

Consumer Decision-Making Styles: Relationships with Consumer Alienation

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Abstract

By understanding the relationship between consumer decision-making style and consumer alienation, insight can be gained into consumers and the manifestations of their wants and needs, especially as it concerns discretionary purchases (which comprise most purchases). Individuals possessing differing consumer decision-making styles are hypothesized to possess differing degrees of alienation from the marketplace. The results support several of the hypotheses. The relationships, however, appear to be more complex than hypothesized. The implications for retailers are discussed.

Introduction

Individuals are believed to approach consumer decision making in several distinct styles (Sproules and Kendall, 1986). These consumer decision-making styles have been a focus of research in marketing and the social sciences for many years (Bakewell and Mitchell, 2004). Such attention is not surprising – understanding consumers' decision-making processes permits an awareness of the foundations of the choices individuals make in the marketplace. More specifically, by understanding the different consumer decision-making styles employed by individuals, retailers can better realize the preferences and needs of different groups of consumers and the origins of these preferences and needs (Wiedmann, Walsh, Hennig-Thurau and Mitchell, 2001). Furthermore, by understanding the origins of preferences and needs, retailers will likely find that they are better able to predict and plan for the actions and choices of consumers (Bao, Zhou and Su, 2003). Many questions about consumer decision-making style, however, remain unanswered. One such question of particular importance to retailers concerns whether one's consumer decision-making style relates to the extent to which one interacts in the marketplace.

Given that consumer decision-making style affects how an individual relates to the marketplace (Wang, Siu and Hui, 2004), one can logically expect that the consumer decision-making style employed by an individual will affect the extent of that individual's interactions with the marketplace. Bao, Zhou and Su (2003), for instance, observed that one's consumer decision-making style affects the extent of one's risk aversion in the marketplace. Since most purchases made by individuals are discretionary in nature (Wood, 2005), lesser interactions with the marketplace (physical and/or electronic) can be expected to adversely affect the number and the size of purchases made. (Since the more products that a typical customer sees, the more they generally buy, less exposure to the marketplace

will limit the number of products seen and likewise the number of products purchased). A factor known to affect the extent of one's interactions in the marketplace is the degree of alienation from the marketplace one perceives (Johnson, 1995). The degree to which an individual perceives to be alienated from the marketplace is logically affected by the consumer decision-making style employed. Consequently, since consumers who are alienated from the marketplace will typically attempt to avoid or at least minimize their interactions with the marketplace, this would seem to be an important area of study.

The consumer decision-making styles and the degree of alienation from the marketplace felt by members of Generation Y (young adults) appear to warrant particular research attention. The consumer decision-making styles of members of Generation Y are believed to differ from previous generations (Bakewell and Mitchell, 2003; Mishra, 2010). Members of Generation Y were raised in a media and shopping intensive environment which has affected the meaning and the role played by possessions in their lives. Specifically, during the past century, each generation seemingly has been more materialistic than the previous (Herbig, Koehler and Day, 1993) with products playing larger and larger roles in the lives of the members of each successive generation – members of Generation Y are not an exception (Roberts, 2000).

Members of Generation Y possess a formidable presence in the marketplace by the magnitude of their expenditures – a presence which will likely grow significantly in coming years as their relative incomes grow. Although the extent of the involvement of members of Generation Y in the marketplace is unquestionable, not all members of Generation Y are equally involved. Indeed, a distinct minority of the members of Generation Y appears to possess different consumer decision-making styles and consequently, is not as involved in the marketplace (Elgin and Mitchell, 2004). The consumer decision-making styles of young adults and their relationship with alienation from the marketplace, therefore, appears to warrant research attention.

The objective of this study is to relate young adults' consumer decision-making styles to the degree to which they feel alienated from the marketplace. It is hypothesized that individuals possessing differing consumer decision-making styles possess differing degrees of alienation from the marketplace. First, past research on consumer decision-making styles will be explored. Second, past research on consumer alienation will be examined. Third, hypotheses will be developed and tested.

