

Consumer Decision-Making Styles Among Indian Students

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Abstract

This study is an investigation of the consumer decision-making styles among graduate (degree-holding) students of a business school in India. The model of Consumer Style Inventory (CSI) as suggested by Sproles and Kendall (1986) has been tested to validate the basic characteristics of these styles among Indian young adults. The results of factor analysis suggested that seven decision-making styles are grouped in 6-factor structure. While the seven decision-making styles validated are. (1) Perfectionism and high-quality consciousness, (2) Brand consciousness and price equals quality, (3) Novelty and fashion-consciousness, (4) Recreational and hedonistic shopping consciousness, (5) Impulsiveness and carelessness, (6) Confused by overchoice, and (7) Habitual and brand-loyal orientation. However, one decision making style, namely "Price Consciousness and Value for Money" was not confirmed in the data.

Decision making is more complex and even more important for consumers today than in the past (Hafstrom, Chae, and Chung 1992; Lysonski, Durvasula, and Zotos 1996). Increased number and range of products, channel proliferation with increased retail stores, department stores, shopping malls, electronic commerce, and abundance of information through company advertisements, publicity materials, directs mailings, other traditional and electronic media sources have broadened the choice for the consumer. In addition, it increased the complexity of consumer decision making.

Profiling consumer decision-making styles has importance to marketers, advertisers and consumer affairs specialists (Lysonski, Durvasula, and Zotos 1996). The individuality in consumers' behavior when choosing between alternate products is perhaps the most widely analyzed topic in consumer-interest studies. But although many factors influence consumer decision-making, consumers are thought to approach the market with certain basic decision-making styles (Sproles and Kendall 1986). Consumer decision processes usually refer to problem recognition, information search, alternative solution, and choice and outcome evaluation (Sirgy 1985).

Consumer Decision Making Style

A consumer decision-making style is defined as "a

mental orientation characterizing a consumer's approach to making consumer choices" (Sproles and Kendall 1986). Decision-making style refers to a mental orientation describing how a consumer makes choices (Durvasula, Lysonski, and Craig 1993). The consumer decision-making process is a complex phenomenon. The purchase of goods or services includes a number of factors that could affect each decision. According to Sproles and Kendall (1986), the consumer literature suggests three ways to characterize consumer decision-making styles: psychographic/lifestyle approach, the consumer typology approach, and the consumer characteristics approach. The consumer characteristics approach focuses on the mental orientation of consumers in making decisions and deals with cognitive and affective orientations of consumers in their process of decision making. The unifying theme among these three approaches is the tenet that all consumers engage in shopping with certain fundamental decision-making modes or styles including rational shopping, consciousness regarding brand, price, and quality (Lysonski, Durvasula, and Zotos 1996), and impulsiveness, and quality consciousness (Durvasula, Lysonski, and Craig 1993). Decision-making styles can be determined by identifying general orientations towards shopping and buying.

Sproles and Kendall (1986) designed a model to measure decision-making styles of consumers. They de-

veloped the 40-item Consumer Style Inventory (CSI) based on a sample of U.S. youth. The applicability of the consumer style inventory has been investigated across several cultures (Hafstrom, Chae and Chung 1992; Durvasula, Lysonski and Craig 1993; Lysonski, Durvasula and Zotos 1996; Shim 1996; Fan and Xiao 1998). This construct is described as basic consumer personality. Table 1 summarizes the studies related to consumer decision-making styles/shopping orientations. There are eight mental characteristics of consumer decision-making style in the CSI. They are:

1. Perfectionistic and high-quality conscious consumer (searches carefully and systematically for the best quality in products).
2. Brand conscious and price equals quality consumer (buying the more expensive, well known national brands).
3. Novelty and fashion-conscious consumer (likes new and innovative products and gains excitement from seeking out new things).
4. Recreational and hedonistic consumer (finds shopping a pleasant activity and shops just for the fun of it).
5. Price conscious and value for money consumer (has high consciousness of sale prices and lower prices in general).
6. Impulsive and careless consumer (tends to buy at the spur of the moment and to appear unconcerned about how much he or she spends).
7. Confused by overchoice consumer (perceiving too many brands and stores from which to choose and who likely experiences information overload in the market), and
8. Habitual and brand-loyal consumer (repetitively chooses the same favorite brands and stores).

