

Consumers' Shopping Effort and Evaluation of Store Image Attributes: The Roles Of Purchasing Involvement and Recreational Shopping Interest

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Abstract

Purchasing involvement and recreational shopping are two consumer characteristics associated with active shopping and information-seeking. This study examines how these characteristics influence consumers' shopping effort and consumers' importance ratings of department store attributes. Significant differences are found among highly involved consumers, minimally involved consumers, and recreational shoppers and between groups of consumers classified on the basis of these two characteristics. Public policy and research implications are discussed.

Introduction

Optimal consumer decision-making is a widely researched topic in marketing, economics, and psychology. Embedded in optimal consumer decision-making is the theory of optimal choice--the process of a consumer's making an optimal decision to maximize his or her overall utility with the total package of goods and services consumed (Sproles 1983). Recently, however, consumer researchers have noted some practical problems with the utility maximization approach to optimal decision-making. In most instances consumers are not rational decision-makers. They do not acquire or compare all available information to maximize their purchase utilities but instead adopt strategies that are satisficing rather than maximizing (Simon 1978). Researchers note that personal values, situational factors, and trade-offs among competing alternatives are the influential factors in consumers' decision-making strategies, underscoring the importance of studying the influence of personal factors on consumer choice behavior (Assael 1987).

For example, given time constraints or a low level of involvement in the shopping process, a consumer might limit the number of stores patronized or time spent in searching for alternatives (Clarke and Belk 1979; Lastovicka and Gardner 1979). However, some consumers are more interested than others in purchase problems and shopping. Such interested consumers are

important to consumer researchers, because these consumers are likely to be opinion leaders, both through their roles in the adoption and diffusion process and through their influence on interpersonal communication patterns (Feick and Price 1987).

Consumers who are interested in purchase problems and shopping have been examined from various research perspectives and have been labeled, among other terms, "information-seekers" (Thorelli and Engledow 1980); "recreational shoppers" or "recreational, hedonistic consumers" (Bellenger and Korgaonkar 1980; Sproles and Kendall 1986); "involved consumers" (Kassarjian 1981); and "market mavens" (Feick and Price 1987; Higie, Feick and Price 1987). While these shopper types are not isomorphic, they all represent consumers who are sensitive to market information and are more likely to approximate "rational" consumers. For example, Thorelli and Engledow (1980) suggest that both public policy programs and corporate promotion programs would be most effective if they concentrated on information-seekers, because these consumers tend to be innovators, vigilantes of the marketplace, and opinion leaders. This suggestion would also apply to recreational shoppers, involved consumers, and market mavens, because research has shown all three of these consumer types to be information-seekers and (to varying degrees) advice-givers on purchase issues (Higie, Feick, and Price

1987). These individuals deserve consumer researchers' and public policymakers' special attention, whether the consumers are labeled information-seekers, recreational shoppers, involved consumers, or market mavens.

Lesser and Hughes (1986) found, both in their multimarket study and in the review of shopper typology literature, that active and inactive shoppers were two of the types of shoppers that appear most often. Recreational shopping (Bellenger and Korgaonkar 1980) and purchasing involvement (Slama and Tashchian 1985) are two traits that distinguish active shoppers from inactive shoppers, and both traits have proven to be important predictors of consumer behavior. Although involved consumers and recreational shoppers have been studied individually, integrative research is required to determine the degree to which these concepts overlap or differ in their impact on consumer behavior and consequently on marketing strategy.

In the present research, both involved consumers and recreational shoppers are studied simultaneously by comparing involved consumers and recreational shoppers in terms of the number of stores they visit for making specific purchases, importance they place on store attributes for department stores, and several demographic variables.

Currently, integrative research is required to determine the degree to which these concepts overlap or differ in their impact on consumer behavior and consequently, marketing strategy. The study of factors that influence consumer involvement in search and shopping behavior can also enhance our understanding of optimal or satisfactory decision-making process, a key concern of consumer educators and policymakers. The current research is integrative in that it compares and evaluates consumers' purchasing involvement and recreational shopping behavior as factors that influence search behavior and evaluation of store attributes.