Consumer Decision-making Styles

Consumer decision-making style is "a mental orientation characterizing a consumer's approach to marketing choices" (Sproles and Kendall, 1986: 268) and is commonly regarded as a basic psychological construct, comprising a fundamental part of personality (Coward and Goldsmith, 2007). As such, consumer decision-making style is regarded as a relatively stable construct which affects an individual's behavior over an extended period of time, perhaps one's entire life (Walsh, Hennig-Thurau, Wayne-Mitchell, and Wiedman, 2001). As a stable construct, consumer decision-making style holds promise as a tool to better understand the nature of the consumer orientation of individuals. Indeed, consumer decision-making style can be viewed as "basic buying-decision-making attitudes that consumers adhere to, even when they are applied to different goods, services, or purchasing decisions" (Walsh, Hennig-Thurau, Wayne-Mitchell and Weidmann, 2001: 121).

The most highly regarded and most widely utilized approach to consumer decision-making style is that of Sproles and Kendall (1986). Sproles and Kendall (1986) identified eight consumer decision-making styles: 1) price-value consciousness or "value for money," 2) perfectionism or high-quality consciousness, 3) brand consciousness or "price equals quality," 4) novelty-fashion consciousness, 5) recreational or hedonistic consciousness, 6) habitual or brand loyal, 7) impulsiveness or carelessness, and 8) confused by overchoice. In an attempt to simplify understanding of the eight consumer decision-making styles, Shim (1996) suggests that the eight styles actually represent three differing orientations to consumer activities. Specifically, the first orientation (utilitarian orientation) is suggested to be comprised of the first two styles (price-value consciousness and perfectionism), the second orientation (social/conspicuous orientation) is suggested to be comprised of the next four styles (brand consciousness, novelty-fashion consciousness, recreational/hedonic consciousness, and habitual), and the third orientation (undesirable orientation) includes the final two styles (impulsiveness and confused by choice).

How do the eight decision-making styles relate to the approaches individuals take in the marketplace? As suggested earlier, given the effect that consumer decision-making style has on the consumer choices and activities of individuals, it is logical to expect that one's consumer decision-making style will affect the degree to which one perceives alienation from the marketplace. Indeed, examining perceived alienation from the marketplace may provide increased insight and understanding into the manner by which consumers' decision-making styles are manifest.

Consumer Alienation

Alienation, or feelings of separation or estrangement from a social structure or social institution, is not a new phenomenon (Johnson, 1996). Several, however, perceive that the prevalence of the feelings of alienation individuals are experiencing is growing as a result of the increasing complexity of society (e.g., Lyman, 2001). Coupled with the increasing complexity of society is a requirement for increased personal integration with society. More and more, from automobile repair to communications, many individuals are finding that they must increasingly interact with many of the social institutions from which they feel alienated. Faced with such instances of "forced interaction," a logical reaction of some individuals experiencing feelings of alienation is to withdraw from those forms of interaction which are viewed to be discretionary, such as interaction with the marketplace.

Alienation is not a universal construct - instead, alienation is situation-specific (Allison 1978). Alienation, therefore, can only be examined within the domain of a specific social structure or social institution (Clark, 1959). Some of the contexts within which alienation has been examined include the workplace (e.g., Hirschfield, Field and Bedeian, 2000), the political process (e.g., Radkiewicz, 2007), religion (e.g., Kennedy and Drabing, 2002), and the marketplace (e.g., Johnson, 1996). Alienation in the final example, alienation from the marketplace, is most commonly referred to as consumer alienation and consists of individuals' failure to accept the doctrine of consumption and/or a failure to find fulfillment in the offerings of the marketplace (Boyd and Helms, 2005) and involves feelings of powerlessness (Krishnan, Bhatnagar and Manchanda, 2008). Lambert suggests "(consumer) alienation is a potentially fruitful area for further explorations aimed at attempting to gain better insights into and understanding of the factors that feed discontentment and consumerism" (1981: 82).

