's a big thing for sure."

Financial considerations were evident among participants, as many discussed the reliance on family members or the cost of living without sufficient monetary funds. With money in short supply, each purchase is taken into consideration.

"Especially where in the college years, I am still very much connected to my family monetarily. It's probably the best option because they always joke that indirectly I'm spending their money, because that's money I can spend on college, so they have to spend it and in student loans and stuff like that."

Larger purchases, such as laptops, housing, and study abroad opportunities, were taken with great care and required much more information from surrounding resources.

Overall, participants cited family and information sought on the Internet as the most influential for the large purchase decisions. When asked which socialization agent was the most influential, one participant responded:

“Probably my family in the end, because after I do all of my research of what items I'm looking at and which are worth my money and my time to purchase, then I go to my family and get their final opinion.”

One participant discussed the process in which she would interact with each socialization agent.

“Searching on the Internet, I usually have an idea already of what I need when I search on the Internet. That would usually maybe come from family, like the idea of what I need. The friends are usually; I would just verify small items when I happened to be with them and I don't really use social media for shopping.”

Smaller purchases, such as makeup, fashion items, and food, were not researched by the participant as thoroughly as big purchases. Overall, participants cited friends and social networks as the most influential for the smaller purchase decisions. A participant mentioned the types of products in which she would seek information from her friends.

“Usually just like fashion. I don't really ask them about high-end purchases because I save those for my family members.”

Another participant revealed the context in which she shops with her friends.

“We go to Target a lot; I sometimes get snacks and stuff. I might ask, like if I don't know if I should get ice cream or popsicles, I might ask for their input there. Nothing major.”

Many participants declared that they wanted to be as informed as possible when making purchase decisions. This included spending time searching online for information, as well as obtaining opinions from both family and friends.

“...you need to go into buying stuff as informed as you can. I don't know where I draw the line on that, but if it's something where I have a choice to make, I definitely like to consult resources.”

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that when resources are in short supply, more informed consumers emerge.

Phase IV: Interpretation and Joint Analysis

This study yielded many interesting results and findings. The findings of the qualitative phase did provide an in-depth look into the significant results in the quantitative phase. Table 4.12 provides a joint analysis highlighting the beneficial ways in which the quantitative and qualitative phases complement one another. The results and findings of how participants use VSNS were very similar due to the use of such websites for product information. The qualitative phase, however, did yield information about the use of advertisements within social networks. The influence of peers differed from the quantitative to the qualitative phase, as survey results indicated that peers were an influence on product information, however, the coded interviews revealed that participants did not always follow friends' advice. Customer reviews were the most discussed method in which participants found product information, which was also supported quantitatively in terms of Internet product search. Family members were also found to be of importance in both quantitative and qualitative phases. Participants during the interview discussed the continual influence family members, especially mothers, had upon their purchase decisions. Thus, the quantitative and qualitative phases worked together to provide a more in-depth picture of the CST.

Table 4.12 Joint Analysis for Quantitative and Qualitative Phases

Socialization Agent	Quantitative: Online Survey	Qualitative: Face-to-Face Interview
VSNS	<p>College students have a positive attitude and purchase intention when viewing and discussing products on VSNS</p> <p>Females have a more positive attitude and purchase intention when using VSNS</p> <p>Younger individuals tend to have a more positive attitude and purchase intention when using VSNS</p> <p>VSNS membership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 67.8% Snapchat (n=160) • 57.6% Instagram (n=136) • 50.4% Pinterest (n=119) • 15.3% Wanelo (n=36) 	<p>Choices Among VSNS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pinterest, Instagram, Facebook ads <p>Reasons for VSNS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get idea for desired products • Ads in SNS and VSNS <p>Little communication with others via VSNS, but participants observed products</p>
Peers	<p>College students have a positive attitude and purchase intention when discussing low risk products with friends</p>	<p>Choices Among Peers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proximity when shopping <p>Reason for Peer Communication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gain ideas about future product purchases • Ask about small purchases, pressures don't cost a lot <p>College students seek, but do not always take advice of friends</p>
Internet Product Search	<p>College students have a positive attitude and purchase intention when searching the Internet for product information</p>	<p>Choices Among Internet Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer reviews, mainly on Amazon • Google search engine <p>Reasons for Internet Product Search:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gain product specific information • View more experienced advice <p>Skepticism toward information presented on the Internet</p>
Family	<p>College students have a positive attitude and purchase intention when discussing high risk products with family members</p> <p>Younger participants relied more on their families than friends for advice</p>	<p>Choices Among Family Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mom • Family member specialized knowledge <p>Reasons for Family Communication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financially dependent • Emotionally connected • Trustworthy opinions • 'Sounding board' for decisions

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Both the quantitative phase and the qualitative phase led to results and findings providing immense depth and breadth to this study. Similarities between data were demonstrated through both phases, but differences also exist. While the quantitative phase provided information about which resources and what information individuals seek, the qualitative phase provided more in-depth information about the process an individual endures while learning about products.

VSNS Usage

SNS is used as a social tool which motivates individuals to conform to their peers (Krishnan & Atkin, 2014). Thirty percent of college students use SNS at least four times per day (McGough & Salomon, 2013). The top two reasons that individuals use social networks are for social and entertainment motivations. In addition, more than half of young adults from across Europe, Asia, and North America use SNS as a way to communicate and connect with others (Rao & Shalini, 2013). While participants in this study discussed the entertainment value of VSNS, they failed to recount the influence VSNS has upon their attitude and intention to purchase despite quantitative findings specifying the significance of VSNS. In contrast, Pate and Adams (2014) found that college students consider information posted by online friends on SNS to be important and are more likely to purchase items discussed and liked by friends.

VSNS were found to have significant impacts on attitude and purchase behavior, but when discussing such sites with participants, many mentioned how VSNS provide the idea for the product, but not information on the product. To et al., (2007)

found that even though virtual communities are popular, they are not a strong enough influence for consumers to value. Krishnan and Atkin (2014) described SNS as information for confident individuals that seek social connection and ease of use medium. SNS is primarily used for individuals that are comfortable with face-to-face interactions and are hoping to extend their social lives into the digital world. Females also tend to be more involved in SNS (Krishnan & Atkin, 2014).

The more followers, or friends on VSNS, and individual has, the higher the number of comments and likes on items posted (Bakhshi, Shamma, & Gilbert, 2014). SNS helps to create a collaborative framework for disseminating information (Krishnan & Atkin, 2014). Pinterest users have been found to appreciate the ability to easily find pictures from individuals with similar tastes. Individuals who use Pinterest tend to find new people with similar interests to add to their social network (Zhong et al., 2014). Shared interests are the strongest driver of activity for Pinterest contrary to social connections (Chang et al., 2014). In this study, participants discussed the hedonic motivations to use Pinterest and seek products through VSNS for entertainment. Many participants suggested that they did not care how many followers were utilizing an item, but considered further investigating the product.

Individuals have been found to participate more in SNS if searching for products hedonically, while utilitarian motivations lead to a higher level of browsing behavior. Hedonic shoppers are concerned with actively engaging within the SNS while utilitarian shoppers were more concerned with upcoming purchases and are searching for information (Poyry, Parvinen, & Malmivaara, 2013). Utilitarian shoppers who experience time savings had a higher purchase intention and demonstrated a higher level

of loyalty. The more access to information an individual receives, the more time the individual saves (Anderson, Knight, Pookulangara, & Josiam, 2014). Convenience is of utmost importance to young adults (Wu, Tao, Li, Wang, & Chiu, 2014). Participants described the hedonic motivation leading to the use of VSNS, as it is entertainment to fill time, but also discussed the availability of information on VSNS and how products found on VSNS can lead to more investigation on the Internet at a later time.

VSNS may not be the most reliable source of information due to the ability to change content easily. For example, Instagram can display pictures with filters to make a person or item seem more appealing. Privacy on SNS is of higher concern to individuals' whose parents imparted their own concerns of sharing certain content (Feng & Xie, 2014) and is the top reason for not using SNS (Wu, Tao, Li, Wang, & Chiu, 2014). However, the higher level of efficiency an individual has with social media, the higher the level of trustworthiness of information found on the SNS. This may be due to the vast amount of information available on SNS about products, however, individuals are less likely to seek information on specific information rather than general information (Hocevar, Flanagin, & Metzger, 2014). A study by Flanagin and Metzger (2013) found that individuals see less of a difference between information written by experts and information written by the average user (Flanagin & Metzger, 2013), which can also be deduced in this study.

Visual elements in VSNS have been found to be a more effective way of diffusing information to users (Pajic, 2014). Social networks also eliminate communication apprehension for shy individuals, allowing for individuals to reach out to more people online (Hammick & Lee, 2013). Participants in this study discussed the availability of information on VSNS and how they can connect with friends and individuals with similar

tastes on Pinterest. Individuals with higher levels of self-esteem view SNS more favorably (Krishnan & Atkin, 2014). Information disseminated online was also found to have a relationship with altruistic tendencies (Ma & Chan, 2014). Overall, VSNS was viewed favorably by the participants in this study, but was not relied upon for extensive information despite the helpful nature of two-way communication upon these interactive websites.

Females tend to be the highest users of Pinterest and pin more diverse content than males (Chang, Kumar, Gilbert, & Terveen, 2014). Individuals use Pinterest to look at fashion items, creative ideas, organization, virtual discovery, and entertainment. Individuals also perceive a commercial influence on Pinterest's fashion category and are using the social network to shop (Mull & Lee, 2014), which was also found within this study. Participants described a lack of trust on VSNS as anyone, even marketers, can post items in an attempt to attract more sales. Similarly, Gangadharbatla, Bright, and Logan (2014) found that social media has been found to be the top source for daily news for young individuals, however, credibility of the information found is questioned by this age group (Gangadharbatla et al., 2014).

VSNS are used for passing time (Krishnan & Atkin, 2014). Web-enabled mobile devices with VSNS apps have allowed for individuals to access such websites at any time of the day (Rao & Shalini, 2013). In this study, participants discussed the entertainment value and convenience that VSNS provides. Using VSNS is considered a time-filler and was not the top choice for finding information about a product. VSNS was found to have an influence over the idea of a product, which warrants further investigation through other socialization agents.

Participants in this study viewed VSNS as a convenience and social method of gaining information. In comparison, Anderson, Knight, Pookulangara, and Josiam (2014) found that individuals using SNS for information and shopping behaviors tend to view shopping as an experiential and social. Such individuals also seek out additional information (Anderson et al., 2014), which was also found in this study. The more an individual is attached to using online resources, the more an individual will share knowledge in an online forum (Ma & Chan, 2014). SNS has changed the way information travels between consumers and allows for two-way communication. It allows individuals for more control and flexibility over the information sought (Gangadharbatla et al., 2014).

Peer Communication

Although peer influence was found to be quantitatively significant, many qualitative participants discussed how they would purposely go against their peers' influences. Pate & Adams (2013) also found conflicting responses to their study, as participants stated that they were not likely to purchase items recommended by friends, but they had purchased at least one item that a friend had recommended. This could be due to the influences that peers exert over financially insignificant purchases, as a study by Mitchell, Petrovici, Schlegelmilch, and Szocs (2014) found that peers have a broad influence on short-term decisions.

Peers were found to help provide the idea of which products should be further investigated before a purchase decision is made within this study. Eastman, Iyer, Liao-Troth, Williams, & Griffin (2014) found that peers led by example, as their participants saw their friends using mobile technology, they would also purchase and use such

technologies. Interestingly, if peers all own the same item, it is no longer considered a product designating status (Eastman et al., 2014).