In the following sections, the paper describes the involved consumers and the recreational shoppers.

Characteristics of Involved Consumers

Kassarjian (1981) has stated that it is "undeniable that there are differences between individuals which, regardless of the product or situation, make some people more interested, concerned or involved in the consumer decision process." Kassarjian's notion of generalized purchasing involvement is similar to a personality trait, in the sense that it transcends individual purchase situations and is a characteristic of the individual. Purchasing involvement is useful in explaining those consumer behaviors that are not product-specific. For example, people with relatively greater purchasing involvement tend to know where to shop for certain

items, where to get a good price on products, and which outlets are having sales. Furthermore, they open and read direct-mail advertisements and save trading stamps. Purchasing involvement is a tendency to be concerned with buying things and to feel that purchasing is important to one's life. In contrast, product involvement is product-specific and is defined as an unobservable state reflecting the amount of interest, arousal, or emotional attachment which the product evokes in a particular individual (Bloch 1982). Finally, purchasing involvement is different from the concept of the market maven. As defined by Feick and Price (1987), market mavens are diffusers of marketplace information and initiate discussions with other consumers and respond to requests from other consumers for market information.

It has been shown that purchasing involvement predicts shopping effort. Slama and Tashchian (1983) found that self-reports of amount of time spent, amount of money spent, and number of stores visited for various purchases are significantly related to purchasing involvement, even after accounting for other forms of involvement produced by the product and the purchase situation. Purchasing involvement relates to demographics in a manner consistent with previous findings on demographics and search effort. Specifically, being female is associated with higher purchasing involvement, as are higher educational achievement and having children at home. Income exhibits a curvilinear relationship to purchasing involvement, such that middle-income levels are associated with the highest levels of purchasing involvement (Slama and Tashchian 1985).

Finally, purchasing involvement is related to favorable response to direct-marketing appeals. Williams (1988) questioned consumers about their tendency to respond favorably to direct-marketing appeals, including their tendency to buy over the telephone, through the mail, at buying parties, or from personal salespeople in the home. Using these questions as a scale, he found a significant positive correlation between purchasing involvement and the tendency to buy direct.

In summary, involved consumers believe that purchasing is important to their lives and strive to attain value in their purchase decisions. Their demographic characteristics are similar to those of information-seekers. They are socially aggressive and put a lot of effort into shopping. In their quest for value, they are also willing to use direct marketers.

Characteristics of Recreational Shoppers

Recreational shoppers are defined as people who enjoy shopping as a leisure activity. These individuals typically browse in retail outlets without an upcoming purchase in mind. They have higher interest in and knowledge of product class concerned than do nonbrow-

sers (Bloch and Richins 1983). They are likely to be engaged in active shopping as a means of seeking information on merchandise, prices, quality, and fashion trends (Bellenger and Korgaonkar 1980). In their active shopping tendencies, recreational shoppers are similar to involved consumers but differ in their motives for active shopping. Recreational shoppers enjoy spending leisure time shopping. For them, the enjoyment of shopping is of primary importance, while obtaining optimal value from purchasing is an additional benefit. For involved consumers, enjoyment of shopping activities is secondary to obtaining value in purchasing.

Empirical research has demonstrated that recreational shopping has a rich relationship with consumer behavior. In the Bellenger and Korgaonkar (1980) study, recreational shoppers were shown to be information-seekers, to engage in a high number of nonplanned purchases, to prefer closed malls and department stores, to enjoy social interaction and activities outside the home, and to place importance on quality, variety, and store decor in their store selection.

Additional research findings further illustrate the consumer behavior of the recreational shopper. The recreational shoppers have higher product interest and knowledge and read more product-related magazines than do individuals who are not recreational shoppers. In addition, recreational shoppers engage in more word-of-mouth communication activity concerning the product than do others (Bloch and Richins 1983). Since they are social individuals, recreational shoppers like to take friends shopping and to give advice about shopping decisions. They also like to use coupons and to look for sales. The recreational shopper tends to find advertising helpful in purchase decisions. Recreational shoppers also prefer prestigious brand-name products and upscale department stores; and their tendency to dress in the latest styles indicates that they are fashion-oriented.

