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Mark E. Slama
Utah State University

Terrell G. Williams
Utah State University

Armen Tashchian
Kennesaw State University, atashchi@kennesaw.edu

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Compliant, Aggressive and Detached Types Differ in Generalized Purchasing Involvement

Mark E. Slama, Utah State University
 Terrell G. Williams, Utah State University
 Armen Tashchian, Kennesaw College

Abstract

Cohen's (1967) method of determining compliant, aggressive and detached personality types is modified and employed in exploring the relationship between personality types and generalized purchasing involvement. The hypothesis that the detached personality type will be less involved in purchasing than compliant or aggressive personality types is tested and supported. Theoretical implications are discussed.

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to determine how compliant, aggressive and detached personality types (Horney 1937, 1939, 1945, 1950; Cohen 1966, 1967) differ with respect to generalized purchasing involvement (Kassarjian 1981; Slama and Tashchian 1985). Generalized purchasing involvement is a concept that refers to individual differences in involvement with purchasing activities that are not restricted to specific purchase situations. Kassarjian (1981) states that it is undeniable that there are differences between individuals which, regardless of the product or situation, make some people more interested, concerned or involved in the consumer decision process. Kassarjian proposes that consumers' involvement with purchasing influences their purchase behavior and that different consumer types (i.e. market segments) can be identified on the basis of their involvement (Table 1). Notice that in Table 1, Kassarjian combines the product and situation effects such that he can concentrate on differences between consumers with respect to their involvement in purchasing. Three types of consumers are proposed in Table 1. These are the high involvement consumer (for example, an upper middle class housewife) the low involvement "detached type" (someone who is detached from purchasing because of career or other more personally relevant interests) and the low involvement "know nothing" consumer (apathetic in all respects).

Given these descriptions of how consumer characteristics may related to purchasing involvement, it seems likely that purchasing involvement would be low for people exhibiting a detached (from other people) personality orientation. Although exceptions could be found, it is likely that the low-involvement "detached type" who is detached from purchasing because of career or other interests may (for the same reason) be detached from people. Horney (1945) suggested that people who are frustrated in their compliant or aggressive tendencies, or both, may well adopt a detached personality. If an individual is uncertain as to how to interact effectively with others and has received negative reinforcement from early social interaction, including contacts with salespeople and other potential purchase influencers, this orientation might be appropriate, and the detachment from people could grow into a detachment from purchasing. The low involvement "know nothing" is described as apathetic about most things and is also likely to be detached from people.

Table 1
Kassarjian's Consumer Trait Theory

Consumer Type	Situational Effect of Product Involvement	
	High	Low
High Involvement	Much of consumer knowledge as it exists today.	Typical low involvement
Low involvement	Minimal interest but narrowly and intensely focused	Oblivious to product issues
Low Involvement ("Know nothing")	Choice determined by availability, packaging, affordability.	Don't know Don't care. No opinion

Source: Harold H. Kassarjian, "Low Involvement -- A Second Look," in Kent B. Monroe, ed., *Advances in Consumer Research*, 8, 1981, 31-34.

A scale has been developed for the measurement of generalized purchasing involvement (Slama and Tashchian 1985). Work with the scale has shown that the scores obtained significantly relate to shopping effort even after taking into account product and situation effects (Slama and Tashchian 1983). The scores also related to demographics such that an involved consumer could be described as a well educated middle income woman with children at home. Recently it has been suggested that purchasing involvement may be a characteristic of generalized communicators of marketplace information called "market mavens" (Feick and Price 1987). Given their desire to communicate with others and their high purchasing involvement, market mavens are unlikely to be detached personality types as described by Horney and Cohen. One research study found that self-identified opinion leaders scored low on detachment and high on compliance (Williams, Mager and Rogers 1986).

The CAD personality measurement instrument was introduced in the late 1960's as a tool specifically designed to investigate personality in a consumer behavior context (Cohen 1966, 1967). The CAD is based on the idea that people can be categorized according to their predominant modes of response to other persons. Three personality types are suggested in the paradigm: (1) Compliant--those who move toward people; (2) Aggressive--those who move against people; and (3) Detached--those who move away from others. The three personality types are described in more detail in Table 2.

Table 2
Components of the CAD

COMPLIANT

- Attributes: Good, sympathetic, loving, unselfish, humble, oversensitive to others' needs, overgrateful, overconsiderate, apologetic, self critical, seeks problem solutions in others, manipulates others through weakness, dependance, reliance on others.
- Desires: To be loved, wanted, appreciated, needed, helped, guided, protected, to be part of the activities of others.
- Dislikes: Egotism, aggression, conflict, assertiveness, power seeking.

