

CONSUMER USE OF THE INTERNET IN SHOPPING
FOR UNIQUE PRODUCTS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Many people have the need to show themselves as unique. However, as technology and media have developed, consumers have access to new information very rapidly and can follow new trends quickly. As a result, consumers who seek uniqueness are increasing in number because they want to differentiate themselves from others (Anderson-Connell, Ulrich & Brannon, 2002). Consumers acquire and show material possessions in order to feel unique from other people and be distinctive within a larger group. In other words, consumers desire to be special and distinctive, so they seek goods, services, and experiences that differentiate themselves from other consumers (Lynn & Harris, 1997b).

Several factors are related to the desire for unique consumer products. Previous research found that the need for uniqueness causes individuals to desire such consumer products (Snyder & Fromkin, 1980). Status aspiration (Cassidy & Lynn, 1989) and materialism (Belk, 1985) are also factors that lead to a need for material uniqueness. Furthermore, innovative behavior is highly associated with uniqueness-seeking individuals (Burns & Krampf, 1992).

Peterson, Balasubramanian, and Bronnenberg (1997) suggested that the Internet represents an extremely efficient medium for accessing, organizing, and communicating

information. The Internet provides many advantages for purchasing products efficiently by offering product information, facilitating multi-attribute comparisons, and reducing consumer search costs (Alba, Lynch, Weitz, Janiszewski, Lutz, Sawyer & Wood, 1997). A rapid increase in Internet shopping has attracted researchers who are interested in discovering what leads individuals to participate in online shopping.

Previous research has examined in detail the adoption of online shopping by investigating why some users of the Internet are more likely to use this new medium for shopping than are others. However, little information is available on the relationship between Internet shopping and the desire for unique consumer products. Many social psychologists (Brewer, 1991; Snyder & Fromkin, 1997) have discussed people's desires for distinctiveness and uniqueness, but few studies have investigated the factors that explain these desires.

Objectives

The purposes of this study were to (1) investigate factors that may be related to the desire for unique consumer products and (2) discover if there is a relationship between the desire for unique consumer products and online shopping (See Figure 1). This study provided a deeper understanding of the consumer characteristics of those persons who adopt the Internet for shopping. Such information can assist those marketing over the Internet in developing and evaluating their markets.

Hypotheses

Given the above objectives, it was hypothesized:

1. There will be a significant direct relationship between the score obtained on the need for uniqueness scale and the score obtained on the desire for unique consumer products scale.

2. There will be a significant direct relationship between the score obtained on the status aspiration scale and the score obtained on the desire for unique consumer products scale.

3. There will be a significant direct relationship between the score obtained on the materialism scale and the score obtained on the desire for unique consumer products scale.

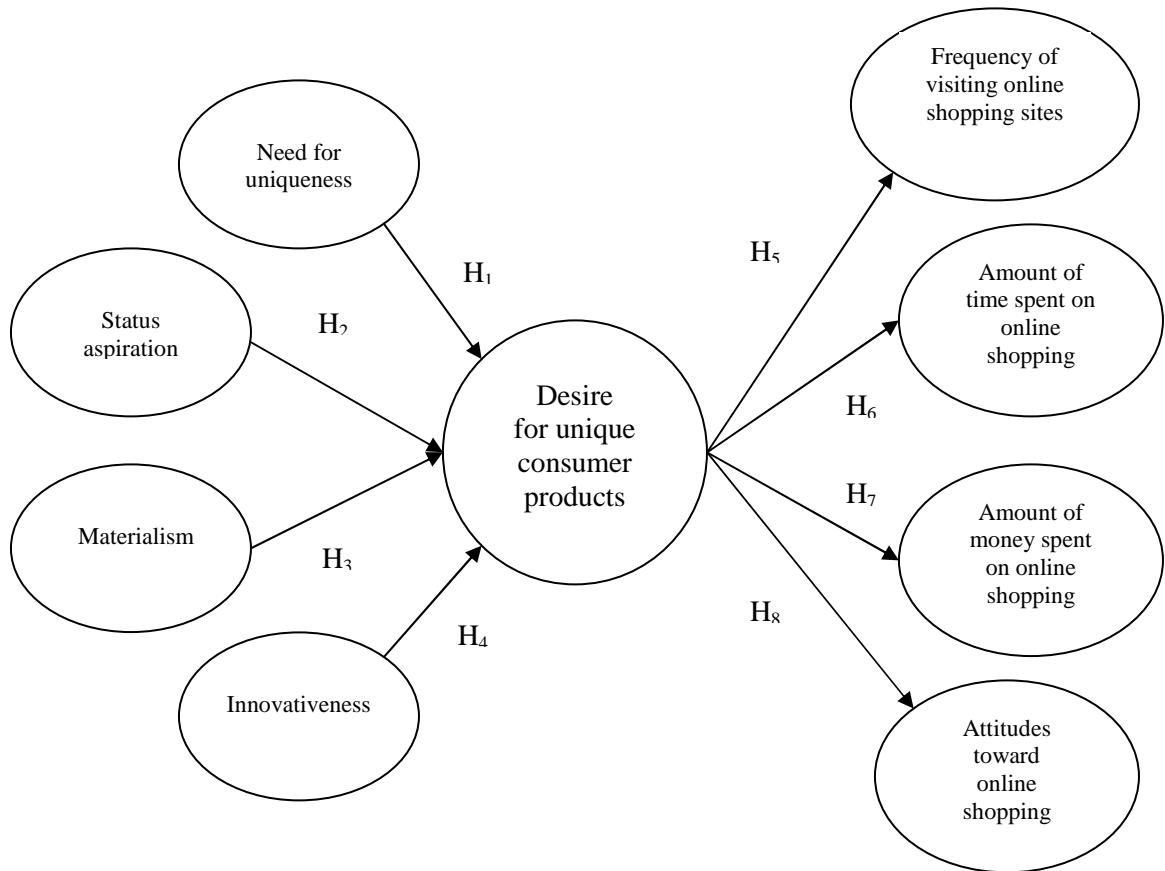
4. There will be a significant direct relationship between the score obtained on the innovativeness scale and the score obtained on the desire for unique consumer products scale.

The following hypotheses are an investigation of the relationship between the desire for unique consumer products and online shopping behaviors.

5. There will be a significant direct relationship between the score obtained on the desire for unique consumer products scale and the frequency of visiting online shopping sites.

6. There will be a significant direct relationship between the score obtained on the desire for unique consumer products scale and the amount of time spent in online shopping.

Figure 1. A Proposed Model Predicting Effect of Desire for Unique Products on Online Shopping Behaviors



7. There will be a significant direct relationship between the score obtained on the desire for unique consumer products scale and the amount of money spent on online shopping.

8. There will be a significant direct relationship between the score obtained on the desire for unique consumer products scale and the score obtained on the attitudes toward online shopping scale.

Definitions

Consumer need for uniqueness: “The trait of pursuing differentness relative to others” (Tian, Bearden, & Hunter, 2001, p.52).

Desire for unique consumer products: “Goal-oriented, individual differences variable to acquire and possess consumer goods, services, and experiences that few others possess” (Lynn & Harris, 1997b, p.603).

Status aspiration: “The motivation which is reinforced by climbing the social status hierarchy and includes the desire to be dominant, to be a leader” (Cassidy & Lynn, 1989, p.302).

Materialism: “The importance a consumer attaches to worldly possessions” (Belk, 1985, p.265).

Innovativeness: “The degree to which an individual is relatively earlier in adopting new ideas than the average member of his social system” (Rogers & Shoemaker, 1971, p. 27).

Score on the need for uniqueness test: The test score of Snyder and Fromkin’s (1997) need for uniqueness scale.

Score on the desire for unique consumer products test: The test score of Lynn and Harris’s (1997b) desire for unique consumer products scale.

Score on the status aspiration test: The test score of Cassidy and Lynn’s (1989) status aspiration scale.

Score on the materialism test: The test score of Richins’s (2004) materialism scale.

Score on the innovativeness test: The test score of Goldsmith and Hofacker (1991) innovativeness scale.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Uniqueness and desire for unique consumer products

A number of consumers have the need to be moderately unique. Although the majority of consumers replicate social cues from others, it is important for consumer researchers to recognize that many other consumers do not follow this majority (Bearden & Etzel, 1982). Uniqueness theory (Snyder & Fromkin, 1980) deals with people's emotional and behavioral responses to information about their similarity to others. These other consumers obtain intrinsic satisfaction from the perception that they are distinctive, special, and separable from the masses, which is referred to as the "need for uniqueness" (Fromkin & Snyder, 1980; Snyder, 1992). Tian, Bearden, and Hunter (2001) defined consumer need for uniqueness as an enduring personality trait by which consumers pursue dissimilarity through products and brands in an effort to develop individually distinctive self and social images.

Freeman and Doob (1968) proposed two kinds of deviance correlated with need for uniqueness: independence and anticonformity. Previous researchers' validation studies of the need for a uniqueness scale also identified characteristics typical of people who have a strong need for uniqueness (Snyder & Fromkin, 1997; Tepper & Hoyle, 1996). Characteristics of these people include independence, nonconformity,

innovativeness, and a willingness to manifest their uniqueness behaviorally despite the risk of social disapproval. Snyder and Fromkin (1997) identified three factors of uniqueness: lack of concern regarding others' reactions, desire not to always follow the rules, and willingness to publicly defend one's beliefs. Tepper and Hoyle (1996) discovered that the three factors identified by Snyder and Fromkin (1997) were positively correlated with risk taking, novelty seeking, individuation, and masculinity, and negatively correlated with social anxiety and femininity.

Consumers acquire, own, use, and display certain products and services to enhance their sense of self, to present an image of what they are like, to represent what they feel and think, and to bring about the types of social relationships they wish to have (Belk, 1988; Braun & Wicklund, 1989; Ewen, 1988; Goffman, 1959). Uniqueness-seeking behaviors include the collection of material goods or possessions, as well as the search for novel or scarce items (Snyder & Fromkin, 1980). In other words, material expressions of consumers' differences from others are likely to be significant indicators of the need for uniqueness.