Recreational shoppers are likely to make impulse purchases during their recreational shopping activities. During recreational shopping they also collect information and develop retail patronage habits, which influence their purchase decisions. Recreational shoppers make a good target market because, as innovators and opinion leaders, they influence other consumers (Jarboe and McDaniel 1987).

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were developed to determine how do involved consumers and recreational shoppers, as compared to other consumers, evaluate a series of department store attributes? If the amount of time spent in shopping for certain purchases for both involved consumers and recreational shoppers, differs from shopping time of other consumers.

H1: Involved consumers will place greater importance on store attributes related to value than will noninvolved consumers.

H2: Recreational shoppers will place greater importance on store attributes that are related to making shopping a pleasant experience than will nonrecreational shoppers.

H3: Both involved consumers and recreational shoppers will spend a greater amount of time shopping for products than will the rest of the sample.

H4: Both involved consumers and recreational shoppers will place greater importance on all store attributes than will other consumers.

Ample research documents that involved consumers and recreational shoppers will spend more time shopping for products, visit more outlets, and engage in more word-of-mouth communication regarding the purchase than will noninvolved consumers and nonrecreational shoppers. (Bellenger and Korgaonkar 1980; Bloch and Richins 1983; Slama and Tashchian 1983). In addition, involved consumers should be particularly concerned with attributes that assure value in purchasing, such as high value for the money and favorable return policies. Recreational shoppers are expected to place greater importance on attributes associated with decor, quality, and variety than do other consumers, as found in the Bellenger and Korgaonkar (1980) study.

Methodology

Measures

In the present study, the purchasing involvement scale (Slama and Tashchian 1985) was employed to classify respondents as involved consumers. The purchasing involvement scale measures the importance that an individual places on purchasing activities. The scale has 33 Likert-type items, with six response categories that are anchored by "Strongly agree" and "Strongly disagree." Typical items on this scale include: "I am not interested in bargain seeking"; "I am not really committed to getting the most for my money"; and "If I were buying major appliances it wouldn't make much difference which brand I chose." This scale has been shown to have excellent reliability and validity. For the present sample the purchasing involvement scale had a reliability coefficient of 0.917, as measured by Cronbach's α . The scores for the purchasing involvement scale can range from a low of 33 (no purchasing involvement) to a high of 198 (a high level of purchasing involvement). For the present sample the scores ranged from 48 to 193.

The Bellenger and Korgaonkar (1980) method was employed to classify respondents as recreational shop-

pers. Their method involves the use of a single five-point Likert scale to measure respondents' enjoyment of shopping. Responses range from "Enjoy very much" to "Strongly dislike." Although simple, this operationalization was shown to be an excellent predictor of consumer behavior in the Bellenger and Korgaonkar (1980) study.

The importance placed on store attributes was measured on seven-point semantic differential scales anchored by "Not important at all" and "Extremely important." All 18 store attributes examined in this study were used in a study of grocery and department store attributes by Hansen and Deutscher (1978) and are generally representative of store image attributes used by other researchers (Higie, Feick, and Price 1987; Hirschman, Greenberg and Robertson 1978). For the present sample, the 18 department store attributes (Table 2) had a reliability coefficient (Cronbach's α) of 0.923, indicating a high degree of internal consistency for the items.

To determine the extent of shopping effort, respondents were asked to indicate the number of stores or outlets that they would visit if they were purchasing: a color television, a washing machine, a business suit, and dress shoes for personal consumption. These items were selected for their high-involvement nature. It was hypothesized that involved consumers and recreational shoppers expend a larger shopping effort for purchases of these shopping goods than do the rest of the sample.

