The Desire for Unique Consumer Products: A New Individual Differences Scale

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In this article we examine individual differences in the desire for unique consumer products. We identify several of the antecedents and consequences of this variable and argue that a new scale to measure it is needed. Then we report the results of our efforts to develop and validate such a scale. The 8-item scale that emerged from these efforts is shown to be unidimensional, to have a factor structure that generalizes across student and nonstudent samples, and to have acceptable internal and test-retest reliabilities. The scale's validity is attested to by its theoretically intelligible relationships with other personality measures and by its ability to differentiate between the patrons of an artistic theater and a second-run theater. Finally, we discuss the potential uses of the scale in both basic and applied marketing research.

I will not choose what many men desire,
Because I will not jump with common spirits
And rank me with the barbarous multitude.

(The Merchant of Venice, Act 2, Sc. 9, *1.* 25)

Like the Prince of Aragon who speaks these words in Shakespeare's play, many consumers make choices and engage in behaviors designed to differentiate themselves from others. The needs for personal uniqueness (Snyder & Fromkin, 1980) and social status (Blumberg, 1974) lead consumers to desire and seek consumer goods, services, and experiences that few others possess. This tendency to seek unique consumer products is of immense practical importance in marketing. In fact, marketers frequently appeal to consumers' desires for unique products through advertising messages like the following:

> "Although the McCooey brothers and their sister have always been reminded of their striking similarities, it is their differences they have always insisted on. It's no wonder then that each owns a different Waterman pen" (advertisement in *Newsweek).*

> "At 650 dollars a bottle, not many people have the opportunity to experience the exceedingly rare The Glenlivet's 21-year-old single malt Scotch" (advertisement in *Fortune).*

> "This beautiful Baccarat crystal designed and created exclusively for Garrard, the Crown Jewellers of England…So, what could come only from us, really could belong only to you" (advertisement in *Connoisseur).*

Although the theme of these ads is uniqueness, the use of that theme is not unique to these examples. One study of 2000 ads randomly sampled from best-selling magazines in each decade from 1900 to 1980 found that uniqueness appeals were used as a central theme in 10% of the ads and were used as a subordinate theme in 23% of the ads (Pollay, 1984). Of course, advertising is not the only means that marketers use to appeal to uniqueness motives. As illustrated in the advertising messages above, product differentiation, prestige pricing, and exclusive distribution are also components of marketers' appeals to consumers' desires for unique products.

In this article we examine individual differences in the desire for consumer goods, services, and experiences that few others possess. First, we introduce this goal-oriented individual difference variable, identify some of its antecedents and consequences, and argue that a new scale to measure it is needed. Second, we report the results of our efforts to develop and validate such a scale. This section describes the generation and selection of scale items, the generalizability of the scale's factor structure, the reliability of the scale, the personality correlates of the scale, and a behavioral correlate of the scale. Finally, we discuss the potential uses of the scale in both basic and applied marketing research.

The Desire for Unique Consumer Products

Consumers differ in the extent to which they hold as a personal goal the acquisition and possession of consumer goods, services, and experiences that few others possess (Harris & Lynn, 1996). We label this goal-oriented, individual differences variable the desire for unique consumer products (DUCP). Although developing a complete nomological network explicating the desire for unique consumer products is beyond the scope of this article some consideration of its antecedents and consequences is necessary to understand and evaluate our efforts to develop and validate a measure of this variable. Accordingly, several antecedents and consequences of the desire for unique consumer products are briefly discussed below, along with our reasons for believing that a scale measuring this variable is needed.

Antecedents

The desire for unique consumer products is a goal-oriented state whose strength, or intensity, varies across individuals. Individual differences in the intensity of this desire have many causes. Three of these causes are individual differences in the need for uniqueness (Snyder & Fromkin, 1980), in status aspiration (Cassidy & Lynn, 1989), and in materialism (Belk, 1985). Each is discussed below.

Need for Uniqueness. According to social theorists, people have a need for uniqueness—they find high levels of similarity to others unpleasant and seek to make themselves moderately different

from others (Fromkin, 1968, 1970, 1972; Snyder & Fromkin, 1980). This motivation varies across individuals as well as situations (Snyder & Fromkin, 1977, 1980). People with stronger needs for uniqueness are more sensitive to similarity information and desire higher levels of dissimilarity to others (Snyder, 1992). Because possessions are often extensions of the self (Belk, 1988; James, 1890), one way that people satisfy their needs for uniqueness is by acquiring and possessing unique consumer products (Brock, 1968; Fromkin, 1970; Snyder & Fromkin, 1980; Snyder, 1992). Indeed, research suggests that the need for uniqueness is a major source of the desire for such products (Lynn, 1991).

Status Aspiration. Status aspiration is an individual difference variable reflecting the desire for dominance and leadership in social hierarchies (Cassidy & Lynn, 1989). Many social theorists have noted that people often rely upon the possession and display of consumer products to obtain and communicate social status (e.g., Dawson & Cavell, 1986; Form & Stone, 1957; Goffman, 1951; Veblen, 1899/1965). Moreover, in order to be an effective status symbol, a product must be scarce or unique (Belk, 1980; Blumberg, 1974; Rae, 1905). Thus, status aspiration is likely to produce a desire for unique consumer products.