AGGRESSIVE

- Attributes: Strength, power, unemotional realism, manipulates others by gaining power over them, cynical, exhibitionistic.
- Desires: To excel, achieve success, prestige, admiration, to be a superior strategist, to control emotions and fears.

DETACHED

- Attributes: Nonconforming, emotionally distant from others, distrustful.
- Values: Freedom from obligations, being unique, independence, reasoning, self sufficiency, intelligence.
- Dislikes: Being influenced by others, sharing experiences, conformity, showing feelings.

Based on: Joel Cohen, "An Interpersonal Orientation to the Study of Consumer Behavior," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 4, (August 1967), 270-278.

In the current research it is hypothesized that detached personality types will score lower on purchasing involvement than either compliant or aggressive personality types. Cohen's CAD scale is used for operationalizing personality and Slama and Tashchian's purchasing involvement scale is employed to measure involvement.

Methods and Results

A questionnaire containing the Slama and Tashchian (1985) purchasing involvement scale and Cohen's (1967) CAD scale was administered to undergraduate marketing students at a major western university. Sample items from both scales are shown in Table 3. Two hundred eighty-four respondents, 198 males and 86 females, satisfactorily completed the instrument.

The involvement scale developed by Slama and Tashchian contains thirty-three items related to issues like interest in shopping, relevance of purchase information, bargain consciousness, time invested in shopping, and the importance of searching out and weighing purchase alternatives. The scale items are measured on six point Likert-type scales without a "no opinion" midpoint. The Slama and Tashchian (1985) scale is used rather than the Zaichkowsky (1985) or

Table 3
Sample Items from the Purchasing Involvement and CAD Scales

*The Purchasing Involvement Scale**

- On most purchase decisions the choice I make is of little importance.
- I have little or no interest in shopping.
- I often take advantage of coupon offers in the newspapers.
- Being a smart shopper is worth the extra time it takes.
- I am not really committed to getting the most for my money.

*CAD Scale**

Compliant

- Giving comfort to those in need of friends is:
The knowledge that most people would be fond of me at all times would be:
To feel that I like everyone I know would be:

Aggressive

- To refuse to give in to others in an argument seems:
Using pull to get ahead would be:
To work under tension would be:

Detached

- Being free of emotional ties with others is:
Enjoying a good movie by myself is:
For me to pay little attention to what others think of me seems:

*The purchasing involvement scale responses were recorded on six point Likert type scales. The CAD items were measured using six point scales anchored by extremely desirable and extremely undesirable.

Laurent and Kapferer (1985) scales because it measures generalized purchasing involvement as discussed by Kassarian (1981) rather than product involvement which the other two scales measure. The CAD scale developed by Cohen is composed of thirty-five items, ten each for the compliant and detached dimensions and fifteen for the aggressive dimension measured on six point semantic differential scales. It is hypothesized that compliant personality types will score lower on involvement than other personality types.

While the Slama and Tashchian scale has recently been favorably assessed in terms of reliability and validity, there is some question as to the validity of the CAD scale. Cohen put considerable effort into testing the reliability and validity of the CAD with generally positive results (1967). However, subsequent assessments of the reliability and validity of the instrument have yielded mixed results (Heeler and Ray 1972; Noerager 1979; Tyagi 1983). The error introduced by this imperfect measure is likely to attenuate the expected relationship between purchasing involvement and detachment and is a limitation of the research. In defense of the CAD it should be noted that each personality type (compliant, aggressive and detached) is supposed to possess numerous traits and not represent merely a unidimensional construct, therefore, most previous analyses of the instrument which focus on factorial structure or internal consistency are not as

relevant as would be an assessment of the CAD's predictive validity. The degree to which detached personality type individuals score lower on involvement than other members of the sample will serve as a partial validation of the CAD scale as well as an interesting substantive finding.

When Cohen applied the CAD measure, he treated the three personality dimensions as independent of one another and considered a person to be high on a particular dimension if the summated score on the test items was above the median of all respondents. This means that a given person could score high on none, one, two or all three of the scale dimensions. Subsequent research on the CAD has generally followed the same procedure. Consistent with Cohen's criterion, subjects in this study were originally rated high on a given dimension if they scored above the median for all respondents and low if their score on the scale fell below the median. On this basis, only about one third of the respondents were dominant on a single dimension and eighty-four of the 284 respondents (30%) scored high or low on all three dimensions.