To classify a respondent as an involved consumer, the following approach was adopted. The respondents with a total score of 165 or above on the purchasing involvement scale were classified as involved consumers. This cutoff point separates from the rest of the sample those respondents who on the average strongly agree or agree with the individual items of the scale. Similarly, a respondent who had indicated "Enjoying shopping very much" or "Enjoying shopping" was classified as a high recreational shopper. Finally, by cross-classifying individuals based on their involvement and recreational shopping categories, four shopper groups (high involvement/high recreational, high involvement/low recreational, low involvement/high recreational, and low involvement/low recreational) were created.

Subjects and Data Collection

A probability sample of adults was drawn from a Southern city in the United States. The subjects were selected by a systematic area-sampling technique which has been widely used and accepted in survey research (Survey Research Center 1976).

The interviewing procedure involved personal delivery and collection of self-administered questionnaires. The interviewers were instructed to select the first available

adult in a chosen household for interviewing. If the interviewee did not have time or did not want to complete the questionnaire while the interviewer waited, the interviewer dropped off the questionnaire and returned for it a maximum of two times at times arranged with the interviewee. If after two return attempts the completed questionnaire was not collected, the interviewee was replaced by a subject from an adjacent dwelling. Of the 335 questionnaires that were dropped off, 297 were collected.

The sample had a median age of 36.5 years, was 65.7 percent female, was 84.5 percent white, and had a median household income of \$35,600. The sample was representative of the city's population with respect to age, income, and race but included a higher than expected proportion of women.

Design

To determine if the importance ratings differ between involved consumers and noninvolved consumers, multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was employed. This method tests the hypothesis that the centroid of importance ratings for the respondents classified as involved is not different from the centroid for other respondents. MANOVA was also used to test for differences between the centroids of attribute importance for respondents classified as recreational shoppers and that of other respondents.

To determine the extent of search effort, respondents were asked to indicate the number of stores or outlets they would visit if they were purchasing: a color television, a washing machine, a business suit, and dress shoes.

To examine the overlap between recreational shopping and purchasing involvement, respondents were cross-classified into four groups: high involvement/high recreational, low involvement/high recreational, high involvement/low recreational, and low involvement/low recreational. MANOVA was used to test for differences between these group centroids of importance ratings. Demographic profiles of the groups were also compared.

Results

On the purchasing involvement scale, 25 percent of the sample obtained scores that classified them as involved consumers (scores which indicate that on average they agree or strongly agree with the scale items). Sixty-three percent of the sample reported that they "enjoy shopping" or "enjoy shopping very much" and were classified as recreational shoppers.

Involvement: the Salience of Store Attributes and Shopping Effort

The first panel of Table 1 shows the results of the MANOVA comparing involved respondents to other respondents. The results are significant for the overall comparison of centroids ($p = .003$) for the importance placed on the store image attributes, with 14 of the 18 univariate F tests significant at an alpha level of .05. As expected, the mean scores for all attributes are higher for the involved group. In addition the scores are significantly higher for the involved group for "Value for the money," "Easy to exchange purchases," "Fair on price adjustments," and "Easy to return purchases." From most to least important, the top six store image attributes for the high involvement group are: "High value for the money," "Dependable products," "Easy to exchange purchases," "High-quality products," "Fair on price adjustments," and "Easy to return purchases." This ordering of the mean importance ratings implies a solid emphasis on value and security among the involved consumers.

With respect to shopping effort, the overall MANOVA was significant ($p = .002$). In this instance, all four of the univariate F-tests were also significant ($p < 0.05$). The involved consumers consistently indicated that they would visit more stores for purchasing a color television, a washing machine, a business suit, and dress shoes than did the less involved consumers. Table 2 presents the results of MANOVA of comparing involved and uninvolved consumers in terms of their shopping effort.