Conformity and Nonconformity

Conformity refers to a tendency of behaviors or opinions to comply with group norms (Burnkrant & Consineau, 1975). Deutsch and Gerad (1995) identified two types of influences on conformity: informational and normative. Firstly, informational influence refers to accepting information from others as evidence of truth. Others' actions often show better and more precise ways, especially useful when we are in an uncertain

situation (Cialdini, 2001; Crutchfield, 1955; Mackie, 1987). People are influenced by informational conformity because they believe that information obtained from others offers cues for adaptive behavior in these situations. In other words, when people are motivated to be appropriate but find themselves in a relatively unfamiliar and ambiguous condition, conformity is likely to be enhanced (Baron, Vandello, & Brunsman, 1996; Levine, Higgins, & Choi, 2000).

Secondly, normative influence refers to conforming to the expectations of another person or group (Deutsch & Gerard, 1995). People tend to obey normative rules become going along with or imitating others increase liking (Chartrand & Bargh, 1999; Hatfield, Cacioppo & Rapson, 1993). When people are affected by normative reasons, they submit to others' expectation in order to gain rewards such as acceptance and avoid social punishment. When people have desire to be liked by others, mimicry tends to increase (Lakin & Chartrand, 2003).

Nonconformity also has two components: independence (or refusing to accept influence) and anticonformity, (rebellious against influence) (Nail, MacDonald, & Levy, 2000; Wills, 1963). Independence is defined as "behavior or belief that results when the influence target gives zero weight to the norms, positions, or standards of another or others" (Nail, MacDonald, & Levy, 2000, p. 465). Operationally, the opinions of others are irrelevant. Anticonformity is defined as "behavior or belief that is not consistent with the norms, positions, or standards of another or others based on one or more motives of the influence target" (p. 457). Operationally, the opinions of others are relevant in that

they provide the point from which to deviate. Both types of nonconformity can make people different from others and satisfy a need for individuation or uniqueness (Maslach, Stapp & Santee, 1985).

Factors that affect the desire for unique consumer products

Need for uniqueness. The need for uniqueness is the need of an individual to express his/her differentness from other individuals. According to social theorists, those who have a need for uniqueness find high levels of similarity to others unpleasant and seek to make themselves moderately different (Fromkin, 1968, 1970, 1972; Snyder & Fromkin, 1980). Individuals with a stronger need for uniqueness are more sensitive to similarity and desire a higher level of dissimilarity to others (Snyder, 1992). Possessions are often extensions of the self (Belk, 1988; James, 1890), and one way that people express uniqueness is by acquiring and possessing unique consumer products (Brock, 1968; Fromkin, 1970; Snyder & Fromkin, 1980; Snyder, 1992). Lynn (1991) suggested that the need for uniqueness is a major source of the desire for such products. Those consumers who possess a high need for uniqueness monitor others' ownership of goods. Avoiding similarity also involves devaluing and avoiding the purchase of products or brands that are perceived to be commonplace (Tian, Bearden, & Hunter, 2001). In addition, the inherent scarcity of new products makes new products more attractive to individuals with a high need for uniqueness, since the distribution of such products will likely be limited initially (Burns & Krampf, 1991; Snyder, 1992). Thus, need for uniqueness is related to a desire for unique consumer products.

H1. There will be a significant direct relationship between the score obtained on the need for uniqueness scale and the score obtained on the desire for unique consumer products scale.

Status aspiration. Status refers to a ranked position in a society or group given to an individual by others (Bierstedt 1970; Dawson, & Cavell, 1986). Donnenwerth and Foal (1974) stated that status is associated with the power that consists of respect, consideration, and envy from others. According to Cassidy and Lynn (1989), status aspiration is an individual differentiation variable reflecting the desire for dominance and leadership in a social hierarchy. Many people who desire a high status position devote a lot of energy to acquire it (Barkow, 1992).

Brown (1991) suggested that status is defined by consumption and that social status is represented by acquired possessions. Dawson and Cavell (1986) proposed that people own, use, and display certain products to obtain social status. While some consumers purchase products because of the use of those products by powerful people in society, the most effective status symbol is a scarce and unique product (Belk, 1980; Blumberg, 1974; Rae, 1905). Lynn and Harris (1997a) also found that unique products serve most effectively as status symbols. Therefore, it is supposed that there is a significant relationship between status aspiration and a desire for unique consumer products.

H2. There will be a significant direct relationship between the score obtained on the status aspiration scale and the score obtained on the desire for unique consumer products scale.

Materialism. According to Rassuli and Hollander (1986), materialism is a mindset that fosters getting and spending. Belk (1984) defined materialism as the importance a consumer attaches to worldly possessions. Materialistic consumers especially are more likely to value possessions than are less materialistic consumers (Belk, 1985; Richins & Dawson, 1992).

One characteristic of materialistic consumers is the use of possessions to define success (Richins & Dawson, 1992). Materialistic consumers are likely to use possessions to represent success to themselves and to others, and materialists view themselves as successful to the extent that they are able to acquire products and goods that project a desired self-image. Materialism influences consumption in terms of the quality and quantity of products purchased. In other words, materialistic consumers tend to judge their own and others' success by the quantity and quality of possessions accumulated.

Products that show success and accomplishment are likely to be high quality and exclusive. Richins (1994) found that highly materialistic consumers are more conscious of the design, beauty, and other appearance features of their possessions. Therefore, it is probable that materialistic consumers will be more inclined than others to pursue personal uniqueness and social status through the acquisition and possession of unique consumer products.

H3. There will be a significant direct relationship between the score obtained on the materialism scale and the score obtained on the desire for unique consumer products scale.

Innovativeness. Consumer innovativeness refers to an interest in and willingness to try new products or services (Goldsmith & Foxall, 2003). Burns and Krampf (1991) demonstrated a positive relationship between need for uniqueness and the number of new products owned. They discovered that people with high needs for uniqueness are more apt to adopt new products than those with low needs for uniqueness. This correlation was higher for new products than for new brands. Consistent with this study, Burns (1990) found that consumers with strong uniqueness desires showed a greater awareness of, interest in, and/or willingness to consider adoption of new products than consumers with weaker uniqueness desires. Typically, new products or services are first accepted by a relatively small group of consumer innovators who then influence later adopters (Robertson, 1971; Rogers, 1983). Thus, one way to satisfy the desire for unique consumer products is by adopting new products before others do (Burns & Krampf, 1992; Fromkin, 1971).

H4. There will be a significant direct relationship between the score obtained on the innovativeness scale and the score obtained on the desire for unique consumer products scale.

Desire for unique consumer products and online shopping behaviors

The Internet has become one of the most rapidly growing retail formats, with online sale growth rates (Burn, 2005). According to US Census Bureau, the total amount of spending on the Internet were estimated at \$ 47.8 billion in 2002 (Case & King, 2003) and increased in triple to \$ 136.4 billion by 2007.

The Internet offers new customer-retention possibilities through the management of relationships between marketers and consumers owing in part to consumers' access through the Internet to more product and service information and a wider range of products than they would have otherwise (Seock & Norton, 2007). Information searching is an important process that enables consumers to collect information about products before they make decisions (Shim, Eastlick, Lotzs & Warrington, 2001). Along with benefits as a vehicle for purchasing, the Internet offers consumers a powerful means for searching out product information before making purchases (Doyle, 2003; Gray, 2005).

Online information searching is an important element in online consumer decision making because the Internet, as an interactive medium, provides the simplicity of using and improving accessibility of product information by browsing the Internet. The availability and presentation of product information facilitates consumer decision making. Some researchers suggest that type of product information and the ease of searching for information are playing a key role in creating demand for online purchasing increasing store sales (Lohse & Spiller, 1998; Swaminathan, Lepkowska & Rao, 1999). Park and Stoel (2002) found that useful and descriptive product information provided on

the web sites results in greater purchasing activity by online shoppers and increasing customer satisfaction.

Consumers who need uniqueness and resist conformity with respect to self-presentation are searching for novelty goods, hand crafted goods, and personalized items (Tian et al., 2001). These products convey uniqueness, as do vintage goods or antique goods that are not available in mass quantities and are purchased often from nontraditional outlets (Tepper, 1997). Among these nontraditional outlets are web sites through which consumers may search and place bids in an international marketplace for products that are customized, rare, or no longer manufactured. Therefore, it seems probable that a desire for unique consumer products increases online shopping.

Consumers who need uniqueness may desire more frequent and more rapid information searching than others. They can increase their scope of knowledge through the Internet because a vast amount of information may be easily viewed and collected over the Internet, and because of the interactive nature of the Internet (Shim, Eastlick, Lotzs & Warrington, 2001). Consumers who have interests and desires for specific product categories frequently and regularly check sites of interest, looking for new items and updated information (Bloch, Sherrell & Ridgeway, 1986). These shoppers may visit a site several times to obtain desirable knowledge and information before making a purchase and they often browse for short periods of time. Therefore, it seems probable that a consumer with high desire for unique consumer products is likely to visit online shopping sites more frequently.

H5. There will be a significant direct relationship between the score obtained on the desire for unique consumer products scale and the measure of the frequency of visiting online shopping sites.

The desires a consumer has with a product influences the amount of mental and physical effort a consumer puts into the buying process (Laaksonen, 1994). Outcomes associated with high desires and needs include more time and effort spent in search-related activities (Bloch, Sherrell & Ridgeway, 1986). Consumers with strong desires will search for more information before they buy, process relevant information in greater detail, and use more criteria in their buying decisions than other consumers. For example, consumers with strong desire for unique consumer products will pay greater attention to relevant web sites than consumers with weak desire for unique consumer products. Therefore, consumers who have desire for unique consumer products are expected to spend more time at web site gaining information about the products.

