

# Male versus female consumer decision making styles

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## Abstract

Men are an important target group for retailers and are likely to have different decision-making styles to women. Using a sample of 480 young males and females, this study identifies nine decision-making traits were common to both genders and three new male traits; namely; store-loyalty and low-price seeking, confused time-restricted and store-promiscuity. The findings suggest retailers should focus on loyalty creation programs, price-related appeals and methods for improving shopping efficiencies when targeting young male shoppers.

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## 1. Introduction

Most retail research under-represents or completely ignores mall shoppers (for an exception see Otnes and McGrath, 2001). This situation likely relates to females being the principal buying agents for most households. However, today's young males are more involved in shopping (Dholokia, 1999) and many product categories, once seen as female, for example, cosmetics, skin-care and fashion magazines, now have male products. For a complete review of shopper typologies see Jarratt (1996), however, these studies have limitations for understanding male shoppers as some studies use only a limited number of items to measure shopping orientations, concentrate on specific aspects of shopping, for example, enjoyment (Bellenger and Korgaonkar, 1980) and mostly used predominantly all female samples (e.g., Sproles and Kendall, 1996). Yet evidence exists that males make decisions differently. Shim (1996) found that teenage boys were more utilitarian, whereas teenage girls are more social/conspicuous conscious. Other research shows that men see shopping as being unpleasant and undesirable (Dholokia, 1999), spend less time shopping than women and generally do not take responsibility for food and clothing purchases (Miller, 1998), are less interested in clothing

and fashion (Cox and Dittmar, 1995), show a weaker sensitivity to the opinions of their friends (Shoaf et al., 1995), make quick/careless decisions more commonly (Campbell, 1997), and are more independent, confident, externally motivated, competitive, and more willing to take risks especially with money (Areni and Kiecker, 1993; Prince, 1993). All of which leads us to the proposition that: male consumer decision-making traits will be different from females. Although consumers display relatively consistent decision-making styles (Sproles and Kendall, 1996), little research has been done on gender differences which this paper addresses.

## 2. Method

Sproles and Kendall's (1996) Consumer Styles Inventory was piloted with ten male and female respondents for face validity and a final 38 items were rated on a five-point agree–disagree scale. The items were randomly split into two groups to minimize order effects and the items expected to load onto a single factor were separated. Two items were included in alternative forms ( $r=.54$  and  $.58$ ) and a test–retest conducted two weeks apart resulted in correlations between 0.25 and 0.57 with, 95% of the correlations being significant. Alpha coefficients for the scale dimensions were reasonable, but not good for some factors (see Table 1). The questionnaire was administered to a non-probability sample of 245 male and 245 female undergraduate students aged between 18 and 22 years

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Table 1  
Factors and factor loadings for original study and new male and female samples' consumer decision-making traits

	Sproles & Kendall	Male Styles	Female Styles
Factor 1: Recreational Shopping Consciousness	$\alpha = .76$	$\alpha = .56$	$\alpha = .38$
Shopping is not a pleasant activity	−0.76	−0.89	−0.86
Shopping is very enjoyable to me	0.76	0.88	0.88
I enjoy shopping just for fun	0.66	0.83	0.87
Shopping in different stores is a waste of time	−0.69	Time–Energy	Time–Energy
		Conserving	Conserving
I spend little time deciding on the products and brands I buy	−0.64	Time–Energy	Bargain Seeking
		Conserving	
Factor 2: Perfectionism	$\alpha = .74$	$\alpha = .47$	$\alpha = .64$
In general, I usually try to buy the best overall quality	0.62	0.77	0.73
I make a special effort to choose the very best quality products	0.64	0.69	0.66
I have very high standards and expectations for the products I buy	0.54	0.59	0.47
Getting good quality is very important to me	0.68	0.57	0.57
A product doesn't have to be exactly what I want or the best on the Market to satisfy me	−0.45	−0.53	Imperfectionism
I really don't give my purchases much thought or care	−0.54	Time–Energy	Time–Energy
		Conserving	Conserving
I usually shop quickly, buying the first product or brand that seems good enough	−0.45	Time–Energy	Time–Energy
		Conserving	Conserving
Factor 3: Brand Consciousness	$\alpha = .75$	$\alpha = .76$	$\alpha = .76$
The most advertised brands are usually good choices	0.48	0.74	0.59
I prefer buying the best selling brands	0.54	0.59	0.64
The higher the price of the product, the better the quality	0.59	0.57	0.68
Good quality department stores and speciality stores offer the best	0.57	0.54	0.50
I usually buy well-known brands	0.63	0.40	0.50
Factor 4: Novelty/Fashion Consciousness	$\alpha = .74$	$\alpha = .73$	$\alpha = .79$
I keep my wardrobe up to date with the changing fashions	0.70	0.85	0.86
I usually have at least one outfit of the newest style	0.75	0.82	0.79
Fashionable, attractive styling is very important to me	0.50	0.61	0.73
For variety I shop in different stores and buy different brands	0.50	Store-Promiscuous	Store Loyal
It's fun to buy something new and exciting	0.46	Recreational Shopping	Recreational Shopping
		Consciousness	Consciousness
Factor 5: Confused by Overchoice	$\alpha = .53$	$\alpha = .64$	$\alpha = .71$
There are so many brands to choose from that I often feel confused	0.68	0.82	0.88
I am confused by all the information on different products	0.44	0.80	0.78
The more I learn about products, the harder it seems to choose the best	0.53	0.50	0.69
Sometimes it's hard to decide in which stores to shop	0.61	0.43	0.45
Factor 6: Price/Value Consciousness	$\alpha = .48$	$\alpha = .36$	$\alpha = .39$
I look very carefully to find the best value for money	0.54	0.58	0.61
I usually buy the lower priced products	0.56	Store-Loyal/Low Price	0.63
		Seeking	
I buy as much as possible at sale price	0.66	0.75	Bargain Seeking
Factor 7: Impulsive/Careless	$\alpha = .55$	$\alpha = .26$	$\alpha = .48$
I frequently purchase on impulse	0.53	0.55	0.73
I often make purchases I later wish I had not	0.52	0.53	0.73
I should spend more time deciding on the products I buy	0.55	Confused/time	Imperfectionism
		restricted	
I carefully watch how much I spend	−0.43	−0.76	Bargain Seeking
Factor 8: Habitual and Brand-Loyal	$\alpha = .?$	$\alpha = .09$	$\alpha = .43$
I have favorite brands I buy every time	0.70	0.80	0.71
When I find a brand I like, I buy it regularly	0.60	0.66	0.75
I go to the same stores each time I shop	0.58	Store-Loyal/Low Price	Store Loyal
		Seeking	
I regularly change the brands I buy	−0.48	−0.49	Impulsive/Careless
Male Factor 1: Time–Energy Conserving		$\alpha = .61$	
I usually shop quickly, buying the first product or brand that appears good enough	Perfectionism	0.66	0.41
I really don't give my purchases much thought or care	Perfectionism	0.59	0.71
Shopping in different stores is a waste of time	Recreational Shopping	0.49	0.38
I spend little time deciding on the products I buy	Recreational Shopping	0.76	Bargain Seeking
Male Factor 2: Confused Time Restricted		$\alpha = .32$	
I should spend more time on the products I buy	Impulsive/Careless	0.73	Imperfectionism
Sometimes it's hard to decide in which stores to shop	Confused by Overchoice	0.50	Store Loyal

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