Recreational Shopping: the Salience of Store Attributes and Shopping Effort

The second panel of Table 1 shows the results of the MANOVA comparing respondents classified as recreational shoppers to other respondents. The results are significant for the overall comparison of centroids between recreational shoppers and other respondents ($p = .018$), with seven of the 18 univariate F tests significant at the .05 alpha level. For all attributes the means for the recreational-shopper respondents are higher than

Table 1

Differences Between High and Low Purchasing Involvement and Recreational Shopping Scorers for the Importance They Place on Department Store Attributes

Store Selection Attributes	PANEL A					PANEL B				
	High Involvement (n=65)		Low Involvement (n=201)		F-value	High Recreational Shopping (n=185)		Low Recreational Shopping (n=165)		F-value
Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank		Mean	Rank	Mean		
High Value for the Money	1	6.72	2	6.26	17.09****	2	6.47	2	6.29	3.27*
Dependable Products	2	6.71	1	6.50	3.49*	1	6.62	1	6.40	5.47**
Easy to Exchange Purchases	3	6.52	5	5.99	12.69****	4	6.25	4	5.03	3.03*
High-Quality Products	4	6.48	3	6.24	3.27*	3	6.36	3	6.21	1.97
Fair on Price Adjustments	5	6.46	8	5.81	23.16****	7	6.06	7	5.92	1.49
Easy to Return Purchases	6	6.45	6	5.95	10.10****	5	6.21	5	5.94	4.00**
Fast Checkouts	7	6.35	4	6.01	5.30****	6	6.20	6	5.93	4.51**
Easy to Find Items You Want	8	6.23	7	5.83	8.32***	8	6.03	9	5.79	4.33**
Friendly Personnel	9	6.20	11	5.72	8.53***	10	6.00	13	5.63	7.05****
Helpful Personnel	10	6.20	14	5.68	9.59***	11	5.96	12	5.68	3.53*
Convenient Location	11	6.14	9	5.80	5.06****	12	5.94	8	5.89	0.17
Store Is Clean	12	6.14	13	5.70	7.81***	9	6.03	15	5.47	18.77****
Fully Stocked	13	6.11	12	5.72	6.12***	14	5.90	11	5.70	2.15
Wide Selection	14	6.02	10	5.75	2.93*	13	5.90	10	5.78	0.94
Easy to Move Through Store	15	5.95	16	5.40	10.86****	15	5.71	16	5.44	3.49*
Adequate Personnel	16	5.92	15	5.41	8.45**	16	5.61	14	5.56	0.08
Pleasant Physical Facilities	17	5.66	18	5.21	5.96**	17	5.54	18	5.08	9.26****
Easy to Park	18	5.48	17	5.33	0.61	18	5.52	17	5.28	2.08

Wilk's Lambda = 0.858, $F_{(18,244)} = 2.25$, $p = 0.003$,
 Canonical Correlation = 0.335.

Wilk's Lambda = 0.888, $F_{(18,267)} = 1.87$, $p = 0.018$,
 Canonical Correlation = 0.377.

- * $p < .10$
- ** $p < .05$
- *** $p < .01$
- **** $p < .001$

Table 2

Differences Between High and Low Scorers on Purchasing Involvement and Recreational Shoppers for The Number of Stores Visited For Selected Personal Purchases¹

	PANEL A			PANEL B		
	High Involvement (n = 64)	Low Involvement (n = 199)	F-Value	Recreational Shopping (n = 181)	Recreational Shopping (n = 108)	F-Value
	Mean	Mean		Mean	Mean	
Color Television	3.23	2.81	6.23***	3.03	2.68	5.17***
Washing Machine	3.45	2.66	7.23***	3.16	2.74	4.23**
Business Suit	3.67	2.71	8.23***	3.61	2.82	10.41****
Dress Shoes	3.49	2.89	6.84***	3.24	2.74	8.72***

Wilk's Lambda = 0.953, $F_{(4,260)} = 6.315$, $p = .002$.
Canonical Corr. = 0.217.

Wilk's Lambda = 0.956, $F_{(4,278)} = 6.43$, $p = .002$.
Canonical Corr. = 0.210.

¹Respondents' reported income was used as a covariate in the analysis. The mean scores are adjusted for respondents' reported income.