H6. There will be a significant direct relationship between the score obtained on the desire for unique consumer products scale and the measure of the amount of time spent on online shopping.

Previous study has indicated that consumer interests for a product has a significant relationship with amount of money spent (Andrews, Durvasula & Akhter, 1990). For example, consumers with higher fashion interest tended to spend more money on clothing than others. The Internet is an important channel for searching for unique products (Tepper, 1997), and consumers with high desire for these products were likely

to visit more frequently on web sites for interesting products than were other consumers (Shim & Kotsiopoulos, 1993). If consumers are exposed to Internet sites more frequently and search information for longer times at Internet sites, they may tend to spend more money during online shopping for a product than other consumers would. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that the more desire for unique consumer products, the greater the amount of money spent on online shopping.

H7. There will be a significant direct relationship between the score obtained on the desire for unique consumer products scale and the amount of money spent on online shopping.

The benefits for accessing the Internet such as amount of information and speed of processing will increase the possibility of forming positive attitude toward online shopping. People with strong desires for a product should be more likely to log on to a product-specific site, explore more product-specific information, and generate more thoughts about products on the site (Elliott & Speck, 2005). If the product-related information and peer consumers' evaluations on the site are informative, shoppers should be more likely to form positive attitudes about the products offered and about the site itself. Therefore, it is expected that desire for unique consumer products will have impact on the attitude toward online shopping.

H8. There will be a significant direct relationship between the score obtained on the desire for unique consumer products scale and the score obtained on the attitudes toward online shopping scale.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURE

This study investigated important factors that may be related to the desire for unique consumer products and discovered relationships between the desire for unique consumer products and online shopping behaviors and attitudes. This chapter describes the methods used in the study. It includes the following sections: a description of the sample used, description of the instrument, data collection procedures and data analysis.

Selection of the sample

Participants for this study were undergraduate students at Oklahoma State University. A total of 141 college students participated in this study. A college student sample was appropriate for this study because they use online channels effectively and are familiar with Internet shopping. Internet use is pervasive in this group and a powerful means by which they find product and service information and make purchases (Meskauskas, 2003). Bruin and Lawrence (2000) indicated that college students regularly used Internet technology and are likely to buy products online. College students represent an important part of the current online purchasing consumer population as well as offer a long-term potential market. Compared to other age groups, adults 18 to 29 spend a larger percentage of time online compared to other media channels (Nie, 2001).

Instrumentation

Most of the items in the instrument were based on questions used in previous studies. Some of the questions were developed solely for this survey to address important concepts not previously addressed by previous studies.

The survey instrument consisted of five sections (See Appendix A, p.70). In the first section, respondents were asked their experiences in purchasing unique products. This section who included to ensure that respondents possessed sufficient experience to answer questions about their perception of unique products and online retailers. Three items regarding the purchase of unique products also were included (e.g., Have you ever purchased unique products before? Where do you mostly purchase those items? If you purchase unique products over Internet, do you have a preferred online website that you purchase your unique products?).

In the second section of the test package, respondents were asked question about five factors. The factors assessed were: need for uniqueness, status aspiration, materialism, innovativeness, and desire for unique consumer products.

Need for uniqueness. This section of the test contained 31 items from the Need for Uniqueness test used by Tian, Bearden and Hunter (2001) in their study of that variable. The estimate of internal consistency reliability was 0.94, indicating an acceptable reliability for predicting needs for uniqueness. Each item was scored on a 5-point Likert scale format from strongly disagree 1 to strongly agree 5 (See p. 71).

Status aspiration. This section was measured by 11 statements from the original status aspiration scale developed by Cassidy and Lynn (1989). The scale's coefficient *alpha* exceeded 0.66 in the original set of studies. This test consist of 5-point Likert scales from 1 being strongly disagree to 5 being strongly agree (See p. 74).

Materialism. To measure materialism, 18 statements that incorporated three dimensions were adopted from Richins study (2004). The three dimensions were success, centrality, and happiness. The coefficient *alpha* values were above 0.81, indicating an acceptable reliability for predicting material values. The items were scored on a 5-point Likert scale format, from strongly disagree 1 to strongly agree 5 (See p. 74).

Innovativeness. To measure innovativeness, 15 items that incorporated two dimensions were adopted from a study by Manning, Bearden and Madden (1995). The two dimensions were consumer independent judgment-making (CIJM) and consumer novelty seeking (CNS). The scale's coefficient *alpha* was 0.86 for CIJM, and 0.92 for CNS, in the original set of studies. All items were 5 point Likert scale from strongly disagree 1 to strongly agree 5 (See p. 75).

Desire for unique consumer products. This section of the test package was used to measure the extent to which consumers have desires for the possession of consumer goods, services, and experiences that few others possess. The questions were adopted from Lynn and Harris's (1997b) study, and consisted of 8 items to load on a single factor. Coefficient *alpha* estimates were 0.78 in the original set of the studies. The response

format has 5-point Likert alternatives, with classifications from strongly disagree 1 to strongly agree 5 (See p. 73).

In the third section, respondents' online shopping behavior and attitude toward online shopping were assessed. The factors studied were: time spent in online shopping, money spent during online shopping and attitude toward online shopping.

Online shopping behavior. Three items regarding online shopping behavior were asked in this section: 1) how many times each month a respondent browses or purchases from a website, on average 2) how many hours per visit to the Internet a respondent spends browsing or purchasing on average and 3) how much a respondent spends on products purchased via the Internet in the past 12 months. This section of the instrument was an adaptation of previous research (Shim, Eastlick, Lotzs, & Warrington, 2001) (See p. 76).

Attitude toward online shopping. To measure attitude toward online shopping 4 items adapted from the Taylor and Todd study (1995) were used. The coefficient *alpha* values were above 0.85, indicating an acceptable reliability for predicting attitude toward online shopping. The test consisted of 5-point Likert scale from 1 being strongly disagree to 5 being strongly agree (See p. 76).

Lastly, demographic information also was collected. This section consisted of forced-choice demographic questions about the subject, such as age, gender, and allowance (See p. 77).

Instrument reliability

Measure of variables should have reliability in order to draw valid inferences from research (Cronbach, 1971; Nunally, 1978). Reliability deals with how consistently similar measures produce similar results (Rosental & Rosnow, 1984) and it has the two dimensions of repeatability and internal consistency (Zigmund, 1995). Internal consistency refers to the ability of a scale item to correlate with other items in the scale that are intended to measure the same construct. A common measure of the internal consistency of a measurement instrument is Cronbach's alpha. If the reliability is not acceptably high, the scale can be revised by altering or deleting items that have scores lower than a pre-determined cut-off point. If a scale used to measure a construct has an alpha value greater than .70, the scale is considered reliable in measuring the construct (Hair, Aderson, Tatham & Black, 1998; Nummally, 1978; Leedy, 1997). According to Schuessler (1971), a scale is considered to have good reliability if it has an alpha value greater than .60. In this research, the multi-item scales were checked for reliability by determining Cronbach's alpha and an alpha value of .06 or greater was considered acceptable.

Each of the six scales had alpha value greater than .60. The desire for unique consumer product measure, consisting of 8 items, has an alpha value of .90. The need for uniqueness measure, consisting of 31 items, has an alpha value of .95. The status aspiration measure, consisting of 11 items, has an alpha value of .64. The materialism measure, consisting of 18 items, has an alpha value of .69. The innovativeness measure,

consisting of 15 items, has an alpha value of .81. The attitude toward online shopping measure, consisting of four items, has an alpha value of .87 (See Table 1). The coefficients shown in Table 3 indicate good reliability for the six variables (i.e., desire for unique consumer product, need for uniqueness, status aspiration, materialism, innovativeness, and attitude toward online shopping). Items in each factor were averaged for further analysis.

Table 1. Cronbach's α Coefficients

Scales	Number of items	Cronbach's α
Need for uniqueness	31	.95
Status aspiration	11	.64
Materialism	18	.69
Innovativeness	15	.81
Desire for unique consumer products	8	.90
Attitude toward online shopping	4	.87

Procedure

A paper questionnaire was used to collect the data. IRB consent forms were distributed along with the test package. After the IRB for the protection of human subjects approved the study (See Appendix A, p.78), data collection was conducted during scheduled university classes. Students were selected from courses in Human

Environmental Science. The researcher visited a class with the professor's permission and asked the students to fill out the survey during the class period. Small presents as incentives were distributed to encourage the subjects to fill out the survey completely and sincerely. Participants were entered into a drawing for gift cards for use at a local retailer, by filling out separate name slips for the drawing. The drawing took place after all surveys had been collected.

Analysis

The data collected for this study was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Simple, multiple and multivariate regression analysis were used to test the hypothesized relationships among the variables. Descriptive, frequency and percentage distributions were used to describe and report the information collected pertaining to individual variables and demographic information.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter presents the research findings of the study. Findings from the survey are presented in four sections. The first section reports demographic information. The second section presents results on experience purchasing unique products. The third section reports online shopping behavior. The last section shows the results of hypotheses testing.

Demographics

Of the 144 questionnaires distributed to students, there were 141 usable surveys returned, for a response rate of 98%. A majority of the respondents were female (n=139, 98.6%), and American (n=125, 88.6%). Students ranged in age from 20-37 years with an average age of 23 and most subjects (n=85, 60.5%) were 22-23 years. Approximately half of the students (n=64, 45.4%) perceived their family's socio-economic status to be middle class. Ninety-four percent of the respondents (n=128) owned one or more credit/debit cards while 6% of the subjects did not own any credit/debit cards (See Table 2).

