CHARACTERISTICS OF USERS OF FIVE CONSUMER SHOPPING STYLES

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The purposes of the study were to identify general shopping styles of consumers and to describe users of each style by demographic characteristics. A sample of 472 recent purchasers was drawn from cooperating retailers. Factor analysis and one-way analysis of variance were used. Five shopping styles were extracted and characteristics related to the styles were identified.

Can consumers be classified into a small number of shopping styles they generally use for a wide range of purchases? Literature has identified certain shoppers as economizers, satisficers, maximizers or information seekers (Simon, 1957; Thorelli, Becker & Engledow, 1975) and has identified shopping styles for single products and product categories. However, little has been done to develop a general shopping style typology (Sproles & Kendall, 1986; Ackerman & Windley, 1987).

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METHODS

A sample of recent purchasers of electronic household durable goods was drawn from the sales invoices of randomly selected retailers in one geographic area, which encompassed metropolitan and regional shopping centers. Data were collected by mailed questionnaires in 1988 using a modified Dillman procedure. The sample size was 472 and the response rate was 59%.

Principal axis factoring and varimax rotation were used to identify shopping style factors. Estimated factor scores were computed by the regression method and standardized by the z-score procedure. One-way analysis of variance identified demographics which were significantly related to shopping styles at the .05 probability level.

FINDINGS

The five factor solution was selected for further analysis. Factor 1, a value-for-money style, received loadings of .40 or more on 6 statements and explained 14% of the variance. These shoppers tended to delay purchase when they didn't have enough information or time, sought a wide range of choices, and usually compared several brands before choosing. Factor 2, the recreational style, loaded on 4 statements which explained 10% of the variance. These shoppers enjoyed shopping, and often shopped when they did not plan to buy.

Factor 3, the cue-user style, loaded on 3 statements which explained 7% of the variance. These shoppers believed price indicated quality, that expensive brands were usually best, and were willing to pay more for better quality. Factor 4, the high quality seekers, loaded on 3 statements which explained 4% of the variance. These shoppers tried to choose the very best quality, had high standards for products, and usually bought the newest models, styles and designs. Factor 5, the regretful-confused style, loaded on 3 statements and explained 3% of the variance. These shoppers often made purchases they later regretted, were confused by increased information, and tended to buy the first product that was good enough.

Value-for-money and high quality style users did not differ on demographic characteristics tested. Those scoring highest on the recreational style were most likely to be under age 30, female and employed part time. Cue-users were most likely to have a college degree, be male, not married and living in 1-2 person households. Regretful-confused shoppers were most frequently age 60 or over, had a high school education or less, had an annual income of under $30,000, were not married and lived in 1-4 person households.

IMPLICATIONS

Consumers can be segmented into general shopping styles. Educators could target product information to specific consumer segments. Consumers could consider the strengths and weaknesses of their preferred shopping style. Researchers could use shopping styles in further analysis on product satisfaction and well-being.

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