In his discussion of method, Cohen (1967) noted that the best way for determining a respondent's dominant personality orientation would be to use the set of three scores taken together to classify individuals. Therefore, we reanalyzed the data taking that approach. Rather than considering a person high on a trait when their score was above the median for that trait as Cohen did, the top quartile for all three traits were used in classifying each respondent in this study. Respondents were classified as high on a given trait if their score on that trait was in the top quartile and their scores for the other two traits were below the top quartiles for scores on those traits. Thus, each personality type included for analysis was of a "pure" CAD orientation, scoring high in one trait and low in the other two. This reduced the sample size to 124, 84 males and 40 females, who were high on only one personality dimension. The results of this grouping along with the mean involvement scale score for each group is shown in Table 4.

The mean involvement values across the three "pure" personality types support the hypothesis that detached persons ($x = 122.4$) are less involved in purchasing than compliant ($x = 132.6$) or aggressive ($x = 133.2$) people ($F = 4.37, p = .02$). Detached female respondents ($x = 117.0$) were significantly lower ($p = .01$) in involvement than either compliant ($x = 137.1$) or aggressive ($x = 144.9$) females. Detached male respondents ($x = 125.7$) were lower in involvement than aggressive ($x = 130.4$) or compliant ($x = 129.5$) males, but the difference was not statistically significant.

Discussion

The results of this study support Kassarian's theory that consumer characteristics (personality types in this case) are related to generalized purchasing involvement. The attainment of the expected results also helps to validate the purchasing involvement scale, although it is clear that the CAD scale requires further development and that its lack of demonstrated reliability and validity is a limitation of the generalizability of these substantive findings.

The results encourage an examination of how low involvement purchasers behave in the marketplace. Do they exhibit the type of shopping behavior Kassarian associated with the low involvement "detached" type and the low involvement "know nothing"? For example, low involvement "detached" consumers would be expected to exhibit "narrowly and intensely focused" effort in a high involvement purchase situation. Low involvement "know nothings" would be expected to focus on factors such as packaging and affordability; in a high involvement purchase situation. Both types of low involvement consumers are expected to behave in an essentially random fashion for low involvement purchase situations.

In addition, the findings would encourage work on how the generalized purchasing involvement variable relates to other consumer behavior variables. For example, how does generalized purchasing involvement affect retail outlet selection? Does the importance of store image attributes vary with generalized purchasing involvement? On the product level, how do the type of evaluative criteria and how they are used vary with the consumer's level of purchasing involvement? Furthermore, how does generalized purchasing involvement relate to the "market maven" (Feick and Price 1987) concept? The answers to these and other questions will lead to a better understanding of generalized purchasing involvement as a variable influencing consumer behavior.

A broader issue concerns the relationship between generalized purchasing involvement and other forms of involvement currently appearing in the consumer behavior literature. Zaichkowsky (1986) has identified involvement research streams associated with products, advertisements and purchase decisions. Richins and Bloch (1986) have demonstrated the distinction between enduring product involvement and situational product involvement. At the 1986 ACR conference sessions were held to discuss "deep involvement." How do all of these involvements relate to each other?

Table 4
Involvement Scale Scores by Dominant CAD Personality Type

Personality Type	Mean Involvement Score					
	Males ^a		Females ^b		Total Sample ^c	
	n	Score	n	Score	n	Score
Compliant	26	129.46	18	137.11	44	132.59
Aggressive	38	130.37	10	144.00	48	133.21
Detached	<u>20</u>	<u>125.70</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>117.00</u>	<u>32</u>	<u>122.44</u>
	84	128.98	40	132.80	124	130.21

^a $F = .65, p = .53$

^b $F = 5.62, p < .01$

^c $F = 4.37, p < .02$

Recognizing Rothschild's (1984) concerns over premature theorizing in the involvement area it is modestly suggested that all of these involvements are propensities for interaction between stimuli and people which vary in focus, intensity and duration. Figure 1 illustrates how current involvement topics could be described in three dimensional space.