Feelings of alienation can be expected to affect an individual's behavior. Specifically, individuals can be expected to desire to minimize contact with social structures and institutions from which they feel alienated. Individuals with high degrees of consumer alienation, therefore, can be expected to attempt to minimize contact with the marketplace. Consistent with this line of thought, Lambert (1981) observed that greater degrees of consumer alienation may lead to disengagement from the marketplace.

Individuals experiencing consumer alienation can be expected to hold relatively poor attitudes toward the marketplace – individuals can be expected to disengage from social structures and social institutions with which they possess relatively poor attitudes (Lambert, 1980). Empirical research supports this contention. Lambert (1981) observed a strong relationship between consumer alienation and feelings of being disgruntled with the marketplace as did Vitell and Paolillo (2003). Individuals who feel higher levels of consumer alienation, therefore, appear to hold poorer attitudes toward the marketplace and appear to be more likely to disengage from it (Boyd and Helms, 2005).

The Study

When examining consumer decision-making styles, a number of relationships with consumer alienation appear logical. Specifically, four of the consumer decision-making styles logically can be expected to be positively related with consumer alienation (stronger consumer decision-making style leading to higher alienation from the marketplace) – the brand-conscious style where consistent brand choice is used as a mechanism to limit interaction with the marketplace (Hypothesis 3), the habitual/brand-loyal style where habit is used as a mechanism to limit interaction with the marketplace (Hypothesis 6), the impulsive/careless style where interaction is haphazard (Hypothesis 7), and the confused/overchoice style where individuals have a lack of confidence in their choice-making activities (Hypothesis 8). The remaining consumer decision-making styles logically can be expected to be negatively related with consumer alienation (stronger consumer decision-making style leading to lower alienation from the marketplace) – each of the four styles involves some sort of shopping activity, be it the price-value conscious style (searching for the lowest price) (Hypothesis 1), the perfectionism style (searching for the highest quality) (Hypothesis 2), the novel-fashion conscious style (searching for fashion) (Hypothesis 4), or the recreational conscious style (viewing shopping as an enjoyable leisure activity) (Hypothesis 5). The hypotheses, therefore, are as follows:

- H1. H1:** The price-value conscious consumer decision-making style is associated with lower levels of consumer alienation.
- H2. H2:** The perfectionism consumer decision-making style is associated with lower levels of consumer alienation.
- H3. H3:** The brand-conscious consumer decision-making style is associated with higher levels of consumer alienation.
- H4. H4:** The novelty-fashion consumer decision-making style is associated with lower levels of consumer alienation.
- H5. H5:** The recreational conscious consumer decision-making style is associated with lower levels of consumer alienation.
- H6. H6:** The habitual or brand-loyal consumer decision-making style is associated with higher levels of consumer alienation.

- H7. H7:** The impulsive or careless consumer decision-making style is associated with higher levels of consumer alienation.
- H8. H8:** The confused by overchoice consumer decision-making style is associated with higher levels of consumer alienation.

Methodology

Members of Generation Y formed the basis of the sample. The sample was gathered from undergraduate students attending marketing courses at a medium-sized commuter state university located in the Midwest. The sample was specifically chosen to be chronologically, geographically, and educationally homogeneous. Consequently, the students likely possessed similar marketplace experiences. Furthermore, one's consumer alienation may be affected by one's demographics. Specifically, although Shuptrine, Pruden, and Longman (1977) suggest that consumer alienation is affected little by age or income, others have observed an age effect (Allison, 1978; Johnson, 1995; Lambert, 1981), an education effect (Neal and Groat, 1974), and an ethnic effect (Amyx, Bristow and Schneider, 2004). A homogeneous sample controls for these effects.

The questionnaire was administered anonymously during class settings. The resulting sample consisted of 1008 responses. No nonresponse was noted. The questionnaire included scales to measure consumer decision-making style and consumer alienation.

