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# Introducing the Super Consumer

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## ABSTRACT

Who are our best consumers? One can imagine all sorts of businesses asking this question on a regular basis. The 80/20 rule, the heavy half, the high frequency and high spending consumers are traditionally the backbone of many successful brands or companies. Relationship marketing, a key element of modern marketing strategy, is the outgrowth of the interest in heavy users because of their importance in terms of revenue and potential word-of-mouth. However, who are these best consumers?

The present study is motivated by a body of research on a constellation of consumer characteristics that reflect a unique consumption pattern we have come to think of as the “super consumer.” The theoretical background for the study first presents the three criteria variables used to segment the sample: materialism, status consumption, and brand engagement in self-concept. We chose these three variables as the basis for the super consumer concept because they are consistently correlated across studies and conceptually are highly related. The study uses these three variables to classify consumers into two groups, potential heavy or “super consumers” and “regular” consumers and then contrasts these two types on gender, age, shopping, spending, and market mavenism. The goal is to begin to develop a behavioral, psychological, and demographic profile of the super consumer segment. Not only does this concept tie together several disparate concepts in consumer psychology, but it also has potential managerial application in that identifying these consumers could lead to greater profitability and long-term relationships with them.

The data came from an online survey of 351 consumers. A cluster analysis using materialism, status consumption, and brand engagement in self-concept as criteria produced a two-cluster solution with 136 super consumers and 215 regular consumers. Comparing mean scores between these two groups of on measures of marketplace behavior: market mavenism, shopping frequency, amount of spending, age, and gender, showed that the super consumers were significantly more likely to be market mavens, to shop more frequently, and to spend more than the other consumers were. The super consumers were younger in age as well, but there were no gender differences between the two groups.

From a theoretical perspective, describing the super consumer has the potential to contribute expanded understanding of how customers are differently motivated. A nuanced and quantitatively based description of the motivational underpinnings of important groups of consumers could be the basis for new models of consumer behavior. Currently, the individual

based inputs to the consumer decision making process are atomistic and measured by an ever expanding list of scales. Grouping those inputs should clarify their importance and make them more useful in understanding and predicting the decision process.

Marketers, especially those of status-conferring or self-concept related brands, could use this concept and the profile variables to identify buyers highly motivated to purchase their brands and emphasize these themes to them in marketing promotions. They could develop and/or market new products targeted to this segment, and based on their insights into the motivations driving these consumers, they could build long term relationships with them. The enhanced spending and word-of-mouth characterizing super consumers should repay any investment in targeting them.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHORS**

Leisa R. Flynn earned her Ph.D. at the University of Alabama. She taught for 20 years at Florida State University before moving in 2010 to Southern Miss where she is professor of marketing.

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