The Relationship Between Mind Styles, Consumer Decision-Making Styles, and Shopping Habits of Beginning College Students

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Abstract

The foundation for this study is based on prior research (Sproles & Sproles, 1990) that determined that learning styles are significantly related to consumer decision-making styles. Decision making involves a process of cognitive learning. Since the study was published, other studies have investigated these consumer decision-making styles. However, no additional studies have further investigated the relationship between learning styles and consumer decision-making styles for college students, especially first-year, first semester college students.

Numerous studies have documented that students enter college as consumers but may lack basic knowledge and skills to make consumer decisions and avoid potential debt. The focus of the current study was to determine whether a relationship exists between beginning college students’ self-reported mind styles, consumer decision-making styles, and shopping habits. To investigate this relationship, a purposive sample was targeted consisting of first-year, first semester college students.

Three instruments were administered: the Gregorc Style Delineator, the Consumer Styles Inventory, and a Demographic Survey. A Chi-Square Test of Independence showed that there is a significant relationship between gender and self-reported shopping habits. Females tend to self-report purchases of clothing more frequently than males. Males tend to self-report purchases of food away from home and gas/auto expenses more frequently than females. No significant relationship was found between students’ perception of family income and self-reported shopping habits, suggesting that these students purchase consumer goods frequently regardless of their perceived family income.

A Chi-Square Test of Independence also revealed a significant relationship between gender and self-reported, dominant, Gregorc mind styles. Females were more likely than
males to self-report their dominant mind styles as Abstract Random. Males were more likely than females to self-report their dominant mind style as Concrete Random.

Although the current study’s results did not support multiple consumer decision-making styles from previous studies using the Consumer Styles Inventory, an exploratory factor analysis revealed one, overall consumer decision-making style, Recreational/Hedonistic. A Mann-Whitney Rank Sum Test showed that there is a significant relationship between gender and the Recreational/Hedonistic consumer decision-making style. Females tend to be more recreational shoppers than males.

A summary, discussion of the results, and recommendations for further research, practice, policy, and families are proposed.
Dedication

I wish to dedicate this dissertation to my Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ, who has sustained me through this entire process; to my husband, Joe, who has been my mentor, best friend, and constant supporter; and to my parents and family, who have always provided their steadfast support, love, and prayers. I could not have done this without you all.
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