The Consumer Styles Inventory (CSI) was utilized to measure consumer decision-making style (Sproles and Kendall, 1986). The instrument was constructed to assess respondents' consumer decision-making styles. During the development process, the scale was subjected to large-scale testing and factor analysis to perfect the instrument and to ensure a valid measure. The cross-cultural applicability of the scale was examined in a number of contexts. Walsh, Hennig-Thurau, Mitchell and Wiedmann conclude "the original structure of decision-making style, by and large, was confirmed in all seven countries" (2001: 119), providing evidence to the validity of the instrument. McDonald (1994) reports additional evidence attesting to the scale's validity. Students were asked to respond to each scale item on a five-point Likert scale.

Although consumer alienation has been recognized for some time, little empirical research was been conducted until the 1970s. The initial research conducted on consumer alienation used generic alienation measures (e.g., Hilger, 1973); the contextual nature of alienation and methodological shortcomings of these early studies, however, limit the applicability of their findings.

More recently, Allison (1978) developed a scale to measure consumer alienation. As a result of utilizing a multi-stage scale development process to ensure the validity of the resulting scale, Allison (1978) produced the Consumer Alienation Scale. Although Allison (1978) provides extensive evidence on the reliability and validity of the scale, Beardon, Lichtenstein, and Teel (1983) further refined the scale by reducing the scale from 33 items to 22 items and by identifying three factors, representing 1) business ethics, or beliefs about the ethical behavior of business, 2) informed choice, or opinions about the usefulness of more information, and 3) personal norm, or attitudes about one's personal norms about consumption. Further validity testing by Beardon, Lichtenstein, and Teel (1983) lends additional support to the validity of the scale.

Results

The results (displayed in Table 1), indicate that six of the eight hypotheses are supported – for each hypothesis, with the exception of Hypotheses 1 and 4, significant (at the .05 level) results are observed in the direction hypothesized. (Significant positive relationships between the consumer decision-making styles of brand conscious (H3), habitual or brand loyal (H6), impulsive or careless (H7), and confused by overchoice (H8) and consumer alienation are observed. Significant negative relationships between the consumer decision-making styles of perfectionism (H2) and recreational conscious (H5) and consumer alienation are observed). Significant results are not observed for either Hypothesis 1 or for Hypothesis 4. (The hypothesized negative relationships between the consumer decision-making styles of price-value conscious (H1) and novelty-fashion conscious (H4) and consumer alienation are not observed). The results, therefore, lend support to the contention that consumer decision-making styles are related to the degree of alienation perceived from the marketplace and that the relationships differ across consumer decision-making styles.

Table 1: Correlational Results

Hypothesis	Consumer Decision-Making Style	Correlation	Level of Significance	Hypothesis Direction
H1	Price-Value Consciousness or “Value for Money”	-.024	.452	-
H2	Perfectionism or High-Quality Consciousness	-.120	.000**	-
H3	Brand Consciousness or “Price Equals Quality”	.193	.000**	+
H4	Novelty-Fashion Consciousness	-.021	.514	-
H5	Recreational or Hedonistic Consciousness	-.107	.001**	-
H6	Habitual or Brand Loyal	.082	.010**	+
H7	Impulsiveness or Carelessness	.215	.000**	+
H8	Confused by Overchoice	.427	.000**	+

** $p < .05$

To provide further insight into the findings, the analysis was extended to examine the factors of consumer alienation identified by Beardon, Lichtenstein, and Teel (1983) (Table 2). The further analysis indicates that, for four of the six consumer decision-making styles for which significant relationships are observed with consumer alienation (brand conscious (H3), recreational conscious (H5), impulsive or careless (H7), and confused by overchoice (H8)), the results observed emanate from all three of the consumer alienation factors. The relationships between one of the consumer decision-making styles

(recreational conscious (H5)) and the three consumer alienation factors, however, are not consistent. The relationship with the third factor, personal norm, is positive, opposite of that hypothesized.