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics of Student Respondents

Variables		Frequency (n=141)	Percent ^a (%)
Gender	Male	2	1.4
	Female	139	98.6
Age	20	12	8.5
	21-25	113	87.2
	26-30	6	4.2
Nationality	White	125	88.6
	Native American	5	3.5
	Asian	2	1.4
	Hispanic	2	1.4
	Africa American	1	0.7
Family's socio-economic status	Lower	2	1.4
	Lower-middle	8	5.7
	Middle	64	45.4
	Upper-middle	58	41.1
	Upper	8	5.7
Number of card(s)	0	9	6.4
	1	66	46.8
	2	40	28.4
	3	18	12.8
	4	4	2.8

^a Total percent may not be equal 100 due to non-responses on certain items

Experience purchasing unique products

Subjects were asked about their perceptions of unique products and online retailers. First, students responded to the question. “Of the following products, please choose the most unique products that you have purchased.” The majority of items purchased by students were “handcraft products” (n=61, 43.3%), followed by “vintage/ antique goods” (n=52, 36.9%) and “premier designer brand goods” (n=43, 30.5%),

although 12.1% of the students (n=17) had not ever purchased any unique products (See Table 3).

Table 3. Unique Products Purchased by Subjects

Unique products items	Examples	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
Handcraft products	Handmade personalized products. e.g., Handcrafted jewelry	61	43.3
Vintage/ antique goods	Outmoded or outdated products, e.g., Antique toys	52	36.9
Premier designer brand goods	e.g., Louis Vuitton hand bag	43	30.5
No, I have not purchased any unique products		17	12.1
Other items		4	2.8

The subjects were asked, “Where do you mostly purchase those items?” in an open-ended format. The most frequently mentioned retail sites were “retailing shops” (n=75, 53.2%) and the “Internet” (n=43, 30.5%) (See Table 4). In regards to the latter, some students (19.9%) reported that they have a preferred online website. Respondents visited eBay.com for unique product shopping (28.6%). When asked what they liked best about eBay, respondents frequently mentioned that they appreciated the lower prices of unique products, ask for greater variety in product selection, found what they are looking for more easily, spent less time and found the eBay website to be a fun shopping.

Table 4. Location of Unique Product Purchasing by Subjects

Shopping place	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
Retailing shops	75	53.2
Internet	43	30.5
Specialty/ upscale department store	39	27.7
Flea market	27	19.1
Other places	14	9.9

Online shopping behavior

About 26% of the respondents answered that they browse or purchase from a website a few times each month, while nearly 25% responded that they rarely did so. Approximately 55% of the respondents spent less than an hour browsing or purchasing per visit, while about 43% allocated 1 to 2 hours per visit. Approximately 50% of the respondents spent between \$1 and \$200 for products purchased via the Internet during the past year (See Table 5).

Table 5. Online Shopping Behavior of Student Respondents

Variables		Frequency (n=141)	Percent (%)
Frequency of visiting online shopping sites	Never	7	5.0
	Rarely	35	24.8
	Once a month	12	8.5
	Few times each month	36	25.5
	Weekly	20	14.2
	Every few days	23	16.3
	Daily	8	5.7
Amount of time spent on online shopping	Less than an hour per visit	77	54.6
	1-2 hours per visit	61	43.3
	3-4 hours per visit	2	1.4
	5-6 hours per visit	0	0
	7-8 hours per visit	1	0.7
	9 hours and more per visit	0	0
Amount of money spent on online shopping	None	18	12.8
	\$1-200	71	50.4
	\$201-400	30	21.3
	\$401-600	6	4.3
	\$601-800	7	5.0
	\$801-1000	2	1.4
	Over \$1000	7	5.0

Factor analysis

A principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation was conducted to identify the dimensions of innovativeness. Three items loading less than .50 and cross loadings were eliminated. Results of the factor analysis procedure revealed that 12 items of the innovativeness loaded on two factors at around .50 or more factor loading with Eigen values of one or higher that explained 64.24% of the cumulative variation in innovativeness. The first factor, consumer independent judgment-making (CIJM), included five items and the second factor, consumer novelty seeking (CNS), consisted of

seven items. In order to quantify the scale reliabilities of the factors identified, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were computed. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients were .88 for CIJM and .89 for CNS, indicating acceptability and reliability. These two dimensions of innovativeness were consistent with the dimensions found by Manning, Bearden and Madden (1995). An average of the scale items for each factor was used for further analysis (See Table 6).

Table 6. The Results of Exploratory Factor Analysis: Innovativeness

Variables	Factor loading	Eigen value	Variance explained	Alpha
<i>Innovativeness factor 1: consumer independent judgment-making (CIJM)</i>		3.48	29.03	.88
When it comes to deciding whether to purchase a new service, I do not rely on experienced friends or family members for advice.	.71			
I seldom ask a friend about his or her experiences with a new product before I buy the new product.	.81			
I decide to buy new products and services without relying on the opinions of friends who have already tried them.	.82			
When I am interested in purchasing a new service, I do not rely on my friends or close acquaintances that have already use the new service to give me information as to whether I should try it.	.82			
I do not rely on experienced friends for information about new products prior to making up my mind about whether or not to purchase.	.91			
<i>Innovativeness factor 2: consumer novelty seeking (CNS)</i>		4.23	35.22	.89
I often seek out information about new products and brand.	.57			
I like to go to places where I will be exposed to information about new products and brands.	.78			
I like magazines that introduce new brands.	.72			
I frequently look for new products and services.	.83			
I seek out situations in which I will be exposed to new and different sources of product information.	.85			
I am continually seeking new product experiences.	.87			
I take advantage of the first available opportunity to find out about new and different products.	.75			

Hypotheses testing

The data were analyzed through two different phases. In phase I, simple and multiple regression analysis were performed for hypotheses 1, 2, 3 and 4. In phase II, simple and multivariate regression analyses were used for hypotheses 5, 6, 7, and 8.

Phase I

Simple regression analysis was used to determine each of the hypothesized relationships between the desire for unique consumer products and the three factors: need for uniqueness, status aspiration and materialism. In this analysis, the independent variables were the four factors and the dependent variable was the desire for unique consumer products.

Hypothesis 1. Hypothesis 1 predicted that there would be a significant direct relationship between the score obtained on the need for uniqueness scale and the score obtained on the desire for unique consumer products scale. To test Hypothesis 1, the need for uniqueness was employed as the independent variable and the desire for consumer unique products was the dependent variable. Results of the analysis revealed that the need for uniqueness was significantly related to the desire for unique consumer products ($F = 112.93, p < .001$). The adjusted R^2 value was .44. This indicated that 44% of the variance in desire for unique consumer products was explained by the need for uniqueness. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was supported (See Table 7).

Hypothesis 2. Hypothesis 2 posited that there would be a significant direct relationship between the scores obtained on the status aspiration scale and the scores

obtained on the desire for unique consumer products scale. To test Hypothesis 2, the status aspiration was employed as the independent variable and the desire for consumer unique products as the dependent variable. Results of the analysis indicated that status aspiration was significantly related to the desire for unique consumer products ($F = 20.16$, $p < .001$). The adjusted R^2 value was .12. This indicated that 12% of the variance in desire for unique consumer products was explained by the status aspiration. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was supported (See Table 7).

Hypothesis 3. Hypothesis 3 posited that there would be a significant direct relationship between the scores obtained on the materialism scale and the scores obtained on the desire for unique consumer products scale. To test Hypothesis 3, materialism was employed as the independent variable and the desire for consumer unique products as the dependent variable. Results of the analysis indicated that materialism was significantly related to the desire for unique consumer products at the 0.05 level ($F = 4.31$, $p < .05$). Materialism was the least important of the four variables accounting for $F = 4.31$, $p < .05$. The adjusted R^2 value was .02. This indicated that 2% of the variance in desire for unique consumer products was explained by materialism. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 was supported (See Table 7).

Hypothesis 4. Hypothesis 4 posited that there would be a significant direct relationship between the score obtained on the innovativeness scale and the score obtained on the desire for unique consumer products scale. Multiple regression analysis was conducted to investigate the hypothesized relationship between the two dimensions

of innovativeness and the desire for unique consumer products. To test Hypothesis 4, consumer innovativeness factor 1 (consumer independent judgment-making, CIJM) and innovativeness factor 2 (consumer novelty seeking, CNS) were employed as the independent variable and the desire for consumer unique products as the dependent variable. Results of the analysis indicated that the combination of variables to predict desire for unique consumer products from consumer independent judgment-making and consumer novelty seeking was statistically related to the desire for unique consumer products ($F = 57.99, p < .001$). The beta coefficients are presented in Table 10. Note that consumer independent judgment-making and consumer novelty seeking significantly predict desire for unique consumer products when two variables are included. The adjusted R^2 value was .45. This indicated that 45% of the variance in desire for unique consumer products was explained by this model. Therefore, Hypothesis 4 was supported (See Table 7).