Location was found to be an essential element within this study, as most participants discussed that they were in close proximity to their friends when discussing products. Manikonda, Hu, and Kambhampati (2014) also found that individuals liked to disclose their locations with friends while communicating via Instagram. Participants within this study found that shopping face-to-face as a social activity elicited the most perceived pressure from peers. Friends were not sought out if they were not present during the decision making process.

Since VSNS and SNS have allowed individuals to connect more than ever before, many studies have found that many individuals communicate with their friends using this medium. Due to this increasingly interconnected nature of society, millennials have been found to be more reliant on friends for information and motivation (Scheresberg, Lusardi, & Yakoboski, 2014). This finding was not characteristic of the current study, as many individuals stated that they did not communicate with their online friends about products. However, being a part of a VSNS may signify inclusion within one's peer group. Peers have been found to influence an individual's choice of social networks used by pressuring or recommending a change in social network (Wu, Tao, Li, Wang, & Chiu, 2014).

Product Search on the Internet

While customer reviews were considered a part of product search on the Internet for the quantitative phase, it became clear that more emphasis on this process is needed. Such reviews tend to be located on big box store websites, social networking sites (Pate

& Adams, 2014), and on Amazon. Inconsistent with this study's findings, Pate and Adams (2014) found that customer reviews did not influence an individual's intention to purchase a product, whereas the current study highlighted the importance of user-generated reviews.

Tokunaga and Gustafson (2014) found that quality and valence of information found on the Internet affect an individual's perceived efficiency online. The more reliable information is on the Internet, the more an individual will seek information online (Tokunaga & Gustafson, 2014). Many participants in this study mentioned that not all information on the Internet is accurate or reliable. In terms of customer reviews, participants were weary as to who wrote the review, the knowledge the individual initially lacked about the product, and if the reviewer had received monetary compensation for a positive review. Although participants were skeptical of reviews, it was still the most used method of gaining information about a product.

Consistent with this study, researchers have found that individuals tend to search for information about a product online before they purchase the item either online or in-store (Pate & Adams, 2013). Participants hoped to solidify their stance on an item before it was purchased to counteract regret. Individuals tended to perceive non-regret based upon the strength and number of reviews (Chang & Tseng, 2014). Since many participants discussed a lack of resources, such as transportation or money, the decision to purchase an item was of importance due to these shortages and warranted extensive insight before the item is purchased to eliminate regret and further loss of resources.

Internet shoppers have been found to expect a higher level of convenience (Akbar & James, 2014, Mee & Huei, 2014) and tend to be impulsive variety-seekers. Individuals

that also shop on the Internet more often tend to have more favorable attitudes toward online advertising strategies when compared to non-Internet shoppers (Mee & Huei, 2014). Participants within this study held positive attitudes toward shopping online, as well as gaining information from online sources. Many participants discussed the convenience of online shopping, as there are many options and item was delivered to their home, usually with free shipping.

Both utilitarian and hedonic motivations influence online and offline shopping behaviors (Poyry, Parvinen, & Malmivaara, 2013, To, Liao, & Lin, 2007). Utilitarian shoppers tend to search online for information about upcoming purchases, whereas hedonic shoppers search less aggressively and interact within online communities more (Poyry et al., 2013). Hedonic shoppers gain enjoyment, authority, and status when browsing online for products. Utilitarian shoppers search for convenience, reduced prices, availability of information, and selection. Overall, both hedonic and utilitarian motivations lead to information search for products online, while utilitarian motivations lead to a higher intention to purchase (To et al., 2007). Most participants discussed both utilitarian and hedonic motivations while searching for product information, as well as for purchasing a product. Participants were spending time searching for product information despite utilizing either motivation.

Google was cited by many participants as the search engine they used most often to find information about products, which is consistent with Rao and Shalini's (2013) findings. Search engines have been found to reassure users to adopt online shopping (Akbar & James, 2014). Millennials tend to seek technologies that are easy to use, and utilize those technologies when searching for information. Search engines are considered

an ideal source contributing to their lifestyles (Simpson & Dodigovic, 2014). Young individuals have been found to routinely return to favorite websites for information. This age group also turns to the Internet for any type of information over any other printed medium (Rao & Shalini, 2013). Participants in this study discussed the ample amount of information available online and how helpful such information is upon their decisions.

Participants in this study discussed obtaining vast amounts of information before making a significant purchase. Obtaining information offline and online have been found to contain the same motivating factors (Tokunaga & Gustafson, 2014). Poyry et al. (2013) also found that a high involvement purchase focuses upon instrumental value of the item rather than satisfaction gained from the item. There is a fine line between information desired and obtained, as this level is different per individual and can create anxiety (Tokunaga & Gustafson, 2014). Many participants discussed how they sought as much information as they deemed fit before making a purchase decision.

As popularity of the Internet increased, the use of SNS as a communication tool also increased (McGough & Salomon, 2013). Tokunaga and Gustafson (2014) suggest that the more comfortable individuals are with using the Internet, the more individuals will seek out information from interpersonal sources online. All participants discussed their comfort with the Internet and its influence upon their decisions, but did not view the direct importance of VSNS within their information-gathering investigation of a product.

Familial Communication

Many previous studies have demonstrated that family is undoubtedly a socialization agent (Mitchell, Petrovici, Schlegelmilch, & Szocs, 2014, Moschis & Churchill, 1978). This study also yielded significant results quantitatively. Parenting is

partly viewed as a leadership role among emerging consumers (Mitchell et al., 2014) and also helped to create routines around certain tasks and goals (Barreto, Szostek, Karapanos, Nunes, Pereira, & Quintal, 2014). Barretto et al. (2014) described three elements that parents demonstrate, including educating, being a role model, and providing discipline for inappropriately completed tasks or behaviors. Participants in Barretto et al.'s study also found that family members often shared information with one another about how they saved resources and motivated one another to adopt such methods. Such behaviors were also apparent in this study, as participants were communicating face-to-face, on the phone, via text message, and through email with their family members. Participants also discussed the deep emotional and financial connections they possess with their families.

Many participants discussed their discussion and reliance upon family members, as they were more trustworthy than other mediums. Yusuf, Osman, Hassan, and Teimoury (2014) found that a high quality of discussion between parents and children lead to more trustworthy actions. In terms of online usage, mutual trust between parents and their children helped to mitigate the dangers of an online atmosphere. Participants in this study also felt as if their families understood their desires better than other mediums.

Due to specific types of parenting styles and the poor economy, college-aged individuals are less likely to leave the family's home (Snyder, 2013). Participants in the qualitative phase in this study mentioned the monetary strain of being a college student. Parents have been the sole leaders in teaching children to reduce costs and waste (Barreto et al., 2014). Also, at this phase in their lifecycles, long-term choices were found to be of greater concern requiring extensive contemplation. Examples in this study include study

abroad programs, colleges, laptops, and other expensive electronics. Similarly, Wang et al. (2007) also found that parents had a stronger influence over larger purchases and life decisions.

Through qualitative analysis, this study determined that individuals go to family members that are knowledgeable within their selected areas. Similarly, previous studies have found that many college-aged individuals have difficulty making decisions due to overprotective parenting styles. Due to these parenting styles, Millennials also are very dependent on others (Odenweller, Booth-Butterfield, & Weber, 2014).

Previous studies have found that parents are more protective over their children's online privacy than the child's perceived threat of online data collection, regardless of demographic characteristics except for income (Feng & Xie, 2014). In contrast, children see the online space as a place in which parents cannot exert control. A parent's ethical attitudes have been found not to transcend to an online environment (Mitchell et al., 2014). Participants in this study also demonstrated the lack of communication and interaction within online forums. Many individuals also stated that their parents did not know how to use technology as well as themselves.

Interestingly, a previous study had found that SNS were used by parents to communicate with and monitor their children. Parents who participate more in SNS were more likely to communicate with their children online (Doty & Dworkin, 2014). In contrast, communication between the parents and the child via SNS were not predominant in this study. This could be due to the older age range of this study's participants as compared to the teenagers in previous studies. Similarly, Kerawalla and Cook (2002) also found that parents rarely became involved with children's online

activities. However, Doty et al. (2014) found that the oldest adolescent predicted parents' SNS usage, but parental age was not a significant predictor of SNS usage. Doty et al.'s (2014) study also concluded that a parent's and child's online relationship is different

Implications

Since college-aged individuals have been found to seek as many sources of information as possible, many implications can be derived from the results and findings of this study. Many researchers from across various fields have sought to understand the greatest influences on the purchase of products. Such fields include merchandising, marketing, business, psychology, sociology, technology, and family science. The current study can be used as a foundation to further delve into the comprehensive relationships between socialization agents and their influence over outcome behaviors.

As this study focuses upon the attitude and purchase intention of products, retailers and marketers can use the results and findings to further consider marketing mix strategies. Since family members and Internet product search are heavily considered before purchasing an expensive product, such retailers should consider innovative approaches to satisfy this need. An example includes updating websites to include direct email, text message, or online chat options for specific products. Retailers and marketers could also consider monitoring customer reviews and provide assistance and feedback for negative reviews.

Social networking executives and entrepreneurs may consider the results of this research to further expand the prevalence of shopping in an online forum. As shopping directly through VSNS has not gained as much popularity as expected, the intermix of other socialization agents should be considered. One participant in this study mentioned

her frustration with not being able to find direct information about a product on Pinterest. Social networks could consider providing an extension of information upon a directly-linked product to help individuals gain more information. This tactic would allow individuals to gain the extensive resources of the Internet, while still utilizing the VSNS.

Limitations

Based on the results and findings of this study, some limitations have been identified. For the quantitative phase, the response rate was not as high as expected. In the future, an incentive, such as a monetary reward or drawing for a reward, should be employed. The sample was not as diverse as desired, as females tend to respond to surveys more readily. Participants self-reported their feelings, which may also be inaccurate in certain situations (Dillman et al., 2014). Also, many participants did not fill out every question on the online survey, leading to a lower number of total responses for all questions.

The qualitative study only yielded 11 participants, in which only three were male. In addition, the sample only contained a very limited age range of 19 to 20 years of age. Recruitment of participants was difficult, as 99 potential participants were initially contacted, and were also reminded of participation in the study, leading to an 11% response rate. For future studies, a larger monetary reward should be provided for participants' time.

Future Research

Since most elements of this study have yet to be widely researched, there are many future research opportunities utilizing various elements outlined within this study. In the quantitative phase, VSNS yielded many significant results indicating that females

and older individuals have a more positive attitude and purchase intention toward products shown through VSNS. This result was slightly corroborated through the qualitative findings, leading to a need for more investigation into this disparity. Further investigation is also needed into the use of customer reviews and their influence upon individuals' decisions. A possible study could include the use of eye-tracking technology to track where the eye is drawn when viewing items on VSNS or information presented in online customer reviews.

Many surprising findings were discovered within the qualitative section of this study that warrant future investigation. The mothers of participants tended to be of great influence within the personal interviews and were credited with being the most trustworthy, conscientious, and influential in regard to the family's purchases. However, participants also discussed the inclusion of other family members based on his or her specialized knowledge on the product category being considered. For example, many participants discussed how he or she went to their fathers if he or she were shopping for an electronic item. Thus, it would be beneficial to conduct research on family specialization to determine if a family unit tends to divide knowledge to better provide for one another.

Another interesting contradiction found in this study was how participants tended to go against friends' opinions, yet were still influenced by their peers. This differs from many other studies (Mangleberg et al., 2004; Moschis & Moore, 1979; Shim et al., 2011; Wang et al., 2012), as peer pressure tends to drive individuals to behave in a certain manner. Further investigation is needed to determine if peer pressure primarily occurs

unconsciously or if individuals purposely choose against their peers to prove independence from that type of pressure.