Table 2 : Alienation Factors

Hypothesis	Consumer Decision-Making Style	Factor 1		Factor 2		Factor 3		Hypo.
		Correlation	Sig. Level	Correlation	Sig. Level	Correlation	Sig. Level	Direction
H1	Price-Value Consciousness or "Value for Money"	.028	.383	-.101	.001**	-.024	.446	-
H2	Perfectionism or High-Quality Consciousness	.024	.460	-.230	.000**	-.145	.000**	-
H3	Brand Consciousness or "Price Equals Quality"	.078	.045**	.066	.038**	.337	.000**	+
H4	Novelty-Fashion Consciousness	-.027	.396	-.151	.000**	.111	.000**	-
H5	Recreational or Hedonistic Consciousness	-.109	.001**	-.249	.000**	.083	.009**	-
H6	Habitual or Brand Loyal	.111	.000**	-.003	.927	.060	.057	+
H7	Impulsiveness or Carelessness	.064	.046**	.146	.000**	.341	.000**	+
H8	Confused by Overchoice	.286	.000**	.404	.000**	.201	.000**	+

Alienation factors: Factor 1- Business ethics

Factor 2 - Informed choice

Factor 3 - Personal norm

For the other two consumer decision-making styles for which significant relationships are observed with consumer alienation, the relationships observed appear to emanate from a subset of the consumer alienation factors. Significant relationships are observed between the consumer decision-making style of perfectionism (H2) and the second and third consumer alienation factors (informed choice and personal norm) and between the consumer decision-making style of habitual or brand loyal (H6) and the first consumer alienation factor (business ethics).

Interestingly, the two consumer decision-making styles which are not found to be significantly related to the overall measure of consumer alienation (price-value conscious (H1) and novelty-fashion conscious (H4)) are found to be significantly related to selected factors of consumer alienation. Specifically, significant relationships are observed between price-value consciousness and the second consumer alienation factor (informed choice) in a direction consistent with that hypothesized. Relationships are also observed between novelty-fashion conscious and the second and third consumer alienation factors (informed choice and personal norm). Novelty-fashion consciousness, however, is observed to be

negatively related to the second consumer alienation factor (informed choice) and positively related to the third consumer alienation factor (personal norm).

Discussion and Implications

The results suggest that young adults possessing differing consumer decision-making styles possess varying degrees of alienation from the marketplace as hypothesized. Given that consumer alienation affects the level of interaction one has with the marketplace, and given that the level of interaction that one has with the marketplace likely directly affects the number and sizes of purchases made, the results potentially add to understanding of the effect of consumer decision-making styles on consumers' choices in the marketplace. Additional discussion seems warranted.

For each of the four instances where a positive relationship between consumer decision-making style and consumer alienation was hypothesized, confirmatory results were observed. In these instances (brand conscious, habitual or brand loyal, impulsive or careless, and confused by overchoice), the stronger the consumer decision-making style, the greater the degree of consumer alienation perceived. These consumer decision-making styles, therefore, appear to represent modes of approach to the marketplace which potentially limits one's interaction with it. Each will be briefly discussed.

The brand conscious consumer decision-making style involves relying upon perceived quality as a means to minimize risk of dissatisfaction, or more importantly, as a means to simplify and/or abbreviate the shopping process. A reliance on quality as the primary salient choice criterion eliminates a consumer's need to explore the marketplace to identify and compare other available, though possibly lower quality, product alternatives. Consequently, such a focus on quality permits an individual the ability to significantly limit contact and interaction with the marketplace.

The impulsive or careless and the confused by overchoice consumer decision-making styles both also involve limited involvement with the marketplace. With the impulsive or careless style, for instance, consumers' involvement in the marketplace tends to be haphazard - there is little, if any, attempt by these consumers to understand the marketplace. Instead, interactions with the marketplace are limited, often involving quick and sometimes virtually spontaneous isolated episodes. The outcome of the confused by overchoice style is similar. Faced with an apparent inability (or unwillingness) by these consumers to understand the marketplace, interaction with the marketplace is also usually limited and often involves quick and spontaneous episodes.