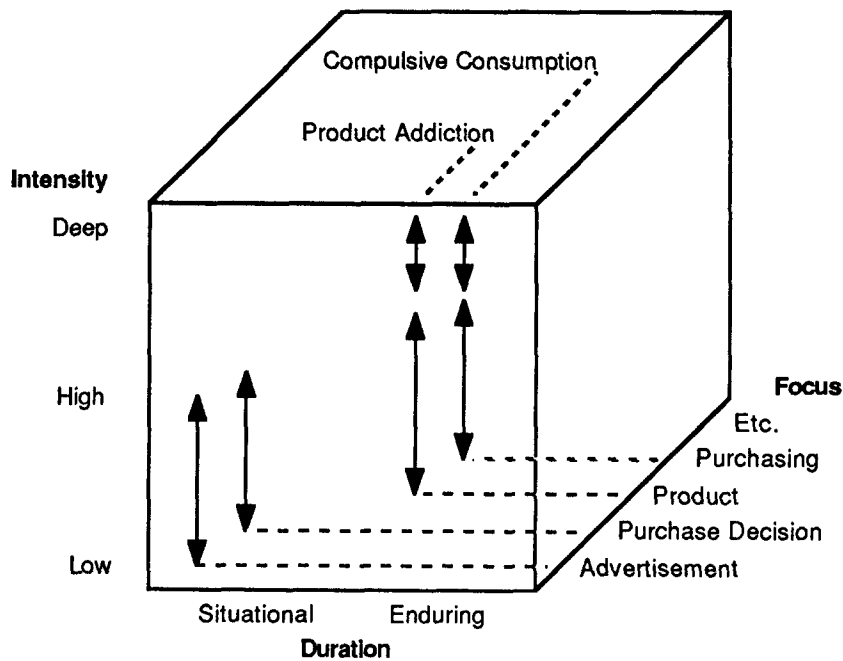
Generalized purchasing involvement, as studied here, is shown as a double ended arrow on the right side of Figure 1. Its focus is purchasing (across products and situations). Its duration is enduring and its intensity varies from low to high. Also focused on purchasing is compulsive consumption (Faber, O'Guinn and Krych 1987) which appears above generalized purchasing involvement in Figure 1. It is enduring, but, differs from generalized purchasing involvement by having a very "deep" intensity.

Enduring product involvement (Bloch 1986; Richins and Bloch 1986) is shown next to generalized purchasing involvement. It is focused on a product and is enduring. Its intensity varies from low to high. At very deep intensities enduring product involvement could take on the characteristics of an obsession or addiction (Bloch 1986). This is shown as "product addiction" above enduring product involvement in Figure 1.

To the left of enduring product involvement in Figure 1 is purchase decision involvement which is often referred to as situational product involvement (Kapferer and Laurent 1986; Richins and Bloch 1986). It is focused on a purchase decision, short in duration and can vary from low to high in intensity. Advertisement involvement is also short in duration and varies from low to high intensity, but, is focused on an advertisement rather than a purchase decision.

It is apparent from Figure 1 that a multitude of involvement relationships varying in focus, intensity and duration could be studied in the consumer behavior context. In this sense involvement may be similar to attitudes in that the level of specificity in measuring individual differences in the intensity involvement relationships should be a function of the type of behavior the researcher is interested in predicting. For example, search behavior for a specific purchase decision might be best predicted by individual differences in the intensity of purchase decision involvement. The intensity of purchase decision involvement would be measured by specifying the exact product and situation (gift, personal, special occasion etc.) and then measuring the salience of that purchase situation to the individual. The Zaichkowsky (1985) involvement scale can be

Figure 1
Consumer Involvement Parameters of Focus, Intensity and Duration:
Used to Describe Current Involvement Types



Range of intensity often measured by involvement scales



Indicates focus or description of the involvement relationship

* Purchase decision involvement is often discussed as situational product involvement.

adapted to this purpose. The risk components of the Laurent and Kapferer (1985) scale also tend to capture this type of purchase specific involvement.

If, however, the researcher is interested in identifying opinion leaders or innovators for a particular product category the appropriate type of involvement would be enduring product involvement (Bloch 1986). Enduring product involvement has a more general impact on product related behaviors than purchase decision involvement. Its intensity can be measured using the sign, interest and pleasure components of the Laurent and Kapferer scale or by using the Zaichkowsky scale. Finally, if the researcher were interested in general sensitivity to retail promotion or shopping area selection then the generalized purchasing involvement scale created by Slama and Tashchian (1985) would be appropriate.

The findings of this study focus on generalized purchasing involvement. To date generalized purchasing involvement has been shown to correlate with search effort (Slama and Tashchian 1983), to relate predictably to demographic variables (Slama and Tashchian 1985) to correlate significantly with Rokeach values (Williams, Parent and Rogers 1987) and to be related to personality type in the current research. These findings along with the work done on compulsive consumption (Faber, O'Guinn and Krych 1987) and market mavens (Feick and Price 1987) suggest that generalized purchasing involvement may be a human trait of importance to consumer research and *not* just a measurement artifact.

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