Table 7. The Results of Simple and Multiple Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Desire for Unique Consumer Products

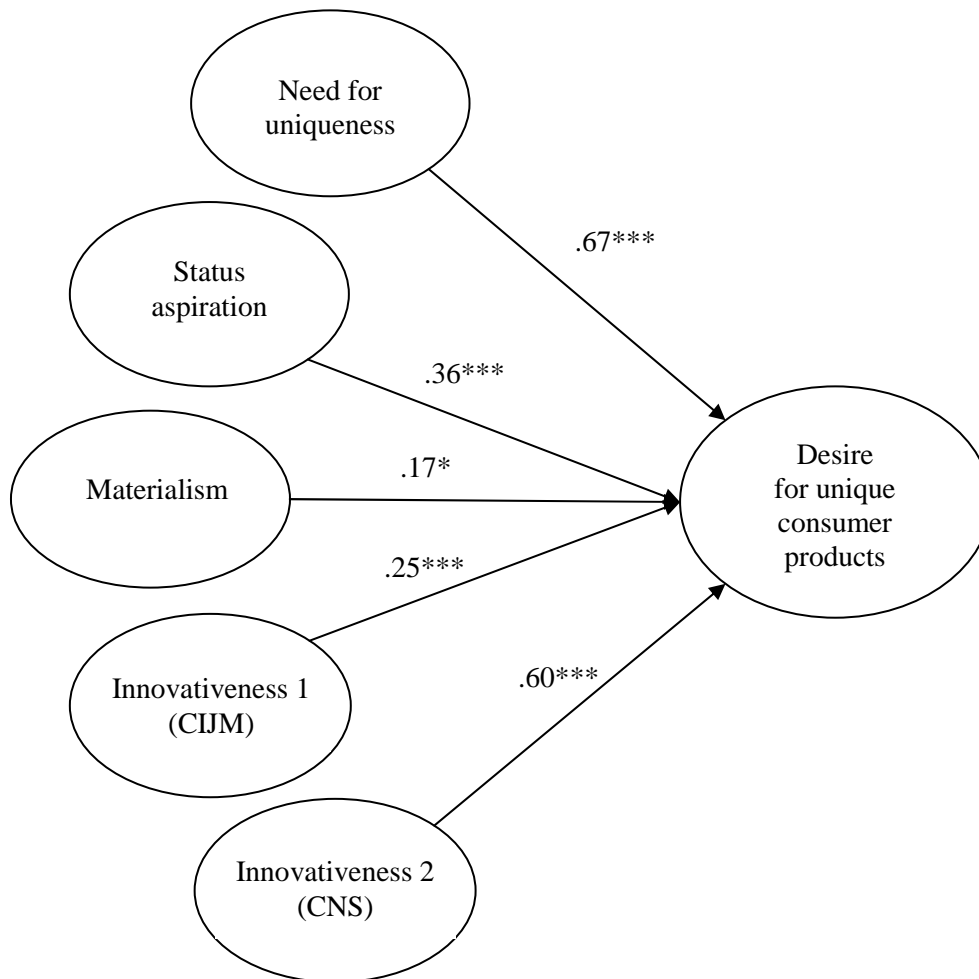
Independent variable	B	β	F	Adj. R ²
Need for uniqueness	.81	.67	112.93***	.44
Status aspiration	.63	.36	20.16***	.12
Materialism	.31	.17	4.31*	.02
Innovativeness factor 1: Consumer independent judgment-making (CIJM)	.25	.25***	57.99***	.45
Innovativeness factor 2: Consumer novelty seeking (CNS)	.69	.60***		

Dependent variable: Desire for unique consumer products

B: Unstandardized coefficients, β : Standardized coefficients, Adj. R²: Adjusted R²

* p < .05, *** p < .001

Figure 2. The Relationships between Antecedents and Desire for Unique Products: A Summary of Simple and Multiple Regression Results



Note: The numbers on each arrow denote standardized coefficients (β). The numbers on innovativeness 1 (CIJM) and innovativeness 2 (CNS) arrow are the result of multiple regression analysis.

* $p < .05$, *** $p < .001$

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to investigate the best predictors of desire for unique consumer products. The combination of variables to predict desire for unique consumer products from needs for uniqueness, status aspiration, materialism,

innovativeness factor 1 (consumer independent judgment-making) and innovativeness factor 2 (consumer novelty seeking) was statistically significant, $F = 40.12$, $p < .001$. The beta coefficients are presented in Table 11. Note that need for uniqueness, status aspiration, and innovativeness factor 2 (consumer novelty seeking) significantly predict desire for unique consumer products when all five variables are included. The adjusted R^2 value was .59. This indicated that 59% of the variance in desire for unique consumer products was explained by this model (See Table 8).

Materialism and innovativeness factor 1 (consumer independent judgment-making) were determined not to predict the desire for unique consumer products. The reason might be multicollinearity among independent variables. When there is high correlation among independent variables, there might be a problem with multicollinearity. Since seemingly related variables are being employed as predictors in the regression equation, multicollinearity may be a concern.

Table 8. The Results of Multiple Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Desire for Unique Consumer Products

Independent variable	B	β	F	Adj. R ²
Need for uniqueness	.52	.43***	40.12***	.59
Status aspiration	.27	.14*		
Materialism	.05	.03		
Innovativeness factor 1: Consumer independent judgment-making (CIJM)	.10	.10		
Innovativeness factor 2: Consumer novelty seeking (CNS)	.42	.36***		

Dependent variable: Desire for unique consumer products

B: Unstandardized coefficients, β : Standardized coefficients, Adj. R²: Adjusted R²

* $p < .05$, *** $p < .001$

Phase II

Simple regression analysis was used to determine each of the hypothesized relationships between the desire for unique consumer products and online shopping behavior and attitude. In this analysis, the independent variable was desire for unique consumer products and the dependent variables were online shopping behaviors and attitude toward online shopping.

Hypothesis 5. Hypothesis 5 posited that there would be a significant direct relationship between the score obtained on the desire for unique consumer products scale and the frequency of visiting online shopping sites. To test Hypothesis 5, the desire for

unique consumer products was employed as the independent variable and the frequency of visiting online shopping sites as the dependent variable. Results of the analysis indicated that the desire for unique consumer products was significantly related to the frequency of visiting online shopping sites ($F = 9.31, p < .05$). The adjusted R^2 value was .06. This indicated that 6% of the variance in desire for unique consumer products was explained by the frequency of visiting online shopping sites. Therefore, Hypothesis 5 was supported (See Table 9).

Hypothesis 6. Hypothesis 6 posited that there would be a significant direct relationship between the score obtained on the desire for unique consumer products scale and the amount of time spent in online shopping. To test Hypothesis 6, the desire for unique consumer products was employed as the independent variable and the amount of time spent in online shopping as the dependent variable. Results of the analysis indicated that the desire for unique consumer products was not significantly related to the amount of time spent in online shopping ($F = 1.20, p = .28$). The adjusted R^2 value was .001. This indicated that 0.1% of the variance in desire for unique consumer products was explained by the amount of time spent in online shopping. Therefore, Hypothesis 6 was not supported (See Table 9).

Hypothesis 7. Hypothesis 7 posited that there would be a significant direct relationship between the scores obtained on the desire for unique consumer products scale and the amount of money spent on online shopping. To test Hypothesis 7, the desire for unique consumer products was employed as the independent variable and the amount

of money spent on online shopping as the dependent variable. Results of the analysis indicated that the desire for unique consumer products was significantly related to the amount of money spent on online shopping ($F = 13.29$, $p < .001$). The adjusted R^2 value was .08. This indicates that 8% of the variance in desire for unique consumer products was explained by the amount of money spent on online shopping. Therefore, Hypothesis 7 was supported (See Table 9).

Hypothesis 8. Hypothesis 8 posited that there would be a significant direct relationship between the scores obtained on the desire for unique consumer products scale and the scores obtained on the attitudes toward online shopping scale. To test Hypothesis 8, the desire for unique consumer products was employed as the independent variable and the attitudes toward online shopping as the dependent variable. Results of the analysis indicated that the desire for unique consumer products was significantly related to attitudes toward online shopping ($F = 14.71$, $p < .001$). The adjusted R^2 value was .09. This indicated that 9% of the variance in desire for unique consumer products was explained by the attitudes toward online shopping. Therefore, Hypothesis 8 was supported (See Table 9).

Table 9. The Results of Simple Regression Analysis of Desire for Unique Consumer Products on Internet Shopping

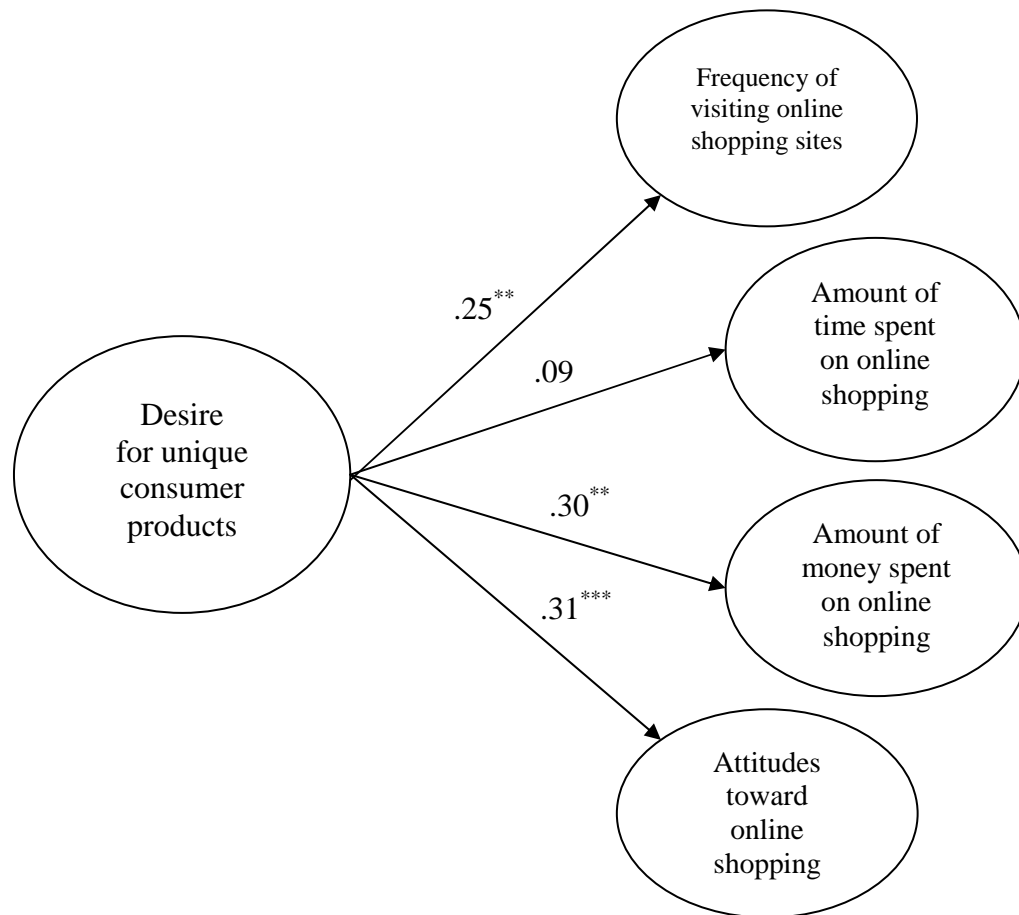
Dependent variable	B	β	F	Adj. R ²
Frequency of visiting online shopping site	.50	.25	9.31 ^{**}	.06
Amount of time spent in online shopping	.07	.09	1.20	.001
Amount of money spent on online shopping	.50	.3	13.29 ^{***}	.08
Attitudes toward online shopping	.28	.31	14.71 ^{***}	.09

Independent variable: Desire for unique consumer products

B: Unstandardized coefficients, β : Standardized coefficients, Adj. R²: Adjusted R²

^{**} p < .01, ^{***} p < .001

Figure 3. The Relationships between Desire for Unique Products and Online Shopping Behaviors: A Summary of Simple Regression Results



Note: The numbers on each arrow denote standardized coefficients (β).

** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Multivariate regression analysis was conducted to test the effects of the desire for unique consumer products on dependent variables. In this analysis, the ability of desire for unique consumer products to predict the combination of variables from frequency of visiting online shopping sites, amount of time spent in online shopping, amount of money

spent on online shopping, and attitude toward online shopping was statistically significant ($F = 5.69, p < .001$), regardless of the any type of four leading multivariate criteria that was used. The unstandardized coefficients were presented in Table 10.

Multivariate regression analysis of significance revealed that there are significant differences in each of the dependent variables: frequency of visiting online shopping sites, amount of time spent in online shopping, amount of money spent on online shopping, and attitude toward online shopping across desire for unique consumer products. In other words, the results identified which variables yielded significant differences. The results of multivariate regression analysis were exactly same as the results of simple regression analysis. The test results indicated that the desire for unique consumer products significantly influenced frequency of visiting online shopping site, amount of money spent on online shopping, and attitude toward online shopping. No significant main effects were found for the amount of time spent on online shopping (See Table 11).

Table 10. Multivariate Tests of Desire for Unique Consumer Products on Internet Shopping

Multivariate criterion	B	F
Pillai's Trace	.14	5.69***
Wilks' Lambda	.86	5.69***
Hotelling's Trace	.17	5.69***
Roy's Largest Root	.17	5.69***

Independent variable: Desire for unique consumer products

B: Unstandardized coefficients

*** p < .001

Table 11. The Results of Multivariate Regression Analysis of Desire for Unique Consumer Products on Internet Shopping

Dependent variable	B	β	F	Adj. R ²
Frequency of visiting online shopping site	.50	.25	9.31**	.06
Amount of time spent in online shopping	.07	.09	1.20	.001
Amount of money spent on online shopping	.50	.3	13.29***	.08
Attitudes toward online shopping	.28	.31	14.71***	.09

Independent variable: Desire for unique consumer products

B: Unstandardized coefficients, β : Standardized coefficients, Adj. R²: Adjusted R²

** p < .01, *** p < .001

Overall, data analyses ($n = 141$) indicate that need for uniqueness, status aspiration, materialism, and innovativeness were significant predictors of the desire for unique consumer products. Based on multiple regression analysis, it was shown that need for uniqueness, status aspiration, and innovativeness factor 2 (consumer novelty seeking) were variables that contributed significant prediction of the desire for unique consumer products. Materialism and innovativeness factor 1 (consumer independent judgment-making) were determined not to predict the desire for unique consumer products when all five variables were included. In addition, the findings showed that the desire for unique consumer products was related to frequency of visiting online shopping sites, amount of money spent on online shopping, and attitude toward online shopping. No significant main effects were found for the amount of time spent on online shopping. Based on multivariate regression analysis, the desire for unique consumer products had influences on online shopping.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

This chapter addresses the findings and provides a discussion of the results of the hypotheses test. The findings of this study relate to the influences of individual differences in desire for unique consumer products on online shopping behaviors (See Figure 4).

The first major finding concerned the influence of individual difference: need for uniqueness, status aspiration, materialism, and innovativeness upon the desire for unique consumer products. In determining the antecedent role of the desire for unique consumer products, it is note that need for uniqueness was found to be significant determinant of the desire for unique consumer products. Therefore, consumers high in need for uniqueness can be said to desire for unique consumer products. This finding supports research by Lynn (1991) that also indicated that the need for uniqueness is a major source of the desire for unique consumer products.

In addition to the initial assumption concerning the need for uniqueness, the results also suggested that status aspiration acts as an influence upon the desire for unique consumer products. That is, consumers who place a great deal of emphasis on status aspiration value unique consumer products. This result supported Lynn and Harris (1997b) who found that unique products serve most effectively as status symbols.

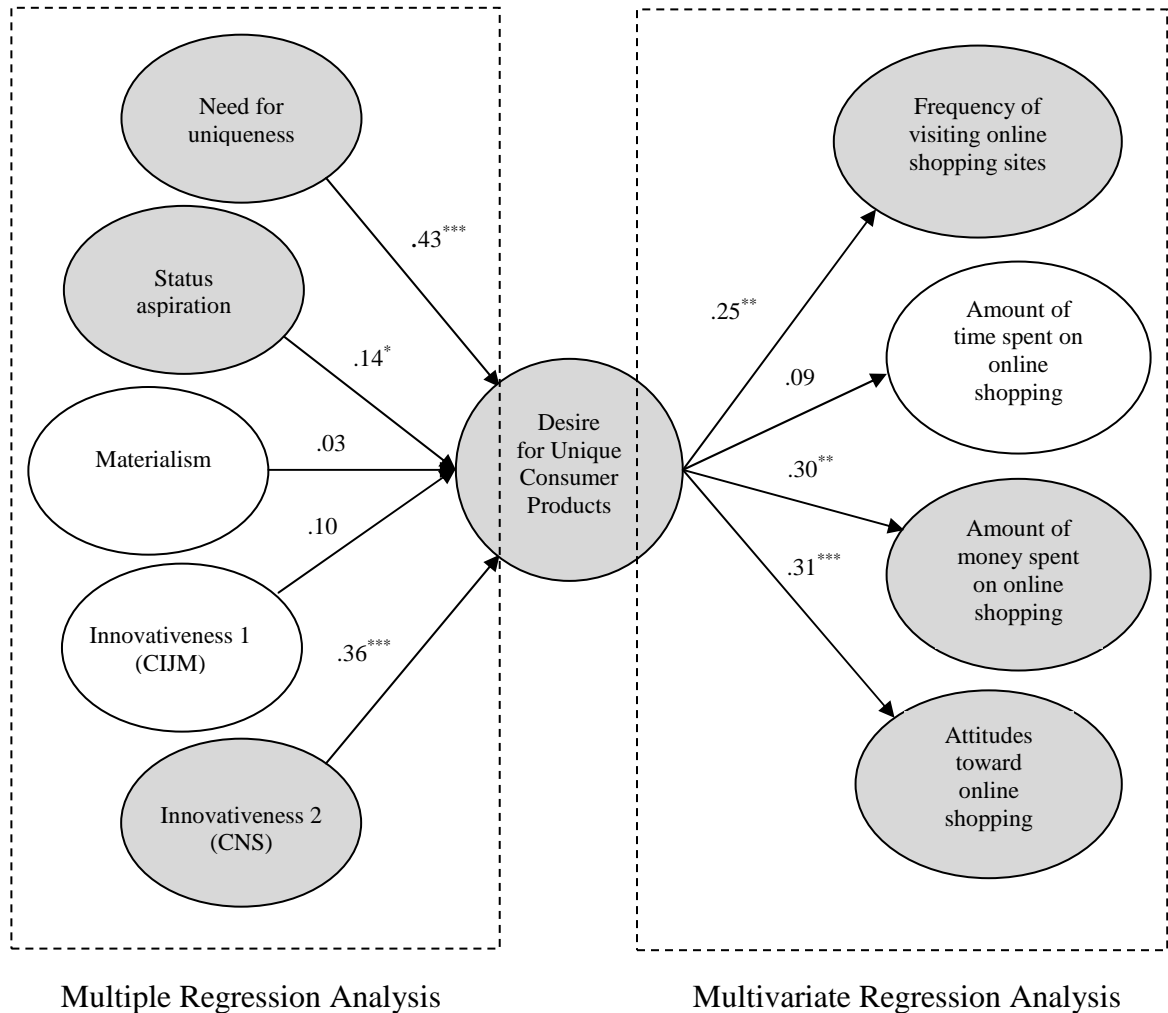
The analysis also indicated that materialism influence the desire for unique consumer products. That is, consumers with strong materialism have higher intention to purchase unique consumer products. This finding is consistent with Richins's (2004) study that highly materialistic consumers are more conscious of the design, beauty, and other appearance features of their possessions.

The analysis also indicated personal innovativeness was a significant factor in the desire for unique consumer products. That is, innovators express their creativity through a pursuit of unique consumer products. As suggested by previous research (Burns & Krampf, 1992; Fromkin, 1971), this study supported the idea that one way of satisfying a desire for uniqueness is by adopting new products before others do.