Conclusion

In conclusion, all four socialization agents, familial communication, peer communication, Internet product search, and VSNS were found to be significant in this study. The qualitative phase of this study further provided in-depth information about each socialization agent and the process in which an individual would seek out these sources. Based on the results and findings, individuals tend to go to VSNS and peers to find the idea for a product and then consult online resources and family members to further gain advice.

Individuals that consulted VSNS and peers were usually seeking information about a smaller monetary purchase. These two resources provided the idea to further investigate the product or impulsively purchase the inexpensive item. VSNS was viewed by participants as entertainment and provided hedonic benefits while searching for products. Peers tended to influence individuals through their encouragement while shopping in stores. Some participants discussed how they will not always take a friend's advice, due to lack of trust and empathy toward lack of monetary resources.

Internet product search and familial communication resulted when individuals were seeking extensive information on a larger monetary purchase. All participants discussed their reliance on customer reviews on Amazon or other big box retailers. However, many participants also considered reviews to not consistently maintain a truthful level of information. In contrast, family members were considered to be the most trustworthy and were heavily relied upon for advice on many diverse products, such as

electronics, study abroad opportunities, and other products in which the participant did not have previous experience purchasing. Mothers were considered to be the most influential for most products, but many participants also discussed the consideration of other family members' knowledge of certain products.

Through the results and findings of this study, it is evident that individuals who expressed a lack of resources, such as time and money, tended to seek out additional information for purchases. As the participants in this study are emerging consumers for many products in the marketplace, a reliance on information from a variety of sources is required. The information sought has clearly led to more informed consumers.

References

- Abraham, R., & Harrington, C. (2015). Consumption patterns of the millennial generational cohort. *Modern Economy*, 6(1), 51-64.
- Aghekyan-Simonian, M., Forsythe, S., Kwon, W.S., & Chattaraman, V. (2012). The role of product brand image and online store image on perceived risks and online purchase intentions for apparel. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 19(3), 325-331.
- Ahmad, M., Sidin, S., Omar, N. (2011). A preliminary investigation of adolescents' perception of the role of Internet in parent consumer socialization. *The IUP Journal of Marketing Management*, 10(3), 7-17.
- Akbar, S., & James, P.T.J. (2013). Consumers' attitude towards online shopping: Factors influencing employees of crazy domains to shop online. *Journal of Management and Marketing Research*, 1(4), 1-11.
- Aladwani, A.M. (2014). Gravitating toward Facebook (GoToFB): What is it? And how can it be measured? *Computers in Human Behavior*, 33, 270-278.
- Anaza, N.A. (2014). Personality antecedents of customer citizenship behaviors in online shopping situations. *Psychology and Marketing*, 31(4), 251-263.
- Anderson, K.C., Knight, D.K., Pookulangara, S., & Josiam, B. (2014). Influence of hedonic and utilitarian motivations on retailer loyalty and purchase intention: A Facebook perspective. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 21, 773-779.
- Appel, M., Stiglbauer, B., Batinic, B., & Holtz, P. (2014). Internet use and verbal aggression: The moderating role of parents and peers. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 33, 235-241.

- Bae, S., & Lee, T. (2011). Gender differences in consumers' perception of online consumer reviews. *Electronic Consumer Research, 11*(2), 201-214.
- Baggett, M., & Gibbs, R. (2014). Historypin and Pinterest for digital collections: Measuring the impact of image-based social tools on discovery and access. *Journal of Library Administration, 54*(1), 11-22.
- Bakhshi, S., Shamma, D.A., & Gilbert, E. (2014). Faces engage us: Photos with faces attract more likes and comments on Instagram. *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, 965-974*.
- Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review, 84*(2), 191-215.
- Barreto, M.L., Szosteck, A., Karapanos, E., Nunes, N.J., Pereira, L., & Quintal, F. (2014). Understanding families' motivations for sustainable behaviors. *Computers in Human Behavior, 40*, 6-15.
- Bearden, W.O., Netemeyer, R.G., & Teel, J.E. (1989). Measurement of consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence. *Journal of Consumer Research, 15*(4), 473-481.
- Belch, M.A., Krentler, K.A., & Willis-Flurry, L.A. (2005). Teen internet mavens: Influence in family decision making. *Journal of Business Research, 58*(5), 569-575.
- Bian, Q., & Forsythe, S. (2012). Purchase intention for luxury brands: A cross cultural comparison. *Journal of Business Research, 65*(10), 1443-1451.
- Brooks, S. (2015). Does personal social media usage affect efficiency and well-being? *Computers in Human Behavior, 46*, 26-37.

- Bush, A.J., Smith, R., & Martin, C. (1999). The influence of consumer socialization variables on attitude toward advertising: A comparison of African-Americans and Caucasians. *Journal of Advertising*, 28 (3), 13-24.
- Caljouw, S.R., van der Kamp, J., Lijster, M., & Savelsbergh, G. (2011). Differential effects of a visual illusion on online visual guidance in a stable environment and online adjustments to perturbations. *Consciousness and Cognition*, 20(4), 1135-1143.
- Carpenter, C.C. (2013). Copyright infringement and the second generation of social media: Why Pinterest users should be protected from copyright infringement by the fair use defense. *Journal of Internet Law*, 16(7), 9-21.
- Chang, C.-C., & Tseng, A.H. (2014). The post-purchase communication strategies for supporting online impulse buying. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 39, 393-403.
- Chang, S., Kumar, V., Gilbert, E., & Terveen, L. (2014). Specialization, homophily, and gender in a social curation site: Findings from Pinterest. *Proceedings from the 17th ACM conference on computer supported cooperative work and social computing*, 674-686.
- Channel Advisor (2014). Facebook Commerce Index (FBCI). *Channel Advisor White Paper*. Retrieved from <http://go.channeladvisor.com/US-Q1-2014-FBCI-WP-LP.html?cid=701F000000IUuH&ls=Blog&lls=Blog>
- Chaplin, L.N., & John, D.R. (2010). Interpersonal influences on adolescent materialism: A new look at the role of parents and peers. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 20(2), 176-184.

- Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing Grounded Theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Chen, Y., Fay, S., & Wang, Q. (2011). The role of marketing in social media: How online consumer reviews evolve. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 25(2), 85-94.
- Cho, H., & Jialin, S.K. (2008). Influence of gender on internet commerce: An explorative study in Singapore. *Journal of Internet Commerce*, 7(1), 95-119.
- Clarke, A.E., & Friese, C. (2007). Grounded theory using situational analysis. *The SAGE Handbook of Grounded Theory*. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.
- Cornish, A.N., & Larkin, B. (2014). Social media's changing legal landscape provides cautionary tales of "Pinterest" to sports marketing. *Sports Marketing Quarterly*, 23, 47-49.
- Cox, A.D., Cox, D., & Zimet, G. (2006). Understanding consumer responses to product risk information. *Journal of Marketing*, 70(1), 79-91.
- Creswell, J. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J.W., & Plano Clark, V.L. (2011). *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J.W. (2005). *Educational Research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill.
- Cusumano, M. (2011). Platform wars come to social media. *Communications of the ACM*, 54 (4), 31-33.
- Dapko, J.L., & Artis, A.B. (2014). Less is more: An exploratory analysis of optimal visual appeal and linguistic style combinations in a salesperson's initial-contact

- email to millennial buyers within marketing channels. *Journal of Marketing Channels*, 21(4), 254-267.
- Davis, R., Lang, B., & San Diego, J. (2014). How gender affects the relationship between hedonic shopping motivation and purchase intentions? *Journal of Consumer Behavior*, 13(1), 18-30.
- Davis, R., Piven, I., & Breazeale, M. (2014). Conceptualizing the brand in social media community: The five sources model. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 21(4), 468-481.
- Demangeot, C., & Broderick, A.J. (2009). The role of exploration in creating online shopping value. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 36, 473-481.
- Doty, J., & Dworkin, J. (2014). Parents' of adolescents use of social networking sites. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 33, 349-355.
- Drozdenko, R., Jensen, M., & Coelho, D. (2012). Examining consumer online search behavior: Websites, products, benefits, and consumer characteristics. *International Journal of Business, Marketing, and Decision Sciences*, 5(1), 94-109.
- Eastman, J.K., Iyer, R., Liao-Troth, S., Williams, D.F., & Griffin, M. (2014). The role of involvement on millennials' mobile technology behaviors: The moderating impact of status consumption, innovation, and opinion leadership. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 22(4), 455-470.
- Elliott, L.J., & Polyakova, V. (2014). Beyond Facebook: The generalization of social networking site measures. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 33, 163-170.

- Ellison, N.B., Steinfeild, C., & Lampe, C. (2007). The benefits of Facebook “friends:” Social capital and college students’ use of online social networking sites. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 12*(4), 1143-1168.
- Erasmus, A.C., Donoghue, S., & Dobbstein, T. (2014). Consumers’ perception of the complexity of selected household purchase decisions. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 21*(3), 293-305.
- Feng, Y., & Xie, W. (2014). Teens’ concern for privacy when using social networking sites: An analysis of socialization agents and relationships with privacy-protecting behaviors. *Computers in Human Behavior, 33*, 153-162.
- Gangadharbatla, H., Bright, L.F., & Logan, K. (2014). Social media and news gathering: Tapping into the millennial mindset. *The Journal of Social Media in Society, 3*(1), 45-63.
- Gavin, J., Duffield, J., Brosnan, M., Joiner, R., Maras, P., & Scott, A.J. (2007). Drawing the net: Internet identification, internet use, and the image of internet users. *Cyberpsychology and Behavior, 10*(3), 478-481.
- Gibson, L.A., & Sodeman, W.A. (2014). Millennials and technology: Addressing the communication gap in education and practice. *Organization Development Journal, 32*(4), 63-75.
- Glaser, B.G., & Strauss, A.L. (1967). *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago, IL: Aldine Publishing Company.
- Greenhow, C., Gleason, B., & Li, J. (2014). Psychological, social, and educational dynamics of adolescents’ online social networking. *Media Education, 5*(2), 115-130.

- Greenhow, C., Walker, J.D., & Kim, S. (2009). Millennial learners and net savvy teens? Examining Internet use among low-income students. *Journal of Computing in Teacher Education, 26*(2), 63-68.
- Gregorio, F., & Sung, Y. (2010). Understanding attitudes toward and behaviors in response to product placement. *Journal of Advertising, 39*(1), 83-96.
- Hammick, J.K., & Lee, M.J. (2014). Do shy people feel less communication apprehension online? The effects of virtual reality on the relationship between personality characteristics and communication outcomes. *Computers in Human Behavior, 33*, 302-310.
- Hanks, K., Odom, W., Roedl, D., & Blevis, E. (2008). Sustainable millennials: Attitudes towards sustainability and the material effects of interactive technologies. *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, 333-342*.
- Helsper, E.J. (2010). Gendered internet use across generations and life stages. *Communication Research, 37*(3), 352-374.
- Henkel, J., & Block, J. (2013). Peer influence in network markets: A theoretical and empirical analysis. *Journal of Evolutionary Economics, 23*(5), 925-953.
- Hesse-Biber, S.N. (2010). *Mixed Methods Research: Merging theory with practice*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Hocevar, K.P., Flanagin, A.J., & Metzger, M.J. (2014). Social media self-efficacy and information evaluation online. *Computers in Human Behavior, 39*, 254-262.