Lastly, the habitual or brand loyal consumer decision-making style involves using brand as a means to simplify and/or abbreviate the shopping process. Reliance on particular brands eliminates the need to explore the marketplace to identify and compare available product alternatives. Unlike the previous three consumer decision-making styles discussed above, however, the habitual or brand loyal consumer decision-making style was observed to be related to only one of the factors of consumer alienation - the factor of "business ethics," or beliefs about the ethical behavior of business. It appears that the habitual or brand loyal style may represent a manifestation of a disbelief in the ethical conduct of business. By pursuing brand loyalty, a consumer can rely on the products/brands which have proven to be satisfactory through previous experience.

Contact with the marketplace is minimized since unknown or unproven products are not likely considered or evaluated.

The findings suggest, therefore, that four consumer decision-making styles are positively related to consumer alienation. Consequently, individuals exhibiting these styles can be expected to desire to minimize their interactions with the marketplace. How can retailers best cater to these individuals? The situation is advantageous for retailers who already possess individuals exhibiting the habitual or brand loyal consumer decision-making style as consumers since as long as the retailer continues to provide the brand names desired or as long as the retailer itself is viewed as a trusted brand, these customers likely possess little incentive to look elsewhere. The situation is likely more difficult, however, for retailers attempting to attract new customers exhibiting this style. The most promising situations for these retailers may occur when a competitor who, as the result of a shift in positioning or alterations in merchandise assortment, alienates their habitual or brand-loyal customers, sending them on a quest to reestablish the status quo.

Retailers targeting the brand conscious consumer possess the need to maintain their quality position and/or to consistently provide products viewed as high quality by these individuals. In addition, the products need to be merchandised and promoted in such a way to maintain an "aura of quality." If brand conscious consumers perceive that products are offered by a particular retailer are consistently high quality, they will likely possess little motivation to look elsewhere given their feelings of alienation from the marketplace.

The impulsive or careless consumer, however, may be best targeted through store location. By choosing locations which are close and convenient to their customers, retailers may find themselves in better positions to cater to these individuals. Given their impulsiveness and their feelings of alienation from the marketplace, these individuals will be unlikely to methodically search for store/product alternatives, but instead will be more likely to purchase when and where a need is first realized. Hence, convenient store location appears to be a must.

Lastly, retailers targeting the confused by overchoice consumer will optimally need to provide a constrained assortment. The consumers will need to be able to locate needed products, but to be able to do so without being confronted by a myriad of choice. Though not primarily targeting the confused by overchoice consumer, retailers such as Trader Joes or Aldi are likely to be viewed favorably by these consumers given these stores' limited assortments and since many of their products are available in only a single brand.

The results suggest that consumer decision-making styles may play a lesser role in fostering involvement in the marketplace than inhibiting it. Only two of the four instances where a negative relationship between consumer decision-making style and consumer alienation was hypothesized were supported by the results (perfectionism and recreational conscious). Furthermore, only one of the two supported relationships, that involving recreation conscious, involved all of the factors of consumer alienation. The relationship involving the recreational conscious style is not surprising – the recreational conscious consumer decision-making style involves a desire to be involved in the marketplace. Indeed, involvement in the marketplace is viewed as a positive, often leisure or entertainment-oriented activity. Interestingly, the relationship with the third factor, personal norm, is positive, however, opposite of that hypothesized. This finding suggests

that the recreational conscious consumer is focused more on the shopping experience itself rather than the acquisition of products.