Shopping Orientations

Shoppers possessing different lifestyles and orientations exhibit different communication behavior. Six

shopping orientations were identified by Moschis (1976) as: (1) special shopper, (2) brand-loyal shopper, (3) store-loyal shopper, (4) problem-solving shopper, (5) psycho-socializing shopper, and (6) name-conscious shopper. Each shopping orientation correlates rather differently with each specific source of information. Advertisements are used as sources of information mainly by the brand-loyal and the name-conscious shopper. The psycho-socializing shopper, who tends to emulate the consumption behavior of others, gets her information from friends and neighbors. The brand-loyal shopper is likely to consult salespeople (Moschis 1976).

Westbrook and Black (1985) hypothesized seven major dimensions of shopping motivation, viz. (1) anticipated utility (shopping motivation linked to the expectation of benefits or hedonic states which will be provided by the product(s) to be acquired through the shopping activity), (2) role enactment (these roles prescribe normative economic behavior, such as careful product and price comparisons, searching for optimum value, and so forth), (3) negotiation (to seek economic advantage through bargaining interactions with sellers), (4) choice optimization (to search for and secure precisely the right product to fit one's demands), (5) affiliation (to affiliate directly or indirectly with other individuals involved in marketplace institutions, principally other shoppers and retail merchants), (6) power and authority (concern the attainment of elevated social position, social interactions during shopping), and (7) stimulation (to seek novel and interesting stimuli from the retail environment encountered during shopping activity).

Lumpkin (1985) has identified three groups of shoppers, viz. active shoppers, economic shoppers, and the uninvolved. Active Shoppers are the most community and socially active. They do not seem to have as much free time and are interested in sports and artistic activities. They also are fashion innovators and fashion opinion leaders. Economic Shoppers are the most concerned with finances, the least optimistic and the most conscious of inflation. They check advertisements less often, and have a lesser tendency to shop around to get the best price. The Uninvolved are characterized as the apathetic consumers.

According to Shim (1996), the eight decision-making styles can be conceptually classified into three orientations: (1) utilitarian, (2) social/conspicuous, and (3) undesirable orientations. The first two styles, (i) perfectionist and high-quality conscious and (ii) price-conscious and value for money, represent a utilitarian orientation because price and quality are emphasized. The next four styles: (iii) brand-conscious and price equals quality, (iv) novelty and fashion conscious, (v) recreational and hedonistic, and (vi) habitual and

brand loyal, represent an orientation with underlying social motivations for consumption. Consumers with these styles are characterized as seeking well-known brands or expensive products, and as being drawn to the recreational aspects of shopping. Finally, the (vii) impulsive and careless and (viii) confused by overchoice styles represent an undesirable orientation because shoppers may make poor decisions because of impulsiveness and confusion about consumption.

Table 1
Studies on Consumer Decision-Making Styles/Shopping Orientations

Name(s) of the author(s)	Year of study	Shopper categories/orientations
Moschis	1976	1. Special shopper 2. Brand-loyal shopper 3. Store-loyal shopper 4. Problem-solving shopper 5. Psycho-socializing shopper 6. Name-conscious shopper
Westbrook and Block	1985	1. Anticipated utility 2. Role enactment 3. Negotiation 4. Choice optimization 5. Affiliation 6. Power and authority 7. Stimulation
Lumpkin	1985	1. Active Shoppers 2. Economic Shoppers 3. Uninvolveds
Sproles and Kendall	1986	1. Perfectionistic/High Quality Consciousness 2. Brand Consciousness/Price Equals Quality 3. Novelty and Fashion Consciousness 4. Recreation and Fashion Consciousness 5. Impulsiveness 6. Confused by Overchoice 7. Habitual Brand Loyal 8. Price Consciousness/Value for Money
Shim	1996	1. Utilitarian 2. Social/conspicuous 3. Undersirable orientations

Fan and Xiao	1998	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Brand consciousness 2. Time consciousness 3. Quality consciousness 4. Price consciousness 5. Information utilization
Hiu, Siu, Wang, and Chang	2001	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Trendy, perfectionistic consumer 2. Traditional, pragmatic consumer 3. Confused by overchoice Consumer
Bakewell and Mitchell	2003	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recreational Quality seekers 2. Recreational Discount Seekers 3. Shopping and Fashion Interested 4. Trend setting loyals 5. Confused time/money conserving shoppers