- Hochman, N., & Schwartz, R. (2012). Visualizing Instagram: Tracing cultural visual rhythms. *Proceedings of the Association for the Advancement of Artificial Intelligence*, p. 6-9.
- Hollenbeck, C.R., & Kaikati, A.M. (2012). Consumers' use of brands to reflect their actual and ideal selves on Facebook. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 29(4), 395-405.
- Hong, I.B., & Cho, H. (2011). The impact of consumer trust on attitudinal loyalty and purchase intentions in B2C e-marketplaces: Intermediary trust vs. seller trust. *International Journal of Information Management*, 31(5), 469-479.
- Howorth, C., Smith, S.M., & Parkinson, C. (2012). Social learning and social entrepreneurship education. *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, 11(3), 371-389.
- Hsu, M.-H., Chang, C.-M., Chu, K.-K., & Lee, Y.-J. (2014). Determinants of repurchase intention in online group-buying: The perspectives of DeLone & McLean IS success model and trust. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 36, 234-245.
- Hu, Y., Manikonda, L., & Kambhampati, S. (2014). What we Instagram: A first analysis of Instagram photo contest and user types. *Proceedings for the Association for the Advancement of Artificial Intelligence*.
- Huang, Y., Wang, L., & Shi, J. (2012). How attachment affects the strength of peer influence on adolescent consumer behavior. *Psychology and Marketing*, 29(8), 558-567.

- Jimenez, F.R., & Mendoza, N.A. (2013). Too popular to ignore: The influence of online reviews on purchase intentions of search and experience products. *Journal of Interactive Marketing, 27*(3), 226-235.
- John, D.R. (1999). Consumer socialization of children: A retrospective look at twenty-five years of research. *Journal of Consumer Research, 26*(3), 183-213.
- Johnson, B.K., & Van Der Heide, B. (2015). Can sharing affect liking? Online taste performances, feedback , and subsequent media preferences. *Computers in Human Behavior, 46*, 181-190.
- Joiner, R., Gavin, J., Duffield, J., Brosnan, M., Crook, C., Durndell, A., Maras, P., Miller, J., Scott, A.J., & Lovatt, P. (2005). Gender, internet identification, and internet anxiety: Correlates of internet use. *Cyberpsychology and Behavior, 8*(4), 371-378.
- Joiner, R., Stewart, C., Beany, C., Moon, A., Maras, P., Guiller, J., Gregory, H., Gavin, J., Cromby, J., & Brosnan, M. (2014). Publically different, privately the same: Gender differences and similarities in response to Facebook status updates. *Computers in Human Behavior, 39*, 165-169.
- Kane, G.C., Alavi, M., Labianca, G., & Borgatti, S.P. (2014). What's different about social media networks? A framework and research agenda. *MIS Quarterly, 38*(1), 275-304.
- Khang, H., Han, E.-K., Ki, E.-J. (2014). Exploring influential social cognitive determinants of social media use. *Computers in Human Behavior, 36*, 48-55.

- Kim, S., Haley, E., & Koo, G.-Y. (2009). Comparison of the paths from consumer involvement types to ad responses between corporate advertising and product advertising. *Journal of Advertising*, 38(3), 67-80.
- Kim, J., & Sung, Y. (2008). Dimensions of purchase-decision involvement: Affective and cognitive involvement in product and brand. *Brand Management*, 16(8), 504-519.
- Kim, E., Sung, Y., & Kang, H. (2014). Brand followers' retweeting behavior on Twitter: How brand relationships influence brand electronic word-of-mouth. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 37, 18-25.
- Korgaonkar, P.A., & Karson, E.J. (2007). The influence of perceived product risk on consumers' e-tailer shopping preference. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 22(1), 55-64.
- Krishnan, A., & Atkin, D. (2014). Individual differences in social networking site users: The interplay between antecedents and consequential effect on level of activity. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 40, 111-118.
- 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.
- Latif, H., Uckun, C.G., & Demir, B. (2014). Examining the relationship between e-social networks and the communication behaviors of generation 2000 (millennials) in Turkey. *Social Science Computer Review*, 33(1), 43-60.
- Leahey, C. (2013). Why your teen loves Wanelo. *Fortune*, 167(8), 52.

- Lee, J. (2013). What makes people read an online review? The relative effects of posting time and helpfulness on review readership. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking, 16*(7), 529-535.
- Lee-Won, R.J., Shim, M., Joo, Y.K., & Park, S.G. (2014). Who puts the best “face” forward on Facebook?: Positive self-presentation in online social networking and the role of self-consciousness, actual-to-total Friends ratio, and culture. *Computers in Human Behavior, 39*, 413-423.
- Li, C. (2014). A tale of two social networking sites: How the use of Facebook and Renren influences Chinese consumers’ attitudes toward product packages with different cultural symbols. *Computers in Human Behavior, 32*, 162-170.
- Lim, W.M., Ting, D.H., Puspitasari, M., Prasetya, I., & Gunadi, S. (2012). Overexposure to social networking sites. *Journal of Research for Consumers, (22)*, 25-40.
- Lodges, M.E. (2010). Are generation y (millennial) consumers brand loyal and is their buying behavior affected in an economic recession? A preliminary study. *5th Annual Siena College Student Conference in Business*.
- Lu, H.-P., & Yang, Y.-W. (2014). Toward an understanding of the behavioral intention to use a social networking site: An extension of task-technology fit to social-technology fit. *Computers in Human Behavior, 34*, 323-332.
- Lu, L.-C., Chang, W.-P., & Chang, H.-H. (2014). Consumer attitudes toward blogger’s sponsored recommendations and purchase intention: The effect of sponsorship type, product type, and brand awareness. *Computers in Human Behavior, 34*, 258-266.

- Luarn, P., Yang, J.-C., & Chiu, Y.-P. (2014). The network effect on information dissemination on social network sites. *Computers in Human Behavior, 37*, 1-8.
- Luczak, C., & Younkin, N. (2012). Net generation: A conceptual framework of the consumer socialization process. *Academy of Marketing Studies Journal, 16*(2), 47-51.
- Ludwig, S., de Ruyter, K., Friedman, M., Bruggen, E.C., Wetzels, M., & Pfann, G. (2013). More than words: The influence of affective content and linguistic style matches in online reviews on conversion rates. *Journal of Marketing, 77*(1), 87-103.
- Lueg, J.E., Ponder, N., Beatty, S.E., & Capella, M.L. (2006). Teenagers' use of alternative shopping channels: A consumer socialization perspective. *Journal of Retailing, 82*(2), 137-153.
- Ma, W.W.K., & Chan, A. (2014). Knowledge sharing and social media: Altruism, perceived online attachment motivation, and perceived online relationship commitment. *Computers in Human Behavior, 39*, 51-58.
- MacKenzie, S.B., & Lutz, R.J. (1989). An empirical examination of the structural antecedents of attitude toward the ad in and advertising pretesting context. *Journal of Marketing, 53*(2), 48-65.
- Maghrabi, R.O., Oakley, R.L., & Nemati, H.R. (2014). The impact of self-selected identity on productive or perverse social capital in social network sites. *Computers in Human Behavior, 33*, 367-371.
- Mangleberg, T. F., & Bristol, T. (1998). Socialization and adolescents' skepticism toward advertising. *Journal of Advertising, 27*(3), 11-21.

- Mangleburg, T.F., Grewal, D., & Bristol, T. (1997). Socialization, gender, and adolescent's self-reports of their generalized use of product labels. *The Journal of Consumer Affairs*, 31(2), 255-278.
- Manikonda, L., Hu, Y., & Kambhampati, S. (2014). Analyzing user activities, demographics, social network structure and user-generated content on Instagram. *ArXiv*.
- Mark, G., & Ganzach, Y. (2014). Personality and Internet usage: A large-scale representative study of young adults. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 36, 274-281.
- Marriott, T.C., & Buchanan, T. (2014). The true self online: Personality correlates of preference for self-expression online, and observer ratings of personality online and offline. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 32, 171-177.
- McGough, B.L., & Salomon, D. (2013). Engaging students through social media. *Proceedings of the Charleston Library Conference*, 282-286.
- McMahan, C., Hovland, R., & McMillan, S. (2009). Online marketing communications: Exploring online consumer behavior by examining gender differences and interactivity within internet advertising. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 10(1), 61-76.
- Mee, L.Y., & Huei, C.T. (2015). A profile of the Internet shoppers: Evidence from nine countries. *Telematics and Informatics*, 32(2),344-354.
- Mirrlees, T. (2015). A critique of the millennial: A retreat from and return to class. *A Journal of Critical Social Research*, 26, 277-304.

- Mitchell, V., Petrovici, D., Schlegelmilch, B.B., & Szocs, I. (2015). The influence of parents versus peers in Generation Y Internet ethical attitudes. *Electronic Commerce Research and Applications*.
- Moore, E.S., & Bowman, G.D. (2006). Of friends and family: How do peers affect the development of intergenerational influences? *Advances in Consumer Research*, 33(1), 536-542.
- Morgan, C. (2013). Five ways to use Pinterest to boost press release results. *Public Relations Tactics*, 9.
- Moretti, E. (2011). Social learning and peer effects in consumption: Evidence from movie scales. *Review of Economic Studies*, 78(1), 356-393.
- Moschis, G.P. (1985). The role of family communication in consumer socialization of children and adolescents. *Journal of Consumer Socialization*, 11(4), 898-913.
- Moschis, G. P. (1987). *Consumer socialization: A life-cycle perspective*. Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books.
- Moschis, G. P. & Churchill, G. A. (1978). Consumer socialization: A theoretical and empirical analysis. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 15 (4), 599-609.
- Moschis, G.P., Mathur, A., Fatt, C.K., Pizzutti, C. (2013). Effects of family structure on materialism and compulsive consumption: A life course study in Brazil. *Journal of Research for Consumers*, (23), 66-96.
- Moschis, G.P., & Mitchell, L.G. (1986). Television advertising and interpersonal influences on teenagers' participation in family consumer decisions. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 13,181-186.

- Moschis, G.P., & Moore, R.L. (1979). Decision making among the young: A socialization perspective. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 6(2), 101-112.
- Mourali, M., & Yang, Z. (2013). The dual role of power in resisting social influence. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 40(3), 539-554.
- Mudambi, S.M., & Schuff, D. (2010). What makes a helpful online review? A study of customer reviews on amazon.com. *MIS Quarterly*, 34(1), 185-200.
- Mull, I.R., & Lee, S.-E. (2014). "Pin" pointing the motivational dimensions behind Pinterest. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 33, 192-200.
- Nambiyar, S. (2014). Aspirations of Gen-Y toward quality of work life. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Approach and Studies*, 1(4), 328-340.
- Nelson, M. R., & McLeod, L. E. (2005). Adolescent brand consciousness and product placements: Awareness, liking, and perceived effects on self and others. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 29(6), 515-528.
- Newman, K.S. (2012). *The accordion family: Boomerang kids, anxious parents, and the private toll of global competition*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Ng, C.S.-P. (2013). Intention to purchase on social commerce websites across cultures: A cross-regional study. *Information Management*, 50(8), 609-620.
- Nicoletti, A., & Merriman, W. (2007). Today's educators find that millennial students are different from students of their generation, with different learning styles that require different teaching methods. *Momentum*, 38(2), 28-31.
- Niu, H.-J. (2013). Cyber peers' influence for adolescent consumer in decision-making styles and online purchasing behavior. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 43(6), 1228-1237.