Since consumers exhibiting a recreational conscious style tend to view shopping as a fun, desirable activity and often view it as a leisure activity, retailers targeting these individuals need to locate in areas visited by this customer. Locating within close proximity to other leisure activities (e.g., vacation locations) would appear to possess the likelihood of being successful locations. The locational strategy of outlet centers is consistent with this philosophy. Most outlet centers are located in or near major tourist destinations, such as amusement parks, beaches, or major historical landmarks. Also, since shopping is often viewed as fun as opposed to merely as an obligation, these individuals will likely be drawn to stores offering unique and different products.

Perfectionism was found to be negatively related to the second and third consumer alienation factors (informed choice and personal norm), but not the first factor (business ethics). The relationship between the perfectionism style and consumer alienation, therefore, does not appear to arise from perceptions of the perceived ethics of business, but from more personally oriented factors – the perceived value of additional information in the choice process and personal norms. These individuals desire quality and value additional information to aid them in the choice process.

Retailers targeting perfectionistic individuals need to provide high quality products. Furthermore, they should provide informational assistance to aid customers into realizing that the products offered by them are indeed of the highest quality and/or to help the customers choose the best quality products from among the retailer's offerings. Optimally, a retailer targeting perfectionistic individuals will provide the information necessary to clearly convince customers of the superiority of its offerings. If the store's customers "shop around," however, the retailer will need to foster informed comparison by readily providing consumers with the information necessary for them to become convinced of the quality of the retailer's offerings.

The final two consumer decision-making styles, although hypothesized to be negatively related with consumer alienation, were not found to be related to the overall measure of consumer alienation – they were, however, found to be related to selected factors of consumer alienation.

The price-value conscious consumer decision-making style was observed to be related only with the second consumer alienation factor – informed choice, or opinions about the usefulness of more information. Individuals possessing this style, therefore, tend to possess a higher opinion of the usefulness of more information in the search process. Consequently, they appear to engage in the marketplace to acquire information – information viewed as useful in the choice process. It seems likely that these individuals will often engage in a relatively high degree of information gathering and comparing before making a product choice. This is logical, given that research and information gathering are required to locate the best price/value.

A retailer's most likely successful response to the price-value conscious consumer is to 1) offer competitive pricing, 2) locate near competitors, and 3) make information readily available. Offering competitive pricing appears to be the starting point in appealing to these individuals. The other two prescriptions deal with facilitating information

acquisition. First, it is imperative that store location be chosen to facilitate price comparison. This would involve locating close to primary competition – locating far from the competition may result in the retailer not being in the consumers' evaluation set. Also, given the importance given to information, particularly price information, such information must be readily available in-store and likely online as well.

The novelty-fashion conscious consumer decision-making style was found to be negatively related with the second consumer alienation factor, informed choice, similar to the price-value consumer decision-making style. Consequently, a retailer response similar to that suggested to that used for individuals possessing a price-value conscious decision-making style as described above seems appropriate. The novelty-fashion conscious customer appears to see the value of information in the acquisition of in-fashion merchandise. Hence, retailers need to provide the fashion information necessary to attract customers to the store's products.

Lastly, the novelty-fashion conscious consumer decision-making style was also observed to be positively related to the third consumer alienation factor, personal norm. The acquisition of in-fashion merchandise, therefore, appears to be more important than the functional use of the products.

In conclusion, understanding the relationship between consumer decision-making style and consumer alienation provides insight into consumers and the manifestations of their wants and needs, especially as it concerns discretionary purchases. Since most retailers survive and prosper through the discretionary purchases of their customers and since structuring their layout to encourage discretionary purchases by their customers is an important activity to increase the probability of success, understanding the relationship between consumer decision-making style and consumer alienation seems to be of the utmost importance, particularly so since the level of alienation experienced by consumers appears to differ across consumer decision-making style.

The study possesses several limitations which may restrict the generalizability of the results. First, the sample, though active in the marketplace, was comprised of individuals from a single demographic group. The generalizability of the findings to other demographic groups is unknown. Furthermore, no attempt was made to examine subjects' actual shopping activity.

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