Fan and Xiao (1998) identified five factors combining seven consumer decision-making styles. These are (1) brand consciousness (consumers pay attention to the brand names of products and are interested in purchasing brand-name products that are highly advertised and well-known), (2) time consciousness (consumers enjoy shopping, perceive shopping as a recreational activity, and are fashion conscious), (3) quality consciousness (consumers perceive the quality of a product to be very important, are willing to make special efforts to choose products with the very best quality, and link high quality with well known brand names), (4) price consciousness (consumers are very price conscious, watch how much money they spend, compare prices of different brands at different stores before making a purchase, and tend to purchase products with low prices), and (5) information utilization (consumers are overwhelmed by all the choices of products and stores available to them and do not know what to do about the information).

Hiu, Siu, Wang, and Chang (2001) revealed three prominent market segments through their study: the trendy and perfectionistic consumer, traditional and pragmatic consumer, and the confused by overchoice consumer. Trendy, perfectionistic consumers are frequent shoppers who view shopping as an enjoyment. They get high quality and fashionable items, read fashion magazines, watch various advertisements to gain trendy fashion information, and tend to associate for-

eign brands with high quality and fashionable styling. Traditional, pragmatic consumers do not view shopping as a pleasant activity to them, are price conscious, choose local brands, are not interested in fashionable styling. Confused by overchoice, these consumers tend not to read magazines or advertisements on fashion, avoid exposure to too much information, and buy local brands with which they are familiar.

Five segments of consumers have been found by Bakewell and Mitchell (2003). They are (1) recreational quality seekers, (2) recreational discount seekers, (3) shopping and fashion interested, (4) trend setting loyals, and (5) confused time/money conserving shoppers. Recreational quality seekers enjoy shopping and exert extra effort in order to get quality products, show a degree of brand loyalty, and pay extra for brand names. Recreational discount seekers are associated with the bargain-seeking trait and display the trait of fashion/novelty consciousness. They are less brand conscious and more price/value conscious. Shopping and fashion interested are confident shoppers associated with the traits of time energy conserving and price/value consciousness. Trend setting loyals are fashion, style conscious, and have a tendency to visit the same stores and buy the same brands. Confused time/money conserving shoppers are not drawn to the more prestigious and higher priced brands/stores, preferring instead lower prices to higher quality.

Consumer Characteristics

A review of literature has revealed consumer characteristics that affect the consumer decision-making styles. They are behavioral dimension, shopping motives, impulse buying, brand loyalty, recreational shopping, and customer confusion. Each of these is discussed below.

Behavioral Dimension

The independent self-concept is characterized by an emphasis on personal goals, personal achievement, appreciation of one's differences from others. The interdependent self-concept is characterized by stress on goals of a group to which one belongs, attention to fitting in with others, and appreciation of commonalities with others (Abe, Bagozzi, and Sarangpani 1996). A consumer is likely to be attracted to a brand, product, or retail environment to the extent that there is a cognitive match between positive value-expressive attributes and the consumer's self-concept (Reed II, 2004). Whereas high cognition might motivate consumers to compare and contrast brand information, those with high affect are content with their emotional attachment to the particular brand they like: thus perhaps making them particularly susceptible to products with brand personalities that reinforce their self-concept (Sojka and Giese 2003). Compared with individualists, collectivist consumers are relatively loyal (Watkins and Liu 1996). Those who prefer decentralized distribution of decision-making power among individual consumers may also value freedom relatively highly. Others may prefer a more centralized approach with consumer leaders and experts making decisions on behalf of consumers (Kroll, and Stampfl 1986).

More specifically, consumers who attach high importance to personal gratification such as a comfortable and exciting life, pleasure, and social recognition would also attach high importance to the store's status such as class of clientele, physical characteristics of store, reputation for fashion, and brands carried (Erdem, Oumlil, and Tuncalp 1999). As people age, there is evidence to suggest that their thoughts about the future tend to decrease and their thoughts about the past tend to increase. Artifacts contained in the homes

of young adults tend to reflect future plans and goals, while the artifacts of older married couples tended to reflect their shared past experiences (Belk 1985).