- Norum, P.S. (2008). The role of time preference and credit card usage in compulsive buying behavior. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 32(3), 269-275.
- Oakley, R.L., & Salam, A.F. (2014). Examining the impact of computer-mediated social networks on individual consumerism environmental behaviors. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 35, 516-526.
- Odaci, H., & Cikrikci, O. (2013). Problematic internet use in terms of gender, attachment styles and subjective well-being in university students. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 32, 61-66.
- Odenweller, K.G., Booth-Butterfield, M., & Weber, K. (2014). Investigating helicopter parenting, family environments, and relational outcomes for millennials. *Communication Studies*, 65(4), 407-425.
- Otoni, R., Pesce, J.P., Casas, D.L., Franciscani, G., Meira, W., Kumaraguru, P., & Almeida, V. (2013). Ladies first: Analyzing gender roles and behaviors in Pinterest. *Proceedings of the Seventh International AAAI Conference on Weblogs and Social Media*.
- Pajic, D. (2014). Browse to search, visualize to explore: Who needs an alternative information retrieving model. *Computer in Human Behavior*, 39, 145-153.
- Park, H., & Kim, Y.-K. (2014). The role of social network websites in the consumer-brand relationship. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 21(4), 460-467.
- Park, S., Choi, D., & Kim, J. (2005). Visualizing e-brand personality: Exploratory studies on visual attributes and e-brand personalities in Korea. *International Journal of Human-Computer Interaction*, 19(1), 7-34.

- Pate, S.S., & Adams, M. (2013). The influence of social media sites on buying behaviors of millennials. *Atlantic Marketing Journal*, 2(1), 92-109.
- Paulin, M., Ferguson, R.J., Schattke, K., & Jost, N. (2015). Millennials, social media, prosocial emotions, and charitable causes: The paradox of gender differences. *Journal of Nonprofit and Public Sector Marketing*, 26(4), 335-353.
- Pentina, I., & Tarafdar, M. (2014). From “information” to “knowing”: Exploring the role of social media in contemporary news consumption. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 35, 211-223.
- Perlman, Y. (2013). The effect of risk aversion on product family design under uncertain consumer segments. *International Journal of Production Research*, 51(2), 504-514.
- Pew Research Center (2013). Photo and video sharing grow online. Retrieved from <http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2013/Photos-and-videos.aspx>
- Poyry, E., Parvinen, P., & Malmivaara, T. (2013). Can we get from liking to buying? Behavioral differences in hedonic and utilitarian Facebook usage. *Electronic Commerce Research and Applications*, 12(4), 224-235.
- Rao, A.V., & Shalini, P. (2013). Social media and its impact on generation next. *International Journal of Logistics and Supply Chain Management Perspectives*, 2(4), 647-654.
- Razak, N.S.A., & Marimuthu, M. (2012). The relationship between co-creation value and Facebook shopping. *Procedia—Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 65, 768-774.

- Rindfleisch, A., Burroughs, J.E., & Denton, F. (1997). Family structure, materialism, and compulsive consumption. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 23(4), 312-325.
- Rose, G.M. (1999). Consumer socialization, parental style, and developmental timetables in the United States and Japan. *Journal of Marketing*, 63(3), 105-119.
- Sashittal, H.C., & Jassawalla, A.R. (2015). Why do college students use Pinterest? A model and implications for scholars and marketers. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 0 (0), 1-13.
- Sasson, H., & Mesch, G. (2014). Parental mediation, peer norms, and risky online behavior among adolescents. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 33, 32-38.
- Scheresberg, C., Lusardi, A., & Yakoboski, P.J. (2014). College-educated millennials: An overview of their personal finances. *Joint report from the TIAA-CREF Institute and the Global Financial Literacy Excellence Center*, 1-38.
- Schindler, R.M., & Bickart, B. (2012). Perceived helpfulness of online consumer reviews: The role of message content and style. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 11(3), 234-243.
- See-To, E.W.K., & Ho, K.K.W. (2014). Value co-creation and purchase intention in social network sites: The role of electronic word-of-mouth and trust—A theoretical analysis. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 31, 182-189.
- Shi, B., & Xie, H. (2013). Peer group influence on urban preadolescents' attitudes toward material possessions: Social status benefits of material possessions. *The Journal of Consumer Affairs*, 47(1), 46-71.
- Shim, S., Serido, J., & Barber, B. (2011). A consumer way of thinking: Linking consumer socialization and consumption motivation perspectives to adolescent development. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 21(1), 290-299.

- Simpson, A.J., & Dodigovic, M. (2014). How to teach generation Y with technology. *Attitudes to Technology in ESL/EFL Pedagogy*, 333-341.
- Singleton-Jackson, J.A., Jackson, D.L., & Reinhardt, J. (2010). Students as consumers of knowledge: Are they buying what we're selling? *Innovative Higher Education*, 35(5), 343-358.
- Sohn, D. (2014). Coping with information in social media: The effects of network structure and knowledge on perception of information value. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 32, 145-151.
- Sridhar, S., & Srinivasan, R. (2012). Social influence effects in online product ratings. *Journal of Marketing*, 76(5), 70-88.
- Stafford, T.F., Stafford, M.R., & Schkade, L.L. (2004). Determining uses and gratifications for the internet. *Decision Sciences*, 35(2), 259-288.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Stautz, K., & Cooper, A. (2014). Brief report: Personality correlates of susceptibility to peer influence in adolescence. *Journal of Adolescence*, 37(4), 401-405.
- Stromer-Galley, J., & Martey, R.M. (2009). Visual spaces, norm governed places: The influence of spatial context online. *New Media Society*, 11(6), 1041-1060.
- Strugatz, R. (2014). Nordstrom taps tech, brings Wanelo in-store. *WWD*, 207(127).
- Sung, Y., Kim, Y., Kwon, O., & Moon, J. (2010). An explorative study of Korean consumer participation in virtual brand communities in social network sites. *Journal of Global Marketing*, 23(5), 430-445.

- Tai, C.L. (2014). The impacts of utilitarian and hedonic motivations on habit and online browsers' behaviors. *International Journal of Advances in Computer Science and its Applications*, 4(1), 126-130.
- Thomas, S.E., & Wilson, P.R. (2012). Youth consumerism and consumption of status products: A study on the prevalence of social pressure among students of professional courses. *IUP Journal of Business Strategy*, 9(2), 44-64.
- To, P.-L., Liao, C., & Lin, T.-H. (2007). Shopping motivations on Internet: A study based on utilitarian and hedonic value. *Technovation*, 27(12), 774-787.
- Tokunaga, R.S. (2014). Relational transgressions on social networking sites: Individual, interpersonal, and contextual explanations for dyadic strain and communication rules change. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 39, 287-295.
- Tokunaga, R.S., & Gustafson, A. (2014). Seeking interpersonal information over the Internet: An application of the theory of motivated information management to Internet use. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 31(8), 1019-1039.
- Tsarenko, Y., Ferraro, C., Sands, S., & McLeod, C. (2013). Environmentally conscious consumption: The role of retailers and peers as external influences. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 20(3), 302-310.
- Valenzuela, S., Halpern, D., & Katz, J.E. (2014). Social networking sites, marriage well-being and divorce: Survey and state-level evidence from the United States. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 36, 94-101.
- Viswanaythan, M., Childers, T.L., & Moore, E.S. (2000). The measurement of intergenerational communication and influence on consumption: Development,

- validation, and cross-cultural comparison of the IGEN scale. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 28(3), 406-424.
- Wang, E.S.-T. (2010). Internet usage purposes and gender differences in the effects of perceived utilitarian and hedonic value. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 13(2), 179-183.
- Wang, X., Yu, C., & Wei, Y. (2012). Social media, peer communication and impacts on purchase intentions: A consumer socialization framework. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 26(4), 198-208.
- Wooten, D.B. (2006). From labeling possessions to possessing labels: Ridicule and socialization among adolescents. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 33(2), 188-198.
- Wu, Y.-L., Tao, Y.-H., Li, C.-P., Wang, S.-Y., & Chiu, C.-Y. (2014). User-switching behavior in social networking sites: A model perspective with drill-down analysis. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 33, 92-103.
- Yang, Y., Jia, J., Zhang, S., Wu, B., Li, J., & Tang, J. (2014). How do your friends on social media disclose your emotions? *Proceedings of the 28th AAAI Conference on Artificial Intelligence*.
- Yang, Z., Kim, C., Laroche, M., & Lee, H. (2014). Parental style and consumer socialization among adolescents. *Journal of Business Research*, 67(3), 228-236.
- Yusuf, S., Osman, M.N., Hassan, M.S.H., & Teimoury, M. (2014). Parents' influence on children's online usage. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 155, 81-86.

Zhong, C., Salehi, M., Shah, S., Cobzarenco, M., Sastry, N., & Cha, M. (2014). Social bootstrapping: How Pinterest and Last.fm social communities benefit by borrowing links from Facebook. *Proceedings from the 23rd international conference on world wide web*, 305-314.

Appendices

Appendix A: Quantitative Recruitment Email

Hello!

My name is Jennifer Jorgensen and I am currently a PhD student at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. You have been randomly selected to participate in an online research study about how you use visually-oriented social networking websites and interactions with family and friends. As a current college student, your participation in this study is instrumental to understanding new technologies consumers use when purchasing items, as college students are considered the most tech-savvy generation. I greatly value your input and time spent completing this survey.

In addition, please understand that:

- You must be 19 years of age or older to participate
- Participation within this study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without harming your relationship with the researchers or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, or in any other way receive a penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. There are no perceived risks or personal benefits for participants.
- All of your responses will remain confidential and will be kept in a password protected file for one year after the study is complete
- The data collected from the survey will be only used for research objectives and will not be used for any other purposes
- By continuing with the survey, you consent to be a participant within this research study
- The results of this research will benefit marketers, retailers, and consumer behavior researchers

The completion of the online survey will take approximately 10 minutes. Please click on the following link: <web address>.

If the link does not work, proceed by copying and pasting the link within the browser address bar. <web address>

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please email me at jennybeth.johnson@huskers.unl.edu. If you would like to speak with someone other than the researchers, please call the Research Compliance Services Office at 402-472-6965 or irb@unl.edu.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Jorgensen, PhD Student
Dept. of Textiles, Merchandising, and
Fashion Design

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Tel: 701-212-8107

Email: jennybeth.johnson@huskers.unl.edu

Dr. Rita Kean, Professor

Dept. of Textiles, Merchandising, and
Fashion Design

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Tel: 402-472-5473

Email: rkean1@unl.edu

Appendix B: Quantitative Informed Consent

Hello!

IRB#20141114851 EX

My name is Jennifer Jorgensen and I am currently a PhD student at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. You have been randomly selected to participate in an online research study about how you use visually-oriented social networking websites and interactions with family and friends. As a current college student, your participation in this study is instrumental to understanding new technologies consumers use when purchasing items, as college students are considered the most tech-savvy generation. The survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. I greatly value your input and time spent completing this survey.

In addition, please understand that:

- You must be 19 years of age or older to participate
- Participation within this study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without harming your relationship with the researchers or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, or in any other way receive a penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. There are no perceived risks or personal benefits for participants.
- All of your responses will remain confidential and will be kept in a password protected file for one year after the study is complete
- The data collected from the survey will be only used for research objectives and will not be used for any other purposes
- The results of this research will benefit marketers, retailers, and consumer behavior researchers

By continuing with the survey, you consent to be a participant within this research study.

At the end of this study, you will be asked if you would be interested in participating in an interview for this same study. Your participation in the interview is completely voluntary.