* $p < .10$

** $p < .05$

*** $p < .01$

**** $p < .001$

the means of the other respondents. The statistically significant differences between recreational shoppers and other respondents occur with the following eight attributes: "Pleasant facilities," "Store is clean," "Easy to find items you want," "Fast checkouts," "Easy to return purchases," "Pleasant physical facilities," "Friendly store personnel," and "Dependable products." With the exception of "Dependable products," which is probably a security factor, the significant differences in the other attributes imply that recreational shoppers want shopping to be an easy and pleasant experience. Significant differences between means for recreational shoppers and other respondents were not found for "Quality products" or "Wide selection," as would have been expected from the results of the Bellenger and Korgaonkar's (1980) study, which found that recreational shoppers emphasize quality and variety in store selection.

The overall MANOVA for the search effort was significant ($p = .002$), with all four of univariate F-tests also significant at the 5-percent significance level (Table 2). As with involved consumers, recreational shoppers will visit more stores, as compared to low recreational shoppers, for their purchases of a color television, a washing machine, a business suit, and dress shoes.

Cross-classifying Involved and Recreational Shoppers

The respondents were cross-classified into groups, according to the previously discussed cutoff points: high involvement/high recreational (22 percent), low involvement/high recreational (40.9 percent), high involvement/low recreational (2.7 percent), and low involvement/low recreational (34.5 percent). These results indicate that there are only a few involved consumers who do not also enjoy shopping (2.7 percent); however, there are many consumers who enjoy shopping but do not find it particularly important to their lives (40.9 percent). Clearly the recreational shopping and purchasing involvement tendencies are related but not isomorphic. Further support for this notion comes from the correlation between the scale scores for purchasing involvement and recreation shopping, which is .21.

To better understand the impact of purchasing involvement and recreational shopping tendencies on the salience of store attributes, three of the groups resulting from the cross-classification were entered into a MANOVA, with the importance placed on the store attributes as dependent variables. The fourth group (high involvement/low recreational) did not have enough members for analysis. Table 3 shows the results of the analysis.

The first eigenvalue was significant at the .001 level for the comparison of the group centroids. For all attributes except "Easy to park," the salience is highest for the high involvement/high recreational group, followed by the low involvement/high recreational group, and then the low involvement/low recreational group. For "Easy to park," the low involvement/high recreational group scored highest, followed by the high involvement/high recreational group.

The high involvement/high recreational group is very similar to the high involvement group described earlier. The most important attributes for this group are: "High value for the money," "Dependable products," "High quality products," and the three favorable return policy attributes.

The low involvement/high recreational group by comparison placed relatively less emphasis on value and return policies than did the high involvement/high recreational group. It also rated "Fast checkouts" as the fourth-most important store attribute, as compared to seventh-most important for the high/high group.

The low involvement/low recreational group rated all attributes as less important than did the other two groups. However, in looking at the ordering of the attribute means within the low/low group, it is apparent that this group was more concerned with "Getting the shopping task over" than were the other two groups. Such attributes as "Convenient location," "Fully stocked," and "Wide selection" were more important relative to the other attributes within this group.

With respect to shopping effort, the overall MANOVA for the first eigenvalue was highly significant ($p = .001$). All the univariate F tests were highly significant, indicating that the three groups expend different amounts of shopping effort for the four products mentioned above. The high involvement/high recreational group reported a higher number of visits for purchasing a television, a washing machine, a business suit, and dress shoes than did the high recreational/low involvement or the low/low group. The low/low group had the smallest number of visits of any of the groups. Table 4 presents the results of this analysis.

Table 3
Differences Between Shopper Groups' Ratings of the Importance Placed on Department Store Attributes