Shopping Motives

The shopping context affects motivations, levels of participation and satisfaction. Three motives were identified as "interactions with family," "utilitarian," and "shopping as pleasure." The recreational and expressive nature of shopping at the mall seems to appeal to the female shopper more than the male shopper (Dholakia 1999). Shoppers respond to negative events such as deviations regarding product availability, helpfulness of store personnel, store atmosphere, crowding, and parking availability, by implying that they would, on average, change stores to avoid the negative situations (Stoltman, Morgan, and Anglin 1999). Consumers with differing shopping orientations have differing requirements for a given type of retail institution. Overall store based direct-marketing operations such as department, discount, or catalog stores have been able to gain consumers' confidence as indicated by favorable responses of the respondents (Korgaonkar 1984). Consumers have distinct dimensions of shopping motivation depending on the potency of internal need states directing and energizing their behavior, and manifesting themselves on a regular basis over a wide range of shopping occasions (Westbrook and Black 1985).

Sproles and Sproles (1990) state that the consumers who are perfectionistic and high-quality-conscious in their behaviors have systematic and involved learning characteristics that enhance their highly goal-oriented behaviors as consumers. They further state that the novelty and fashion-conscious consumer is somewhat similar in style to the perfectionist one, but with the important exception that this person may have a passive and accepting learning characteristic as well. The recreational shopper appears to have a learning style that favors involvement and enjoyment in shopping.

A person who is price and value conscious prefers an active learning process, perhaps by shopping a number of stores, and enjoys the details of learning, which could include learning the characteristics and prices of various products (Sproles and Sproles 1990). Relative

price and product quality remain of importance to the consumer (Sweeney, Soutar and Johnson 1999). This results in consumers' perceptions of risk in future use of products.

Impulse Buying

Impulse buying has been defined as an "unplanned" purchase. Impulse buying occurs when a consumer experiences a sudden, often powerful and persistent urge to buy something immediately (Rook 1987). Impulse buying is a sudden and immediate purchase with no pre-shopping intentions either to buy the specific product category or to fulfill a specific buying task. The behavior occurs after experiencing an urge to buy and it tends to be spontaneous (Beatty and Ferrel 1998). An unplanned purchase results from a comparison of alternative purchase intentions with actual outcomes (Kollat and Willett 1967). Unplanned buying is defined as the purchase of a product that was not planned prior to entering the store (Park, Iyer and Smith 1989).

Iyer (1989) defined time pressure as the perceived constriction of the time available for an individual to perform a given task. He states that a shopper's motivation to complete the task will be enhanced under time pressure, and that her/his reliance on internal memory will increase, thereby enhancing the relative importance of the encoded purchasing sequence. Due to the reduction in the time available, shoppers adhere to the encoded sequence that facilitates completion of the task. Consumers may attempt to directly reduce desire by physically or psychologically reducing proximity to the product (Hoch and Loewenstein 1991). People spend a combination of time (effort) and money for product acquisition. Time and money are often traded off in product acquisition, as consumers generally pay a premium for convenience and go the distance for a bargain (Okada 2005).

Brand Loyalty

Oliver (1999) suggested four levels of loyalty development. Cognitive loyalty is based on brand belief only (prior knowledge or recent experience-based information on attribute performance levels). Loyalty at this phase is directed toward the brand because of this "information" and is of a shallow nature. Affec-

tive loyalty is based on a liking or attitude toward the brand developed on the basis of cumulatively satisfying usage occasions (reflects the pleasure dimension). Conative loyalty is influenced by repeated episodes of positive affect toward the brand and implies a brand-specific commitment to repurchase, with deeply held commitment to buy. Action loyalty is the mechanism by which intentions are converted to action. This is accompanied by an additional desire to overcome obstacles that might prevent the act.

Loyalty intentions are indicated by an inclination to perform a diverse set of behaviors that signal a motivation to enhance an ongoing relationship with the service provider, including repeat buying and greater share of the wallet (Augustin and Singh 2005). Habitual behavior is relatively automatic but not necessarily impulsive. In emergencies, individuals are apt to act immediately but this may be more an instinctive than an impulsive response (Rook 1987).

Recreational Shopping

Shopping enjoyment is defined as the pleasure one obtains in the shopping process. Given that a shopper may enjoy some shopping contexts more than others, this variable is assessed within a shopping mall context (Beatty and Ferrel 1998). Bellenger and Korgaonkar (1980) referred to individuals who enjoyed shopping as recreational shoppers. They found that these shoppers spent more time shopping and shopped longer after making a purchase. Westbrook and Black (1985) found that recreational shoppers obtained more gratification from the process of shopping than from the merchandise purchased. Therefore, an individual enjoys the shopping activity, she/he is likely to spend more time in the shop, browse longer and enjoy it.