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please email me at jennybeth.johnson@huskers.unl.edu. If you would like to speak with someone other than the researchers, please call the Research Compliance Services Office at 402-472-6965 or irb@unl.edu.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Jorgensen, PhD Student
Dept. of Textiles, Merchandising, and
Fashion Design
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Tel: 701-212-8107

Email: jennybeth.johnson@huskers.unl.edu

Dr. Rita Kean, Professor
Dept. of Textiles, Merchandising, and
Fashion Design
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Tel: 402-472-5473

Email: rkean1@unl.edu

Please print or save this page for your records.

[Proceed Button]

Appendix C: Quantitative Reminder Email

Hello!

My name is Jennifer Jorgensen and I am currently a PhD student at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. A week ago, I contacted you to take part in this online survey and hope you will consider contributing to this exciting study. This research is an online study about how you use visually-oriented social networking websites and interactions with family and friends. As a current college student, your participation in this study is instrumental to understanding new technologies consumers use when purchasing items, as college students are considered the most tech-savvy generation.. I greatly value your input and time spent completing this survey.

In addition, please understand that:

- You must be 19 years of age or older to participate
- Participation within this study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without harming your relationship with the researchers or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, or in any other way receive a penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. There are no perceived risks or personal benefits for participants.
- All of your responses will remain confidential and will be kept in a password protected file for one year after the study is complete
- The data collected from the survey will be only used for research objectives and will not be used for any other purposes
- By continuing with the survey, you consent to be a participant within this research study
- The results of this research will benefit marketers, retailers, and consumer behavior researchers

The completion of the online survey will take approximately 10 minutes. Please click on the following link:<web address>.

If the link does not work, proceed by copying and pasting the link within the browser address bar. <web address>

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please email me at jennybeth.johnson@huskers.unl.edu. If you would like to speak with someone other than the researchers, please call the Research Compliance Services Office at 402-472-6965 or irb@unl.edu.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Jorgensen, PhD Student
 Dept. of Textiles, Merchandising, and
 Fashion Design
 University of Nebraska-Lincoln
 Tel: 701-212-8107
 Email: jennybeth.johnson@huskers.unl.edu

Dr. Rita Kean, Professor
 Dept. of Textiles, Merchandising, and
 Fashion Design
 University of Nebraska-Lincoln
 Tel: 402-472-5473
 Email: rkean1@unl.edu

Appendix D: IRB Approval Letter for Quantitative Phase



November 7, 2014

Jennifer Johnson
Department of Textiles, Merchandising & Fashion Design
461 N 44th St Apt 1717 Lincoln, NE 68503

Rita Kean
Department of Textiles, Merchandising & Fashion Design
205 HECO, UNL, 68588-0802

IRB Number: 20141114851 EX
Project ID: 14851
Project Title: INFLUENCE OF PARENTS, PEERS, INTERNET PRODUCT SEARCH AND VISUAL SOCIAL MEDIA ON COLLEGE STUDENTS PURCHASE BEHAVIOR: A MIXED METHODS STUDY

Dear Jennifer:

This letter is to officially notify you of the certification of exemption of your project by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects. It is the Board's opinion that you have provided adequate safeguards for the rights and welfare of the participants in this study based on the information provided. Your proposal is in compliance with this institution's Federal Wide Assurance 00002258 and the DHHS Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR 46) and has been classified as Exempt Category 2.

You are authorized to implement this study as of the Date of Exemption Determination: 11/07/2014.

1. You have received approval for the survey portion of the research. Please submit the following documentation as part of a change request once the interview portion has been developed: interview questions, email recruitment message, email message sent with the transcript, and interview informed consent form.
2. Since the informed consent for the survey portion will appear electronically, please include the IRB approval number (IRB#20141114851 EX) on the document. Please email a copy of the document to me, with the number included, for our records. If you need to make changes to the informed consent document, please submit the revised document to the IRB for review and approval prior to using it.

We wish to remind you that the principal investigator is responsible for reporting to this Board any of the following events within 48 hours of the event:

* Any serious event (including on-site and off-site adverse events, injuries, side effects, deaths,

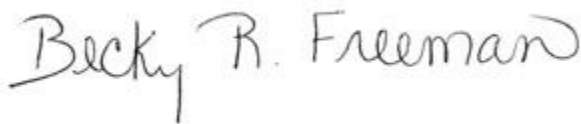
or other problems) which in the opinion of the local investigator was unanticipated, involved risk to subjects or others, and was possibly related to the research procedures;

- * Any serious accidental or unintentional change to the IRB-approved protocol that involves risk or has the potential to recur;
- * Any publication in the literature, safety monitoring report, interim result or other finding that indicates an unexpected change to the risk/benefit ratio of the research;
- * Any breach in confidentiality or compromise in data privacy related to the subject or others; or
- * Any complaint of a subject that indicates an unanticipated risk or that cannot be resolved by the research staff.

This project should be conducted in full accordance with all applicable sections of the IRB Guidelines and you should notify the IRB immediately of any proposed changes that may affect the exempt status of your research project. You should report any unanticipated problems involving risks to the participants or others to the Board.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office at 472-6965.

Sincerely,



Becky R. Freeman, CIP
for the IRB



Appendix E: Qualitative Recruitment Email

IRB#20141114851 EX

Hello!

Last semester, you completed an online survey about your use of technology and personal interactions before purchasing products, and voluntarily provided your email for a potential interview. Your input is highly beneficial to understand the process of how technology and social interactions are used before purchasing products and I would be truly grateful if you would be willing to be interviewed on this subject. In exchange for your time, you will receive a \$10 gift card to Amazon.com.

To set up an interview, please email jennybeth.johnson@huskers.unl.edu with two convenient times and dates that work for you. Interviews will also be held in a private room on either City or East Campus based on your convenience. Only one interview will be conducted.

The purpose of this research study is to understand the process in which websites and online social networks are used as a resource to learn about products, as well as why interaction with family and friends before the purchase of a product is sought in certain situations. Thus, the central aim is to identify the process of how and why individuals gain information about a product from specific people or places.

In addition, please understand that:

- Participation within this study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without harming your relationship with the researchers or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, or in any other way receive a penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Participation in this study is limited to individuals that are 19 years of age or older.
- The interview will take approximately 30 minutes to 45 minutes to complete. Interview questions will be of a semi-structured format regarding the process you undertake when purchasing a product. With your permission, all interviews will be audio-recorded in a private room on either City or East Campus dependent upon your preference.
- There are no perceived risks or personal benefits for participants. The results of this research, however, will benefit marketers, retailers, and consumer behavior researchers as the acceleration of technology is affecting the decision process individuals undertake before the purchase of a new product.
- Your identity and responses will remain confidential. A randomly selected pseudonym will be used instead of your name for the findings of the study. In addition, the audio file of the interview, as well as its transcription, will be kept in a password protected file on a password protected USB drive in a faculty member's office for one year after the study is complete.

- The findings of this interview may be published in an academic journal or presented at academic research conferences. The data collected from the interview will be only used for research objectives and will not be used for any other purposes. Data will remain confidential, with the use of pseudonyms, throughout this process.

Please feel free to ask any questions before you consent to participate in this study. If you have any other questions, comments, or concerns after the interview, please contact me at jennybeth.johnson@huskers.unl.edu. If you would like to speak with someone other than the researchers, please call the Research Compliance Services Office at 402-472-6965 or irb@unl.edu.

Sincerely,
Jennifer Jorgensen, PhD Candidate
Dept. of Textiles, Merchandising, and Fashion Design
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Tel: 402-560-1267
Email: jennybeth.johnson@huskers.unl.edu

Dr. Rita Kean, Professor
Dept. of Textiles, Merchandising, and Fashion Design
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Tel: 402-472-5473
Email: rkean1@unl.edu

Appendix F: Qualitative Informed Consent



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SCIENCES
Department of Textiles, Merchandising & Fashion Design

IRB#20141114851 EX

"Influence of Parents, Peers, Internet Product Search and Visual Social Media on College Students' Purchase Behavior: A Mixed Methods Study"

The purpose of this research study is to understand the process in which websites and online social networks are used as a resource to learn about products, as well as why interaction with family and friends before the purchase of a product is sought in certain situations. Thus, the central aim is to identify the process of how and why individuals gain information about a product from specific people or places.

Participation within this study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without harming your relationship with the researchers or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, or in any other way receive a penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Participation in this study is limited to individuals that are 19 years of age or older.

The interview will take approximately 30 minutes to 45 minutes to complete. Interview questions will be of a semi-structured format regarding the process you undertake when purchasing a product. With your permission, all interviews will be audio-recorded in a private room on either City or East Campus dependent upon your preference.

There are no perceived risks or personal benefits for participants. The results of this research, however, will benefit marketers, retailers, and consumer behavior researchers as the acceleration of technology is affecting the decision process individuals undertake before the purchase of a new product.

Your identity and responses will remain confidential. A randomly selected pseudonym will be used instead of your name for the findings of the study. In addition, the audio file of the interview, as well as its transcription, will be kept in a password protected file on a password protected USB drive in a faculty member's office for one year after the study is complete.

The findings of this interview may be published in an academic journal or presented at academic research conferences. The data collected from the interview will be only used for research objectives and will not be used for any other purposes. Data will remain confidential, with the use of pseudonyms, throughout this process.

You will receive a \$10 gift card to Amazon as compensation for your participation with this study.



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SCIENCES
Department of Textiles, Merchandising & Fashion Design

Please feel free to ask any questions before you consent to participate in this study. If you have any other questions, comments, or concerns after the interview, please contact me at jennybeth.johnson@huskers.unl.edu. If you would like to speak with someone other than the researchers, please call the Research Compliance Services Office at 402-472-6965 or irb@unl.edu.

By signing this form, you are voluntarily consenting to participate in this study. Your signature indicates that you are aware and understand the information presented on this form. This signed form will also remain confidential. You will also be given a copy of this form for your records.

Signature of Participant

Date

Sincerely,

Jennifer Jorgensen, PhD Candidate
Dept. of Textiles, Merchandising, and Fashion Design
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Tel: 402-560-1267
Email: jennybeth.johnson@huskers.unl.edu

Dr. Rita Kean, Professor
Dept. of Textiles, Merchandising, and Fashion Design
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Tel: 402-472-5473
Email: rkean1@unl.edu

Appendix G: Qualitative Reminder Email

IRB#20141114851 EX

Hello!

One week ago, I sent you an email about an opportunity to participate in an interview about your use of technology and personal interactions before purchasing products. Last semester, you completed an online survey and voluntarily provided your email for a potential interview. Your input is highly beneficial to understand the process of how technology and social interactions are used before purchasing products and I would be truly grateful if you would be willing to be interviewed on this subject. In exchange for your time, you will receive a \$10 gift card to Amazon.com.

To set up an interview, please email jennybeth.johnson@huskers.unl.edu with two convenient times and dates that work for you. Interviews will also be held in a private room on either City or East Campus based on your convenience. Only one interview will be conducted.

The purpose of this research study is to understand the process in which websites and online social networks are used as a resource to learn about products, as well as why interaction with family and friends before the purchase of a product is sought in certain situations. Thus, the central aim is to identify the process of how and why individuals gain information about a product from specific people or places.

In addition, please understand that:

- Participation within this study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without harming your relationship with the researchers or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, or in any other way receive a penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Participation in this study is limited to individuals that are 19 years of age or older.
- The interview will take approximately 30 minutes to 45 minutes to complete. Interview questions will be of a semi-structured format regarding the process you undertake when purchasing a product. With your permission, all interviews will be audio-recorded in a private room on either City or East Campus dependent upon your preference.
- There are no perceived risks or personal benefits for participants. The results of this research, however, will benefit marketers, retailers, and consumer behavior researchers as the acceleration of technology is affecting the decision process individuals undertake before the purchase of a new product.
- Your identity and responses will remain confidential. A randomly selected pseudonym will be used instead of your name for the findings of the study. In addition, the audio file of the interview, as well as its transcription, will be kept in

a password protected file on a password protected USB drive in a faculty member's office for one year after the study is complete.