Store Selection Attributes	High Involvement High Recreational Group (n=58)		Low Involvement High Recreational Group (n=108)		Low Involvement Low Recreational Group (n=89)		F-value
	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	
High Value for the Money	1	6.707	3	6.296	2	6.211	7.620****
Dependable Products	2	6.707	1	6.593	1	6.393	3.560**
Easy to Exchange Purchases	3	6.500	5	6.093	4	5.889	5.830***
Fair on Price Adjustments	4	6.448	10	5.852	7	5.789	9.780****
High-Quality Products	5	6.448	2	6.315	3	6.144	2.280
Easy to Return Purchases	6	6.448	6	6.083	5	5.822	5.630***
Fast Checkouts	7	6.293	4	6.176	6	5.800	5.220***
Friendly Personnel	8	6.259	9	5.889	12	5.511	7.360****
Easy to Find Items You Want	9	6.190	7	5.991	9	5.656	6.620****
Store Is Clean	10	6.172	8	5.972	15	5.367	12.90****
Helpful Personnel	11	6.155	11	5.843	13	5.500	5.520****
Convenient Locations	12	6.121	14	5.824	8	5.778	1.990
Fully Stocked	13	6.052	13	5.833	11	5.584	3.310**
Wide Selection	14	6.000	12	5.843	10	5.656	1.820
Easy to Move Through the Store	15	5.914	15	5.537	16	5.244	5.410****
Adequate Personnel	16	5.879	18	5.426	14	5.389	3.080**
Pleasant Facilities	17	5.655	17	5.454	18	4.888	6.720****
Easy to Park	18	5.448	16	5.509	17	5.111	2.170

Wilk's Lambda = 0.759, $F_{(36,468)} = 1.91, p = 0.001$.

Canonical Correlation = 0.386.

- * $p < .10$
- ** $p < .05$
- *** $p < .01$
- **** $p < .001$

Table 4

**Differences Between Shopper Groups' Ratings for the Number of
Stores Visited for Selected Personal Purchases¹**

	Number of Stores Visited			F-value
	<u>High Involvement</u> <u>High Recreational</u> <u>Group</u> (n=57)	<u>Low Involvement</u> <u>High Recreational</u> <u>Group</u> (n=106)	<u>Low Involvement</u> <u>Low Recreational</u> <u>Group</u> (n=91)	
	Mean	Mean	Mean	
	Color Television	3.22	2.98	
Washing Machine	3.01	2.73	2.44	4.20**
Business Suit	3.78	3.21	2.84	8.21***
Dress Shoes	3.43	3.18	2.61	9.10***

Wilk's Lambda = 0.914, $F_{(8,490)} = 5.59$, $p = .001$.

Canonical Correlation = 0.291.

¹Respondents' reported income was used as a covariate in the analysis. The mean scores are adjusted for respondents' reported income.

* $p < .10$

** $p < .05$

*** $p < .01$

**** $p < .001$

Discussion

The results of this study confirm the stated hypotheses and show that purchasing involvement and recreational shopping differ in influencing store selection. Purchasing involvement increases the salience of store attributes related to value-seeking. Recreational shopping is associated with increased salience for store attributes that are related to making shopping a fun and easy experience.

The three types of consumers who emerge from the analysis are, in order of their proportion of the sample: low involvement/high recreational (41 percent), low involvement/low recreational (35 percent), and high involvement/high recreational (22 percent).

A substantial portion of the respondents (the low involvement/high recreational group) enjoy shopping but do not find it particularly important to their lives. Intuitively this finding seems correct and is consistent with a research finding that social issues are more important than products in consumer lives (Hupfer and

Gardner 1971). This conclusion is also consistent with research on information search, which shows that the majority of consumers engage in very limited information search, even for important products.

Shopping effort is also related to a consumer's level of involvement and recreational shopping behavior. Consumers who are involved in purchasing and who are also highly recreational shoppers expend a greater amount of time shopping than does any other group. These are information-sensitive individuals who would like to get the best value for the money. They would come closest to approximating the "rational" shoppers as identified by Sproles (1983). Individuals who enjoy shopping but who are not involved in purchasing are likely to be influential in the market through opinion leadership and innovation but are not as price-sensitive as the highly involved segment. These results would imply that these consumers want shopping to be a pleasant and easy experience. Apparently these shoppers would emphasize upscale brands, atmospherics, fast checkouts, cleanliness, and easy return, but would not be overly concerned with price.

Some retailers, however, have developed organizations which are more capable of attracting the high involvement/high recreational groups. K Mart and Wall Mart would be examples of such retailers. In attracting the high involvement/high recreational group the two key factors are competitive prices on high quality products (high value for the money) and liberal return policies. The liberal return policies provide security to this value oriented customer which does not want to take chances in the quest for the best price. Those retailers capable of attracting the high/high group are likely to receive favorable word-of-mouth regarding their stores because both purchasing involvement and recreational shopping tendencies are known to be positively correlated with advice giving on marketplace issues (Feick and Price 1987).