A study by Jason, Merrilees and Birch (2003) reveals that the retail strategy of integrating entertainment into a shopping center's marketing mix has been gaining popularity over the past few years. Entertainment, such as movie theatres, food courts and fashion shows, can enhance the ambience of a shopping center conducive to an exciting and pleasant experience for shoppers. Entertainment is pivotal to shopping centers because it induces an exciting or fun shopping experience, which in turn could entice consumer patronage.

Entertainment shoppers perceive shopping as a leisure activity, including browsing, entertainment, meeting people and dining out. Further, this segment of shoppers perceives shopping centers as an entertaining or exciting place to "hang out", either at the movie theatre or the video arcade. According to Bloch, Ridgway, and Nelson (1991), malls act as group-level gathering sites allowing people to meet and recreate with friends, as is common among teens.

Consumers use some products to create fantasies, enjoyment and emotional arousal. Hedonic consumption research has generally focused on products that are experienced such as theatre, movies, and sporting events. However, it may be that some specific shopper segment is driven through the enjoyment of the shopping experience. Associated with this concept is an individual's desire to undertake leisure activities (Jarratt 1996). Here, the attention shifts from the goods obtained via consumption to the fun, emotions, sensory stimulation, fantasy, and amusement that may accrue along with the goods or alone (Bloch, Ridgway, and Nelson 1991).

Customer Confusion

Consumer confusion is becoming more of a problem as consumers are provided with ever increasing amounts of decision-relevant information in their purchasing environments. The increasing number of products as well as the amount of information carried by each brand can overload and confuse consumers and can result in stress, frustration and sub-optimal decisions. Confusion can be caused not only by the excessive product offerings, but also by the increased information carried on each product. This confusion usually arises from three main sources, viz. overchoice of products and stores; similarity of products; and ambiguous, misleading or inadequate information conveyed through marketing communications (Mitchell and Papavassiliou 1999).

A consumer becomes confused or information overloaded when confronted with the detail- and fact-oriented learning style. This person may become mentally overloaded when trying to learn too much about too many different brands or products. Further, the confused consumer appears likely to be a nonadap-

tive, struggling learner who might easily become overwhelmed in a complex multi-choice market. Finally, this consumer seems to be passive rather than active in his or her learning style, which contributes to his or her confusion in decision-making (Sproles and Sproles 1990).

Methodology

This study investigates Indian consumers' decision-making styles. The Consumer Style Inventory (CSI), consisting of 39-items was administered to 72 graduate (degree-holding) students in an industrial management program in metropolitan Mumbai, India. All of the students had engineering undergraduate degrees and were drawn from different parts of the country. Their age ranged between 21 to 25 years. The data were factor analyzed and alpha coefficients were computed for scale reliability. The results indicated the generality of some consumer decision-making styles. A six-factor solution explained 57% of the variance in the correlation matrix. This resulted in a 34-item and 6-factor solution. Findings indicate that 7 decision-making styles are valid and reliable in Indian culture: (1) perfectionist/ high quality conscious, (2) brand consciousness/ price equals quality, (3) novelty and fashion conscious, (4) recreational and shopping conscious, (5) impulsive/careless, (6) confused by overchoice and (7) habitual/brand loyal.

The descriptive statistics and reliability coefficients for each factor are presented in Table 2. As shown in Table 2, the reliability coefficients for all factors were .66 or higher indicating satisfactory levels of reliability. However, the alpha coefficient for one factor—price consciousness/value for money (consisting of three items) – had very low reliability, indicating that it may not be the real factor in identifying decision-making styles of Indian students.

The results of factor analysis are summarized in Table 3. The sample was grouped into six factors. The six-factor solution explained 57% of the variance in the correlation matrix. The highest eigen value was 6.729 and all were higher than 1.958.

Results of Factor Analysis and Discussion

The six factors are summarized here. Factors are named in line with those proposed by Sproles and Kendall (1986).