From the finding indicated multiple regression analysis, materialism did not influence the desire for unique consumer products. There might be a problem with multicollinearity. However, it is important to realize that student samples have a limitation when studying the expression of materialism through possessions, in that students often are operating with restricted economic resources. Non-student adults would be able to relate to a wider range of product categories, having access to a wider range of economic resources, and could be more stable conduits to signal materialism. Also, the results suggested that innovativeness factor 1 (consumer independent judgment-making) did not have any influence on the desire for unique consumer products. The reason might be multicollinearity among antecedents of desire for unique consumer products. Another assumption would be that consumer independent judgment-making

could be a consequence rather than an antecedent of the desire for unique consumer products. According to Manning, Bearden and Madden (1995), the innovativeness factor 2 (consumer novelty seeking) measure assesses one's tendency to seek out new product information, whereas the innovativeness factor 1 (consumer independent judgment-making) measure evaluates the degree to which an individual makes new product decisions independently of the communicated experience of others. The researchers suggested that consumer novelty seeking was most closely associated with the initial stages of the adoption process, whereas consumer independent judgment-making was related to only the later trial stage of the process. Perhaps because consumer independent judgment-making is likely to happen during the later stage of the product adoption process, this study found an insignificant result. Therefore, consumer independent judgment-making might not be related to the desire for unique consumer products.

Figure 4. Summary: Results of Multiple and Multivariate Regression Analyses



Note: The shaded variables were significantly related, according to multiple and multivariate regression analyses.

The numbers on each arrow denote standardized coefficients (β) on multiple and multivariate regression analyses.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Another major finding of this study involved the influence desire for unique consumer products on online shopping behaviors. It was found that three components of

online shopping behavior were a positively related to the desire for unique consumer products: frequency of visiting online shopping sites, amount of money spent on online shopping, and attitudes toward online shopping. Another component (amount of time spent in online shopping), however, was not affected by the desire for unique consumer products. The results of this study suggest that people who individuate through the uniqueness of consumer products, tend to perceive online shopping as somewhat valuable and purchase products through the Internet by visiting sites frequently and spending money at those sites. However, those people do not necessarily devote much time to online shopping. The ability to comprehend and interpret information is influenced by education, intelligence, product experience, relevant knowledge, and message difficulty (MacInnis & Jaworski, 1989; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Since data was collected at a university, the sample was relatively young and had a higher educational background. It may be that these individuals are able to quickly find and assess Internet merchandise. Or, it may be that this sample did not have sufficient time for lengthy Internet shopping. Thus, different results might be obtained with a more demographically diverse sample.

In addition, the results of the multivariate analysis for the relationship between the desire for unique consumer products and online shopping indicated that frequency of visiting online shopping sites, amount of money spent on online shopping, and attitude toward online shopping were the factors affected by the desire for unique consumer products when other factors also were considered in the model. The results suggested that the desire for unique consumer products was related to frequency of visiting online

shopping sites, amount of money spent on online shopping, and attitude toward online shopping.

The majority of our sample from this study considered unique products to be handcrafted products rather than vintage/ antique goods, novelty goods or premier designers' brand goods. To purchase those unique items, they preferred to shop at retailing shops rather than on the Internet, specialty/ upscale department stores or flea markets. It may be because of consumers' attitude toward handcraft criteria such as design, fabric and color. They are more likely to want to touch, feel, or try on the products in retailing store.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The primary goal of this study was to identify important factors that relate to the desire for unique consumer products and discover the relationships between the desire for unique consumer products and online shopping. A prediction model developed from previous research was proposed to test the idea that the value of online shopping can be partially explained by individual differences in desire for unique consumer products. The results of this study indicated that need for uniqueness, status aspiration, and innovativeness influence the desire for unique consumer products. In addition, results suggested that the desire for unique consumer products has an effect on online shopping behaviors. This chapter discusses the significance of the findings and implications for the study. The limitations and implications of these issues for future research are also discussed.

Academic Implications

The results of this study provide evidence that individual differences exist within a general tendency to seek unique consumer products. That is, the research suggests that consumers who have need for uniqueness, status aspiration, and innovativeness tend to be more desirous of unique consumer products. Therefore, this study contributes to the

extant literature in that it provides a deeper understanding of the consumer characteristics of those persons who have desires for unique consumer products.

Second, the results provide empirical evidence of the effects of the desire for unique consumer products on online shopping. Despite an increased interest in online shopping, few empirical studies have been conducted regarding various psychological factors in the context of unique product buying. Through the analyses, this study found that the desire for unique consumer products underlies consumer online shopping. Therefore, this study provides new theoretical insight by identifying the relative importance of the desire for unique consumer products on online shopping behavior.

Managerial Implications

This research made a couple of important discoveries relevant to marketing and more specifically, to consumer behavior. Marketers can use these results as a reference to improve on various marketing strategies. Such information can assist those marketing over the Internet in developing and evaluating their markets, and selecting appropriate merchandises.

This study indicated that need for uniqueness was the most important antecedent to determine the desire for unique consumer products ($\beta = .43$). This association implies that retailers should realize the role that need for uniqueness plays on desire for unique consumer products. Need for uniqueness refers to the trait of pursuing differentness relative to others (Tian, Bearden, & Hunter, 2001). That is, consumers who want to be

different from others have desires for unique products. Therefore, retailers should consider individual desire for differentness when attempting to satisfy their customers' desires for unique products, and develop promotional strategies that emphasize differentness when providing unique products to target customers.

According to the results of this study, innovativeness was the second most important antecedent of the desire for unique consumer products ($\beta = .36$). This finding indicates the importance of innovativeness in leading to the desire for unique consumer products. Hence, companies seeking marketing opportunities with unique products ought to carry new products to satisfy these consumers' needs and enhance the promotion by emphasizing the newness of these.

One of the key findings in this research was the relationship between the desire for unique consumer products and online shopping. This finding identified that the desire for unique consumer products influences three aspects of online shopping behavior (i.e., frequency of visiting online shopping sites, amount of money spent on online shopping and attitudes toward online shopping). Thus, the findings of this study will help e-tailers to develop more effective and efficient online retail outlets. Marketers on the Internet can consider the means by which they carry and develop specific unique consumer products on web sites. Consequently, they should stock and promote unique merchandise on web sites in order to capitalize on their customers' tastes. In other words, providing unique products on Internet sites may influence persons to become more frequent visitors of the sites, which may lead to greater Internet purchasing.

The results showed that most of the participants considered unique products to be handcrafted products, and participants had a preference for retailing shops over other channels of distribution. This may be because they want to touch or try on the products before deciding to buy them. Thus, companies need to identify and develop effective web sites that attempt to satisfy these needs. That is, e-tailers should pay acute attention to the content of their web sites, through which consumers can reach purchase decisions without physically touching or seeing unique products. Accordingly, in order to attract and retain those consumers on web sites, e-tailers must ensure that their sites provide high quality unique consumer product information such as colors, details on design, and quality photos to enhance user beliefs and increase customer intention to return.

In addition, this study revealed that consumers with desires for unique handcrafted products more often visit a retailing shop rather than an online store. Consumers who find desirable items and information on a web site are likely to go to offline channels (Kaufman-Scaborough & Lindquist, 2002). Due to needs for sensory examination before purchase (e.g. fitting, touching), consumers often avoid purchasing directly from the online store and instead use the online channel to obtain product and service information. Therefore, Internet-only businesses might build brick-and-mortar stores as showrooms and places to satisfy consumers' sensory needs for unique products. Companies using multi-channels offline and online would be most effective for developing unique products to create the best outcome in each channel.

Limitations and Further Studies

Although the study provided insights into critical factors affecting the desire for unique consumer products on online shopping, the findings should be interpreted with caution due to specific limitations. First, since the sample was collected in one particular state, and represented a certain demographic group, the results may vary in different locations and with subjects of different demographic backgrounds. Further research is recommended toward expanding the study to focus on different populations. For example, a more extensive study of these results on a non-student population would help in establishing the generalizability of these finding. Using bigger sample sizes as well as a wider sample of subjects would be advised for future research. In addition, the relatively small proportion of male students in the sample may have influenced the results of this study. Further research should consider more equal sample size of both male and female respondents.

The second limitation of the study is that it did not include a specific list of products or situations to explore the desire for unique consumer products. These overall more generalized judgments may not be truly reflective of the respondents' actual behavior toward specific products. For a future study, types of products might be clearly categorized since customers may have different purchase motivations for different products, thus leading to various evaluative perceptions in different products category settings. For example, apparel shopping might elicit a different Internet shopping process in comparison to that of electronics product shopping.

Finally, 98.6% of the sample consisted of females. Male sample size is relatively small, so cautions are needed to generalize the findings to male consumers.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Part I . Please read the question and checkmark and write down the appropriate answer.

1. Have you ever purchased unique products before? Of the following products, please choose the most unique products that you have purchased.

- ☐ Novelty goods (new and innovative products, e.g., new “Mac-book air” laptop)
☐ Handcraft products (handmade personalized products, e.g., Handcrafted jewelry)
☐ Vintage/ antique goods (outmoded or outdated products, e.g., Antique toys)
☐ Premier designers’ brand goods (e.g., Louis Vuitton hand bag)
☐ Etc. _____
☐ No. I have NOT purchased any unique products (Please go to part II)

2. Where do you mostly purchase those items?

- ☐ Retailing shops
☐ Flea markets
☐ Specialty/ upscale department store
☐ Internet
☐ Etc. _____

3. If you purchase unique products over Internet, do you have a preferred online website that you purchase your unique products? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If Yes, please identify your preferred online website.

Why did you use Internet for this purchase?

Part II . Please read each item carefully and circle the response that most closely describes your thoughts.

	Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree				
<i>Need for uniqueness</i>										
I collect unusual products as a way of telling people I’m different.	1	2	3	4	5					
I have sometimes purchased unusual products or brands as a way to create a more distinctive personal image.	1	2	3	4	5					
I often look for one-of-a-kind products or brands so that I create a style that is all my own.	1	2	3	4	5					

	<i>Strongly disagree</i>					<i>Strongly agree</i>				
I often combine possessions in such a way that I create a personal image for myself that can't be duplicated.	1	2	3	4	5					
I often try to find a more interesting version of run-of-the-mill products because I enjoy being original.	1	2	3	4	5					
I actively seek to develop my personal uniqueness by buying special products or brands.	1	2	3	4	5					
Having an eye for products that are interesting and unusual assists me in establishing a distinctive image.	1	2	3	4	5					
The products and brands that I like best are the ones that express my individuality.	1	2	3	4	5					
I often think of the things I buy and do in terms of how I can use them to shape a more unusual personal image.	1	2	3	4	5					
I'm often on the lookout for new products or brands that will add to my personal uniqueness.	1	2	3	4	5					
When dressing, I have sometimes dared to be different in ways that others are likely to disapprove.	1	2	3	4	5					
As far as I'm concerned, when it comes to the products I buy and the situations in which I use them, customs and rules are made to be broken.	1	2	3	4	5					
I often dress unconventionally even when it's likely to offend others.	1	2	3	4	5					
I rarely act in agreement with what others think are the right things to buy.	1	2	3	4	5					
Concern for being out of place doesn't prevent me from wearing what I want to wear.	1	2	3	4	5					
When it comes to the products I buy and the situations in which I use them, I have often broken customs and rules.	1	2	3	4	5					
I have often violated the understood rules of my social group regarding what to buy or own.	1	2	3	4	5					
I have often gone against the understood rules of my social group regarding when and how certain products are properly used.	1	2	3	4	5					

	Strongly disagree				Strongly agree
I enjoy challenging the prevailing taste of people I know by buying something they wouldn't seem to accept.	1	2	3	4	5
If someone hinted that I had been dressing inappropriately for a social situation, I would continue dressing in the same manner.	1	2	3	4	5
When I dress differently, I'm often aware that others think I'm peculiar, but I don't care.	1	2	3	4	5
I avoid products or brands that have already been accepted and purchase by the average consumer.	1	2	3	4	5
When a product I own becomes popular among the general population, I begin using it less.	1	2	3	4	5
I often try to avoid the general population buys products or brands that I know.	1	2	3	4	5
As a rule, I dislike products or brands that are customarily purchased by everyone.	1	2	3	4	5
I give up wearing fashions I've purchased once they become popular among the general public.	1	2	3	4	5
The more commonplace a product or brand is among the general population, the less interested I am in buying it.	1	2	3	4	5
Products don't seem to hold much value for me when everyone purchases them regularly.	1	2	3	4	5
When a style of clothing I own becomes too commonplace, I usually quit wearing it.	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Desire for unique consumer products</i>					
I am very attracted to rare objects.	1	2	3	4	5
I tend to be a fashion leader rather than a fashion follower.	1	2	3	4	5
I am more likely to buy a product if it is scarce.	1	2	3	4	5
I would prefer to have things custom-made than to have them ready-made.	1	2	3	4	5

	Strongly disagree				Strongly agree
I enjoy having things that others do not.	1	2	3	4	5
I rarely pass up the opportunity to order custom features on the products I buy.	1	2	3	4	5
I like to try new products and services before others do.	1	2	3	4	5
I enjoy shopping at stores that carry merchandise that is different and unusual.	1	2	3	4	5

Status aspiration

I would like an important job where people looked up to me.	1	2	3	4	5
I like talking to people who are important.	1	2	3	4	5
I want to be an important person in the community.	1	2	3	4	5
I really admire people who have fought their way to the top	1	2	3	4	5
If I had enough money I would not work.	1	2	3	4	5
Even if I won a great deal of money on the pools I would prefer to continue to work.	1	2	3	4	5

I like to be admired for my achievements.	1	2	3	4	5
I dislike being the centre of attention.	1	2	3	4	5
I like to have people come to me for advice.	1	2	3	4	5
I find satisfaction in having influence over others because of my position in the community.	1	2	3	4	5

Materialism

I admire people who own expensive homes, cars, and clothes.	1	2	3	4	5
Some of the most important achievements in life include acquiring material possessions.	1	2	3	4	5
I don't place much emphasis on the amount of material objects people own as a sign of success. *	1	2	3	4	5
The things I own say a lot about how well I'm doing in life.	1	2	3	4	5

I like to own things that impress people.	1	2	3	4	5
I don't pay much attention to the material objects other people own. *	1	2	3	4	5
I usually buy only the things I need. *	1	2	3	4	5
I try to keep my life simple, as far as possessions are concerned. *	1	2	3	4	5
The things I own aren't all that important to me. *	1	2	3	4	5

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
I enjoy spending money on things that aren't practical.	1	2	3	4	5
Buying things gives me a lot of pleasure.	1	2	3	4	5
I like a lot of luxury in my life.	1	2	3	4	5
I put less emphasis on material things than most people I know. *	1	2	3	4	5
I have all the things I really need to enjoy life.	1	2	3	4	5

My life would be better if I owned certain things I don't have.	1	2	3	4	5
I wouldn't be any happier if I owned nicer things. *	1	2	3	4	5
I'd be happier if I could afford to buy more things.	1	2	3	4	5
It sometimes bothers me quite a bit that I can't afford to buy all the things I'd like.	1	2	3	4	5

Innovativeness

Prior to purchasing a new brand, I prefer to consult a friend that has experience with the new brand. *	1	2	3	4	5
When it comes to deciding whether to purchase a new service, I do not rely on experienced friends or family members for advice.	1	2	3	4	5
I seldom ask a friend about his or her experiences with a new product before I buy the new product.	1	2	3	4	5
I decide to buy new products and services without relying on the opinions of friends who have already tried them.	1	2	3	4	5

When I am interested in purchasing a new service, I do not rely on my friends or close acquaintances that have already use the new service to give me information as to whether I should try it. *	1	2	3	4	5
I do not rely on experienced friends for information about new products prior to making up my mind about whether or not to purchase.	1	2	3	4	5
I often seek out information about new products and brand.	1	2	3	4	5
I like to go to places where I will be exposed to information about new products and brands.	1	2	3	4	5
I like magazines that introduce new brands.	1	2	3	4	5

	Strongly disagree				Strongly agree
I frequently look for new products and services.	1	2	3	4	5
I seek out situations in which I will be exposed to new and different sources of product information.	1	2	3	4	5
I am continually seeking new product experiences.	1	2	3	4	5
When I go shopping, I find myself spending very little time checking out new products and brands.	1	2	3	4	5
I take advantage of the first available opportunity to find out about new and different products.	1	2	3	4	5
I know more about new products before other people do.	1	2	3	4	5

Part III. We would like to know your attitude toward online shopping. Please read each item carefully and circle the response that most closely describes your thoughts.

Using the Internet for shopping would be/ is a _____ idea.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
 Bad Good
 1-----2-----3-----4-----5
 Foolish Wise
 1-----2-----3-----4-----5
 Unpleasant Pleasant

I _____ the idea of using the Internet for shopping.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
 Dislike Like

Part IV. We would like to know your online shopping behavior. Please read the question and checkmark the appropriate answer that best describes you.

How many times **each month** do you browse or purchase from a website, on average?

() ----- () ----- () ----- () ----- () ----- () ----- ()
 Never Rarely Once a month Few times Weekly Every few days Daily
 each month

How many hours per visit to the Internet do you spend browsing or purchasing, on average?

☐ Less than an hour per visit to the Internet ☐ 5-6 hours per visit
☐ 1-2 hours per visit ☐ 7-8 hours per visit
☐ 3-4 hours per visit ☐ 9 hours and more per visit

Estimate how much you spend on material objects purchased via the Internet in the past 12 months:

() ----- () ----- () ----- () ----- () ----- () ----- ()
None \$1-\$200 \$201-\$400 \$401-\$600 \$601-\$800 \$801-\$1000 Over \$1000

Part V. We request general demographic information to help with our analysis.
Please read the question and write and checkmark the appropriate answer that best describes you.

Gender: ☐ Female ☐ Male

Year of birth: _____

Nationality: _____

How do you perceive your family's socio-economic status?

() ----- () ----- () ----- () ----- ()
Lower Lower-middle Middle Upper-middle Upper

How many credit/ debit card(s) do you regularly use (excluding cards for gasoline):

Thank you very much for your participations!

APPENDIX B

IRB HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: Monday, April 07, 2008
IRB Application No HE0817
Proposal Title: Consumer Use of the Internet When Shopping for Unique Products

Reviewed and
Processed as: Exempt

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved Protocol Expires: 4/6/2009

Principal
Investigator(s):

Minjung Nam	Lynne Richards
22 N. Univ. Pl. Apt. #4	431 HES
Stillwater, OK 74075	Stillwater, OK 74078

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

☒ The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Beth McTernan in 219 Cordell North (phone: 405-744-5700, beth.mcternan@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,



Shelia Kennison, Chair
Institutional Review Board

VITA

Minjung Nam

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: CONSUMER USE OF THE INTERNET IN SHOPPING FOR UNIQUE
PRODUCTS

Major Field: Design, Housing and Merchandising

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Date of Degree: December, 2008

Institution: Oklahoma State University

Location: Stillwater, Oklahoma

Title of Study: CONSUMER USE OF THE INTERNET IN SHOPPING FOR UNIQUE PRODUCTS

Pages in Study: 79

Candidate for the Degree of Master of Science

Major Field: Design, Housing and Merchandising

Scope and Method of Study: The purpose of this study was to investigate factors that may be related to the desire for unique consumer products and discover if there is a relationship between the desire for unique consumer products and online shopping. Data collection was conducted during scheduled university classes and each participant was asked to complete a paper questionnaire. A total of 141 usable questionnaires were obtained. The data collected for this study was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Simple, multiple and multivariate regression analysis were employed to test the hypotheses.

Findings and Conclusions: Among the proposed eight hypotheses in the research model seven hypotheses were statistically significant. Need for uniqueness, status aspiration, materialism, and innovativeness were significant predictors of desire for unique consumer products. In addition, the findings showed that desire for unique consumer products was related to frequency of visiting online shopping sites, amount of money spent in online shopping, and attitudes toward online shopping. However, no relationship was found between desire for unique consumer products and the amount of time spent on online shopping.

ADVISER'S APPROVAL: Dr. Lynne Richards