- The findings of this interview may be published in an academic journal or presented at academic research conferences. The data collected from the interview will be only used for research objectives and will not be used for any other purposes. Data will remain confidential, with the use of pseudonyms, throughout this process.

Please feel free to ask any questions before you consent to participate in this study. If you have any other questions, comments, or concerns after the interview, please contact me at jennybeth.johnson@huskers.unl.edu. If you would like to speak with someone other than the researchers, please call the Research Compliance Services Office at 402-472-6965 or irb@unl.edu.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Jorgensen, PhD Candidate

Dept. of Textiles, Merchandising, and Fashion Design

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Tel: 402-560-1267

Email: jennybeth.johnson@huskers.unl.edu

Dr. Rita Kean, Professor

Dept. of Textiles, Merchandising, and Fashion Design

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Tel: 402-472-5473

Email: rkean1@unl.edu

Appendix H: Qualitative Transcript Email

IRB#20141114851 EX

Hello!

Thank you so much for participating in an interview for my dissertation study. Attached is the transcript from our interview. At your convenience, please look over the transcript and email me any clarifications, changes, or omissions you would like to make. Your input was highly beneficial to understanding the process of how technology and social interactions are used before purchasing products. The time you spent on this interview is truly appreciated.

As a reminder, please understand that:

- Participation within this study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without harming your relationship with the researchers or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, or in any other way receive a penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Participation in this study is limited to individuals that are 19 years of age or older.
- There are no perceived risks or personal benefits for participants. The results of this research, however, will benefit marketers, retailers, and consumer behavior researchers as the acceleration of technology is affecting the decision process individuals undertake before the purchase of a new product.
- Your identity and responses will remain confidential. A randomly selected pseudonym has been used instead of your name for the findings of the study. In addition, the audio file of the interview, as well as its transcription, is being kept in a password protected file on a password protected USB drive in a faculty member's office for one year after the study is complete.
- The findings of this interview may be published in an academic journal or presented at academic research conferences. The data collected from the interview will be only used for research objectives and will not be used for any other purposes. Data will remain confidential, with the use of pseudonyms, throughout this process.

If you have any other questions, comments, or concerns, please contact me at jennybeth.johnson@huskers.unl.edu. If you would like to speak with someone other than the researchers, please call the Research Compliance Services Office at 402-472-6965 or irb@unl.edu.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Jorgensen, PhD Candidate
Dept. of Textiles, Merchandising, and
Fashion Design
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Tel: 402-560-1267
Email: jennybeth.johnson@huskers.unl.edu

Dr. Rita Kean, Professor
Dept. of Textiles, Merchandising, and
Fashion Design
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Tel: 402-472-5473
Email: rkean1@unl.edu

Appendix I: IRB Approval Letter for Qualitative Phase



February 4, 2015

Jennifer Johnson
Department of Textiles, Merchandising & Fashion Design
461 N 44th St Apt 1717 Lincoln, NE 68503

Rita Kean
Department of Textiles, Merchandising & Fashion Design
HECO 205, UNL, 68588-0802

IRB Number:

Project ID: 14851

Project Title: INFLUENCE OF PARENTS, PEERS, INTERNET PRODUCT SEARCH AND VISUAL SOCIAL MEDIA ON COLLEGE STUDENTS PURCHASE BEHAVIOR: A MIXED METHODS STUDY

Dear Jennifer:

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects has completed its review of the Request for Change in Protocol submitted to the IRB.

1. It has been approved to conduct the qualitative phase of your research. The recruitment and reminder emails, transcript follow-up email, informed consent form, and interview questions have been approved.
2. Your stamped and approved informed consent document has been uploaded to NUgrant (files with Approved.pdf in the file name). Please use this document to distribute to participants. If you need to make changes to the informed consent document, please submit the revised document to the IRB for review and approval prior to using it.

We wish to remind you that the principal investigator is responsible for reporting to this Board any of the following events within 48 hours of the event:

- * Any serious event (including on-site and off-site adverse events, injuries, side effects, deaths, or other problems) which in the opinion of the local investigator was unanticipated, involved risk to subjects or others, and was possibly related to the research procedures;
- * Any serious accidental or unintentional change to the IRB-approved protocol that involves risk or has the potential to recur;
- * Any publication in the literature, safety monitoring report, interim result or other finding that indicates an unexpected change to the risk/benefit ratio of the research;
- * Any breach in confidentiality or compromise in data privacy related to the subject or others; or
- * Any complaint of a subject that indicates an unanticipated risk or that cannot be resolved by the research staff.

This letter constitutes official notification of the approval of the protocol change. You are therefore authorized to implement this change accordingly.

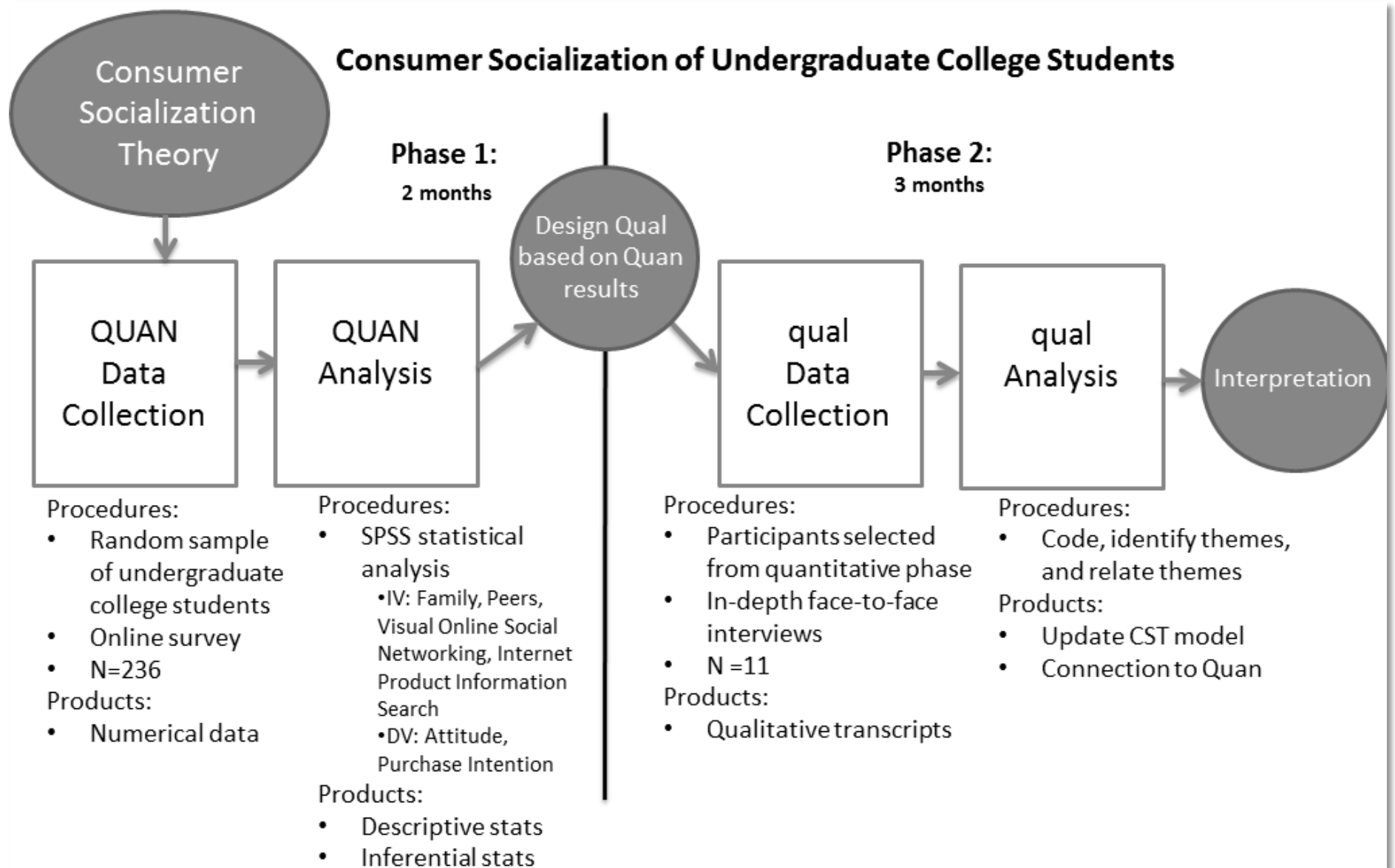
If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office at 472-6965.

Sincerely,

Becky R. Freeman

Becky R. Freeman, CIP
for the IRB





Appendix K: Records and Registration Approval Letter



OFFICE OF THE UNIVERSITY REGISTRAR

November 05, 2014

Internal Review Board
2200 Vine Street
278 Whittier
Lincoln, NE 68583-0863

Dear Committee Members,

The Office of the Registrar has agreed to provide support to Jennifer Jorgensen in her research project regarding the influence of parents, peers, internet product search and visual social media on college students under the general direction of advisor Rita Kean within the Department of Textiles, Merchandising & Fashion Design.

Based on the request and plan forwarded to my office we will provide a randomly selected sample of student e-mail addresses that match the population target of the study. Students will be invited to voluntarily participate in the study by filling out an on-line survey. We will provide a file of unattributed e-mail addresses that will be used to invite students to participate in the survey.

If you have any further questions, please contact me at 402-472-2082.
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Juan Carlos Gutierrez".

Juan Carlos Gutierrez
Assistant Registrar, Systems & Research

Appendix L: Previous Survey Instruments

Study	Variables	Survey Instrument(s) Used	Example	Reliability
Ahmad, Sidin, & Omar, 2011	Peers, family, internet usage, school	Kargaonkar, & Wolin, 1999; Singh et al., 2003; Belch et al., 2005 (Internet interaction); Swinyard & Sim, 1997; Viswanathan et al., 2000 (Parental communication)	<p>“My child considers the Internet as a good source of information” (Internet interaction)</p> <p>“Was your child influential at the problem recognition stage?” (Parental communication)</p>	$0.68 \leq \alpha \leq 0.83$
Bearden, Netemeyer, & Teel, 1989	Family, peers	Bearden, Netemeyer, & Teel, 1989 (Parental and peer communication)	<p>“I rarely purchase the latest fashion styles until I am sure my friends approve of them.” (Peer communication)</p>	$0.82 \leq \alpha \leq 0.88$
Belch, Krentler, & Willis-Flurry, 2005	Family, internet use, internet maven	Beatty & Talpade, 1994 (Parental communication)	<p>“I contributed more than other family members.” (Parental communication)</p>	$\alpha = 0.81$
Bush, Smith, & Martin, 1999	Peers, family, mass media, attitude	Moschis, & Moore, 1979 (Parental communication); Bearden, Netermeyer, & Teel, 1989 (Mass media usage); Moschis, & Churchill, 1978 (Television usage); Moschis, 1981 (Peer communication)	<p>“My parents and I talked about things we saw or heard advertised” (Parental communication)</p> <p>“I spend a lot of time talking with my friends about products and brands” (Peer communication)</p>	$0.72 \leq \alpha \leq 0.82$