Factor 1. This factor reflects the combination of two decision making styles, the recreational and shopping conscious and novelty and fashion conscious consumer styles (eigen value 6.729 and alpha .79). Items loading on this factor indicate that for Indian graduate students with engineering backgrounds, shopping is an enjoyable and pleasant activity. At the same time, fashionable attractive styling is important

to them and they also enjoy shopping for fun. Factor loadings indicate that these shoppers compare brands and take time to shop carefully indicating that they are comparison shoppers. Identified characteristics show that they do not feel that shopping wastes time. Because shopping is enjoyable, pleasant, fun-filled activity and being fashionable with attractive and new styling is important to them, this factor can be conceptually called “Recreational and Fashion Conscious Consumer”. They tend to gain excitement and pleasure from seeking out new things. They keep up-to-date with styles, and being in style is important to them.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Coefficients

Dimension	No. of Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Reliability Coefficients
Perfectionistic/High Quality Conscious	7	4.1630	.5608	.7681
Brand Consciousness/Price Equals Quality	6	3.1065	.6865	.7502
Novelty and Fashion Conscious	5	3.2761	.8850	.7915
Recreation and Shopping Conscious	5	3.5634	.8080	.7848
Impulsiveness	5	2.7718	.7778	.6658
Confused by Overchoice	4	2.8681	.9202	.8117
Habitual/Brand Loyal	4	3.5845	.7331	.7615

No. of cases = 72

Overall reliability = .6964

Table 3
Factor Analysis - Rotated Component Matrix

Item	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Shopping is enjoyable activity	.848					
Shopping is a pleasant activity to me	.787					
Shopping the store doesn't waste my time	.751					

Fashionable, attractive styling is important to me	.701					
Keep wardrobe up-to-date with the changing fashions	.643					
Have one or more outfits of the very new style	.603					
Enjoy shopping for fun	.491					
It's fun to buy something new and exciting	.465					
To get variety, I shop different stores and choose different brands	.368					
Special effort for choosing best quality products		.732				
Getting very good quality is very important to me		.699				
I try to get the very best or perfect choice		.695				
Usually try to buy the best overall quality		.691				
My standards and expectations for products are very high		.674				
I don't buy the first product/brand I find good enough		.414				
I give my purchases much thought or care		.392				
I prefer buying the best selling brands			.775			
The most expensive brands are my choices			.622			
Nice department/specialty stores offer me the best products			.607			
The well known national brands are for me			.605			
The most advertised brands are very good choices			.563			
The higher the price of the product, better the quality			.434			
So many brands to choose that I feel confused				.823		
All the information I get on different products confuses me				.792		
The more I learn about products, the harder to choose the best				.773		
It is hard to choose which stores to shop				.663		
Once I find a product/brand I like, I stick with it					.829	
I don't change brands I buy regularly					.778	
I go to the same stores each time I shop					.593	
I have favorite brands I buy over and over					.526	
Often I make careless purchases I later wish I had not						.777
I am impulsive when purchasing						.759
I should plan my shopping more carefully						.598
I don't carefully watch how much I spend						.479
No time to shop carefully for best buys						.400
Eigen Value	6.729	4.335	3.042	2.397	2.203	1.958

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a Rotation converged in 9 iterations.

Cumulative variance = 57.398

Factor 2: This factor reflects the 'perfectionist/high quality conscious' consumer characteristic (eigen value 4.335 and alpha .76). They seek to maximize quality by choosing best quality products. They set high standards and have high expectations for the products they buy and aim to get the best choice and value for money. Being higher in perfectionism, these consumers could be expected to shop more carefully, more systematically, or by comparison. This factor is labeled as Perfectionistic and High Quality Conscious Consumer.

Factor 3: The shopper style reflected in this factor is "brand consciousness and price equals quality" characteristic (eigen value 3.042 and alpha .75). Items loadings on this factor indicate that shoppers prefer buying the best selling and most expensive brands. They buy the well-known national brands and shop at nice department or specialty stores. They tend to buy heavily advertised brands and equate price with quality. They tend to believe that a higher price means better quality and appear to have positive attitudes toward department and specialty stores, where brand names and higher prices are prevalent. Brand name, quality and the price are the most important purchasing criteria for these shoppers. This factor is named "Brand Conscious, Price Equals Quality Consumer".