The low involvement/low recreational group shows the least interest in shopping and information search. This group is probably hard to reach through promotion because both purchasing involvement and recreational shopping are positively correlated with information-seeking, and this group scores low on both of these traits. Since the low/low group does not seek information and is unlikely to pass information on to other consumers, efforts targeted at the low/low group will generate little additional word-of-mouth communication. One-stop shopping in a convenient location would seem to be the strategy for this fairly substantial (35 percent) segment of the market.

From a consumer education point of view, the facts that consumers differ in levels of purchasing involvement and devote different amounts of time to the purchase process reinforce the point that, as a whole, consumers are not rational decision-makers. There are some "expert" consumers who have relatively more knowledge and experience in a given market, leading them to make significantly better choices than the average consumer (Bloom 1989). In part, they make better choices by expending more time in acquiring information about products in the marketplace. Consumer education programs and education efforts should specifically be directed to these individuals, as they are more information-sensitive and are more likely to disseminate information to the more isolated segments (in our case the low involvement/low recreational group) (Price, Feick and Higie 1987; Moorman and Price 1989).

Demographic comparisons of age, sex, education, income, marital status, and the presence of children in our sample show sex, marital status, and presence of children as being significantly different among the three groups. The high involvement/high recreational group is predominantly (88 percent) female and married (69 percent), and 65 percent of respondents in this group have children living at home. The low involvement/high recreational group is 75 percent female and 56 percent

married with only 45 percent having children present at home. Finally, the low/low group is 40 percent female and 57 percent married, and 47 percent report having children at home. There are no significant differences with respect to age, income, or education among the three groups. In addition to demographic variables, these three groups are different with respect to their readership of some selected publications. The high involvement/high recreational and low involvement/high recreational groups are more likely to read *Consumer Reports*, *Reader's Digest*, and *People* magazines than is the low involvement/low recreational group.

Targeting the information-sensitive segment (in this case the high involvement/high recreational and low involvement/high recreational groups) can improve the market in at least two ways. This consumer segment's better choices will lead firms to change product offerings; and this segment's complaints can pressure firms to recall or redesign products, to improve warranty provisions, and to provide better information to the marketplace. In addition, since information-sensitive consumers are motivated to police the market and to disseminate information to other consumers, consumer advocacy groups can develop programs to facilitate consumers' motivations. For example, Moorman and Price (1989) suggest that public service messages could be used to encourage these consumers to report poor business practices to Better Business Bureaus and to encourage consumers to share their information with other consumers. In this manner, policymakers can increase both the number of informed consumers and their impact on the marketplace.

The current research has shown that both recreational shoppers and involved consumers generally place greater importance on store attributes and engage in more shopping effort than do other consumers. Previous research has shown that both recreational shoppers and involved consumers are also likely to be innovators and opinion leaders (Feick and Price 1987; Price, Feick and Higie 1987). Thus recreational shoppers and involved consumers share some common behaviors, even though their interest in the marketplace arises from different motives. It appears that interest in the marketplace could be related to many motives, among them, value-seeking of the involved consumer, pleasure-seeking of the recreational shopper, and desire of the market maven to share information. It may be that all of these are antecedents of a generalized marketplace interest which would yield such consequences as opinion leadership, complaining, and innovation. Certainly the commonalities appearing in the research on information-seeking, recreational shopping, purchasing involvement, and the market maven would imply that heightened sensitivity to the marketplace leads to similar consequences, regardless of the underlying motives.

Suggestions For Future Research

Future research should examine the major motives for heightened interest in the marketplace, with the eventual goal of developing a multidimensional measure of marketplace sensitivity. Such research should also be concerned with determining the process by which consumers develop interest in the marketplace, since the development of an active, information-seeking consumer has been described as a major public policy concern. ❁

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