Study	Variables	Survey Instrument(s) Used	Example	Reliability
Lueg, Ponder, Beatty, & Capella, 2006	Channel involvement, access to funds, access to the channel, peer communication, familial communication	Bush et al., 1999, Belch et al., 2005, Mangleburg et al., 1997, Mochis, & Moore, 1979 (Parental and Peer communication)	“I spend a lot of time talking with my peers about shopping on the Internet” (Peer communication)	$0.88 \leq \alpha \leq 0.96$
Mangleburg, Grewal, & Bristol, 1997	Family, peers, mass media, use of product labels	Moschis, & Mitchell, 1986 (Mass media usage); Mangleburg, Grewal, & Bristol, 1997 (Parental and peer communication)	“I watch a lot of television” (Mass media usage) “I talk with my parents about how much things cost.” (Parental communication)	$0.68 \leq \alpha \leq 0.8$
Moschis, & Churchill, 1978	Family, peers, mass media, school	Moschis, & Churchill, 1978	“My parents and I talk about buying things.” (Parental communication)	$0.64 \leq \alpha \leq 0.84$
Moschis, & Moore, 1979	Family, peers, mass media (television)	McLeod, & O’Keefe, 1972; Moschis, & Churchill, 1978 (Television usage); Moschis & Moore, 1979 (Parental and peer communication)	“How often did you view national news?” (Television usage) “My friends and I talk about buying things.” (Peer communication)	$0.65 \leq \alpha \leq 0.81$
Viswanathan, Childers, & Moore, 2000	Family, intergenerational communication, attitude	Moschis, 1976 (Parental communication); Viswanathan et al., 2000 (Intergenerational communication)	“Why they buy the brands or products they purchase. Have your parents communicated this to you?” (Parental communication)	$0.87 \leq \alpha \leq 0.92$

Appendix M: Quantitative Survey Questions

Online Social Networking, Communication, and Purchasing Survey

This research is about your usage of media, communications with others, and who you like to talk with about your purchases. This survey is divided into four sections about your online usage of media and how you communicate with others, either face-to-face or online. Thank you in advance for your responses, as they are a true asset to our research.

Section 1: Media Use and Communication

Please check which online social networks in which you have an account.

- Pinterest
- Snapchat
- Instagram
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Foursquare
- Google+
- YouTube
- Vimeo
- Other [Text box]

[SA Frequency]					
Please select one answer which best represents your communication or media usage.	Every day	5-6 times a week	3-4 times a week	1-2 times a week	I did not use
How frequently do you visit online social networking websites that focus on pictures to communicate? (Example: Pinteret, Instagram, Wanelo, Snapchat)	1	2	3	4	5
How often did you use the Internet to search for products?	1	2	3	4	5
How often did you read an online customer review?	1	2	3	4	5
How often did you read a product description for an item?	1	2	3	4	5
How often did you talk to immediate or extended family members face-to-face?	1	2	3	4	5
How often did you talk to immediate or extended family members on the telephone?	1	2	3	4	5
How often did you talk to immediate or extended family members online?	1	2	3	4	5
How often did you talk to your friends face-to-face?	1	2	3	4	5
How often did you talk to your friends on the telephone?	1	2	3	4	5
How often did you talk to your friends online?	1	2	3	4	5

Section 2: Product Interest

Please select one answer which best represents an item you have purchased and how often you discuss or have interest in products.

[Risk]		
Please identify an item that your family members encouraged you to purchase.	[Textbox]	N/A
In dollars, what did your purchase cost?	[Textbox]	N/A

\

[SA: Family]	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I spend a lot of time talking with my family about purchasing an item.	1	2	3	4	5
My family encourages me to make purchases.	1	2	3	4	5
My family and I tell each other where to find items.	1	2	3	4	5
I ask my family for advice about buying things.	1	2	3	4	5
I spend a lot of time talking with my family about purchasing an item.	1	2	3	4	5
My family encourages me to make purchases of items.	1	2	3	4	5
My family and I tell each other where to find items.	1	2	3	4	5
I spend a lot of time talking with my family about purchasing an item.	1	2	3	4	5

[Risk]		
Please identify an item that you searched for product information online before purchasing.	[Textbox]	N/A
In dollars, what did your purchase cost?	[Textbox]	N/A

[SA: Product Search]	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I spend a lot of time searching online for product information when purchasing an item.	1	2	3	4	5
Knowledge about the product helps me make purchases.	1	2	3	4	5
I search online for where to find items.	1	2	3	4	5
I seek product information online before buying things.	1	2	3	4	5
I spend a lot of time searching online for product information before purchasing an item.	1	2	3	4	5
Knowledge about the product helps me make purchases of items.	1	2	3	4	5
I search online for where to find items.	1	2	3	4	5
I seek product information online before buying an item.	1	2	3	4	5

[Risk]		
Please identify an item that your friends encouraged you to purchase.	[Textbox]	N/A
In dollars, what did your purchase cost?	[Textbox]	N/A

[SA: Peers]	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I spend a lot of time talking with my peers about purchasing an item.	1	2	3	4	5
My peers encourage me to make purchases.	1	2	3	4	5
My peers and I tell each other where to find items.	1	2	3	4	5
I ask my peers for advice about buying things.	1	2	3	4	5
I spend a lot of time talking with my peers about purchasing an item.	1	2	3	4	5
My peers encourage me to make purchases of items.	1	2	3	4	5
My peers and I tell each other where to find items.	1	2	3	4	5
I spend a lot of time talking with my peers about purchasing an item.	1	2	3	4	5

[Risk]		
Please identify an item that you saw on a visual social network (Pinterest, Wanelo, Instagram, Snapchat) and purchased.	[Textbox]	N/A
In dollars, what did your purchase cost?	[Textbox]	N/A

[SA: Visual SNS]	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I spend a lot of time using visually-oriented online social networks (i.e. Pinterest, Wanelo, Instagram, Snapchat) to look at products before purchasing an item.	1	2	3	4	5
I spend a lot of time talking with my online social network friends about purchasing an item.	1	2	3	4	5
Pictures from visual social networks encourage me to make purchases.	1	2	3	4	5
My online social network friends encourage me to make purchases.	1	2	3	4	5
Visual social networks help me find items.	1	2	3	4	5
My online social network friends help me find items.	1	2	3	4	5
I search online social networking websites for advice about buying things.	1	2	3	4	5
I ask my online social network friends for advice about buying things.	1	2	3	4	5

[Attitude and Purchase Intention]	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I intend to search online for products in the future.	1	2	3	4	5
I intend to search on visual social networking websites for products in the future.	1	2	3	4	5
I intend to ask my family members for advice about products in the future.	1	2	3	4	5
I intend to ask my friends for advice about products in the future	1	2	3	4	5
I intend to buy products I've searched for online in the future.	1	2	3	4	5
I intend to buy products I've searched for on visual social networking websites in the future.	1	2	3	4	5
I intend to buy products my family members recommend in the future	1	2	3	4	5
I intend to buy products my friends recommend in the future.	1	2	3	4	5

Section 3: Demographic Information

Please fill out the following information about yourself.

[Age]		
What is your age?		[Text Box]
What is your gender?		
Male 1	Female 2	Would rather not specify 3

What is your class status?				
Freshman	Sophomore	Junior	Senior	Other
1	2	3	4	[Textbox]

[Major]
What is your major? [Text Box]

In addition to being a student, do you currently employed?		
Yes	No	Would rather not specify
1	2	3

Do you feel that you have an income to spend on products per month?		
Yes	No	Would rather not specify
1	2	3

Thank you so much for participating in the survey!

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the IRB at xxx.unl.edu or the researcher at jennybeth.johnson@huskers.unl.edu

Would you be willing to participate in an interview on the subject of online social network usage in exchange for a **\$10 gift card to Amazon?** If so, please put your email below and you will be contacted early next semester. Your email address will not be used beyond this study and your responses to this survey will not be affiliated with your email address.

[Text box]

Appendix N: Qualitative Interview Questions
Interview Protocol

Project: Influence of Parents, Peers, Internet Product Search and Visual Social Media on College Students' Purchase Behavior: A Mixed Methods Study

Project Description: The overall goal of this study is to explain and understand the changes in how informed decisions are made when purchasing products. Since there are a variety of sources for information about products, such as parents, peers, Internet product search, and visual social media, it is important for researchers to understand how and why individuals use these sources. Thus, you will be asked about advice you have received from family members and friends about products, as well as how you use online media and websites to search for information about products.

This is a single interview that will help to provide more information about certain elements of the survey that you and many others completed last semester. Other individuals have also consented to be interviewed, so the results will not solely reflect your own personal viewpoints. Confidentiality and anonymity is extremely important to me and a pseudonym will be assigned to your responses. Your transcript will not contain your name or any other highly descriptive personal information. Any other names, such as family members or friends, that you provide will also be changed. I will send you a copy of the typed transcript for your review within the next two weeks. Please let me know of any changes, corrections, or concerns that you have, and we will work together to eliminate any information that you do not want shared within the results of this study. All completed transcripts will be kept in a password-secured file on a password-secured USB drive locked in the secondary researcher's office. This interview should last from 30-45 minutes.

[Interviewee should read and sign the consent form]

[Turn on tape recorder]

Interview Questions:

Introductory Questions

1. What is your age?
2. What is your gender?
3. What is your major?
4. Are you currently employed?

Probe. How long have you been employed?

Family

1. Please describe a situation when your family members encouraged you to purchase a product.

Probe. Who (would you/did you) ask for advice about a product?

2. What type of purchases do you seek advice from your family?
3. How do you ask your family for advice on purchases of any item (i.e. do you do so over the phone, in person, on social media)?

Probe. How and where would you start the conversation about potential purchases you may make?

4. Do you think it is important to gain advice from family members before making certain purchases? Why?

Friends

5. Please describe a situation when your friends encouraged you to purchase a product.

Probe. Who (would you/did you) ask for advice?

6. What type of purchases do you seek advice from your friends?
7. How do you ask your friends for advice on purchases (i.e. do you do so over the phone, in person, on social media)?

Probe. How and where would you start the conversation about potential purchases you may make?

8. Do you think it is important to gain advice from friends before making certain purchases? Why?

Internet Product Search

9. How do search for product information on the Internet?

Probe. What search engine do you use? What websites do you frequent? Are consumer reviews/pictures/detailed information important to you? Why?

10. Please describe a situation in which information you sought online enticed you to purchase a product.

Probe. Why do you think that information found online helped you make a decision to purchase the product?

11. Do you think it is important to gain information from the Internet before making certain purchases? Why?

Social Media

12. How would you search online social media with visual elements for items to purchase (i.e. Pinterest, SnapChat, Instagram, Wanelo)?

Probe. How do you access online social media (i.e. through mobile device, computer, tablet)?

13. Please describe a situation in which online social media enticed you to purchase an item.

Probe. Do you save or like items that you come across on visual social media?

Probe. Do your family and friends like or comment about the items you like or save?

14. Do you think it is important to gain information from online social media before making certain purchases? Why and in what ways?

Conclusive Questions

15. Which do you believe have more influence over what you purchase: families, friends, information you found online or online social media? Why?

16. Are there any other methods in which you gain information about products?

17. Is there anything else you would like to add about the topics we have discussed today?

18. Is there anything you would like to ask me?
-

Thank you for your participation in this interview. The confidentiality of your responses is of utmost importance and will be maintained as specified within the consent form. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at any time. I will email you the transcript of this interview. If you have any edits, changes, or clarifications, please let me know and we will work together to eliminate any discrepancies. Thank you so much for your time. I truly appreciate it.

[Dissemination of \$10 Amazon Gift Card]