Factor 4: This factor reflects the confused by over-choice characteristic (eigen value 2.397 and alpha .81). Items loaded on this factor suggest that these shoppers feel confused and overloaded with information. They find it hard to choose the best products or stores to shop. They feel the quantity of different consumer brands is confusing. The amount of information available about these different brands adds to confusion. Hence, this factor is named Confused by Over-choice Consumer. They are aware of the many brands and stores from which to choose and have difficulty making those choices. **Factor 5:** This factor reflects 'habitual, brand loyal consumer' characteristic (eigen value 2.203 and alpha .76). Items loaded on this factor indicate that shoppers with high scores are habitual in buying same brands regularly. They have strong loyalty towards the brands as well as stores. They appear to have favorite brands and stores and to have formed habits in choosing these.

Factor 6: This factor reflects 'impulsiveness, careless consumer' characteristic (eigen value 1.958 and alpha .66). Items indicate that these shoppers are impulsive and careless in making their purchases. They regret their impulsive shopping behavior.

This study confirms seven out of eight dimensions of consumer decision-making styles proposed by Sproles and Kendall (1986). They are - "Perfectionistic/ High Quality Consciousness", "Brand Consciousness/ Price Equals Quality", "Novelty and Fashion Consciousness", "Recreation and Fashion Consciousness", "Impulsiveness", "Confused by Overchoice", and "Habitual Brand Loyal" decision making styles. Only the "Price Consciousness/Value for Money Consumer" style identified by Sproles and Kendall (1986) was not confirmed in the data. Thus, in all, 35 items have been confirmed in the study.

Managerial Implications and Conclusion

The results of this study have important implications for marketers. The graduate (degree-holding) business school students having engineering undergraduate degrees have exhibited different consumer decision-making styles. However, price consciousness and value for money style has not been confirmed in the data. This implies that these students are not price sensitive. This may be due to the socio-economic aspects as most of the students come from middle and upper class families and hail from urban areas. The recreational and shopping conscious and novelty and fashion conscious consumers enjoy shopping for fun and it is a pleasant activity to them. They seem to gain pleasure from seeking out new things. They keep up-to-date with fashionable attractive styles. Being in style is important to them.

The perfectionist/ high quality conscious consumers seek to maximize quality by choosing the best quality products. They set high standards and have high expectations for the products they buy, and aim to get the best choice and value for money. They buy the heavily advertised, well-known national brands and shop at nice department or specialty stores. They tend to believe that a higher price means better quality and appear to have positive attitudes toward department and

specialty stores, where brand names and higher prices are prevalent. The most important purchasing criteria for these shoppers brand name, quality and price.

The confused by overchoice consumers feel overloaded with information and find it hard to choose the best products and stores at which to shop. They feel the quantity of different consumer brands is confusing and that the amount of information available about these brands adds to confusion. The habitual, brand loyal consumers are habitual in buying same brands regularly and have strong loyalty towards the brands as well as stores. The impulsiveness, careless consumers exhibit both characteristics when making their purchases. They tend to regret their impulsive shopping behavior later.

According to Buttle (1992), the three most common categories of episode are shopping for groceries and household items, clothing, and gifts. While grocery and household shopping is generally thought of as a pleasure-less chore, clothes shopping is more attractive to most people and offers an opportunity for self-expression, self-indulgence, fantasy, and a break from the routine of shopping. Gift shopping is described as devoting time and effort into buying something that will delight a loved one. Park, Iyer and Smith (1989) suggested that to avoid potential pitfalls, a coordinated approach to store environment needs to be taken, this includes considering in-store aisle and display configurations, product display arrangements, and in-store presentation of information.

Thus, marketers need to understand the decision-making styles of business school students in terms of their behavior towards purchase of products and services. After graduation, these students join reputed multinational and national companies at middle and senior levels of management. They also earn high salaries, comparatively at younger age in relation to their counterparts without business school background. Their immense buying power and medium to heavy consumption of consumer products and services makes them the most preferred target segments offering profitable opportunities to marketers.

In conclusion, the consumer decision-making styles offer an opportunity to understand the disposition of

a consumer towards the shopping behavior. The consumer style inventory provides a foundation for consumer decision-making styles and has practical applications for marketers. This study has a limitation and that is that it has been carried out on a specific segment of young adults, i.e. the students of the graduate program of a business school in a metropolitan city in India. There is a need to study these decision-making styles among the larger populations across different segments to have focused understanding of specific target markets in India.

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