Materialism. Materialism is a personality trait reflecting the importance a person places on material possessions (Belk, 1985). Among other things, materialistic people are more acquisitive and possessive than are less materialistic people (Belk, 1985; Richins & Dawson, 1992). Thus, it seems probable that materialistic people will be more inclined than others to pin*sue personal uniqueness and social status through the acquisition and possession of unique consumer products.

Consequences

In general, the desire for unique consumer products will increase consumers' efforts to acquire and possess goods, services, and experiences that few others possess. More specific manifestations of this desire include an increased tendency to acquire and use products that are scarce, innovative, customized, and/or outmoded as well as an increased tendency to shop at small, unique retail outlets. These manifestations of the desire for unique consumer products are discussed in the paragraphs that follow.

Possession of Scarce Products. Fewer people can possess scarce products than can possess nonscarce ones. Thus, one way in which consumers can satisfy their desires for unique consumer products is by owing rare or hard-to-obtain items (Brock, 1968; Snyder & Fromkin, 1980). Consistent with this possibility, several researchers have found that the preference for scarce products over nonscarce ones is stronger the greater people's uniqueness motivations (Fromkin, 1970; Lynn, 1987).

Although other studies have failed to replicate this finding, a meta-analysis of the literature found that the effect remained statistically significant when combined across all the relevant studies (Lynn, 1991).

Consumer Innovativeness. New products rarely gain immediate and widespread acceptance. Typically, new products are first adopted by a relatively small group of consumer innovators who then influence later adopters (Robertson, 1971; Rogers, 1983). Thus, adopting new products before others do is one way to satisfy the desire for unique consumer products (Burns & Krampf, 1992; Fromkin, 1971). Consistent with this hypothesis, Burns (1987; 1990) found that consumers with strong uniqueness motives displayed a greater awareness of, interest in, and/or willingness to consider adopting new products than did consumers with weaker uniqueness motives. In addition, Harris and Lynn (1996) found a positive relationship between the self-attributed need for uniqueness and the tendency to be a consumer innovator.

Customization of Products. Customization makes a product different from the standard, uncustomized product that most people get. Thus, the desire for unique consumer products may manifest itself in a tendency to customize products. Supporting this possibility, Harris and Lynn (1996) found that the preference for customized products was positively related to the strength of consumers' self-attributed uniqueness motives and to a latent variable reflecting the tendency to pursue uniqueness through consumption.

Outmoded Products. Technology and fashions change over time, so many popular consumer products become outdated or outmoded and are eventually discarded by most consumers. Continuing to use these outmoded products represents another means whereby consumers can satisfy their desires for unique consumer goods. Consistent with this reasoning, Darley & Lim (1993) found that consumers patronize thrift stores, which carry preowned merchandise discarded by others, in part because these stores offer "the best selection of unique merchandise" (p. 19).

Shopping Venue. Retail outlets differ in popularity and in the uniqueness of their merchandise. Thus, the desire for unique consumer products may influence consumer's choices of shopping venue. Consistent with this possibility, ethnographic research suggests that consumers shop at swap meets and flea markets partly because the atmosphere and selection are more personal and unique than in traditional stores (Belk, Sherry, & Wallendorf, 1988; Sherry, 1990). Additionally, quantitative research has found that consumers who see themselves as different and standing out in a crowd regarding fashion shopped at specialty and upscale department stores more, and at mass merchandisers less, than did other consumer segments (Gutman & Mills, 1982; also see Darley & Lim, 1993).

Need for a New Scale

Given the widespread use of uniqueness appeals in marketing practice and the myriad manifestations of consumers' desires for unique products, a measure of the desire for unique consumer products would prove useful in basic and applied marketing research. One measure of uniqueness motivation already exists in the Snyder and Fromkin (1977) need-for-uniqueness scale. However, there are several problems with the use of the Snyder and Fromkin scale in consumer research. These problems stem from the fact that the Snyder and Fromkin scale is multidimensional, places an undue emphasis on socially risky displays of uniqueness, and contains no items involving reactions to consumer products. Each of these problems are discussed in greater detail below.

The first problem with the Snyder and Fromkin (1977) scale is its multidimensionality. Items on the need-for-uniqueness scale load on three factors, which Snyder and Fromkin label: (a) a lack of concern for the reactions of others, (b) a desire to not always follow rules, and (c) a willingness to publicly defend one's beliefs. This multidimensionality may make overall scores on the scale psychologically ambiguous and the relationships between need-for-uniqueness scores and other variables difficult to interpret (see Bagozzi & Heatherton, 1994; Briggs & Cheek, 1986; Gerbing & Anderson, 1988).

A second problem with the Snyder and Fromkin (1977) scale is that it places too heavy an emphasis on public and socially risky displays of uniqueness (see factor labels above). Disregarding others' reactions, breaking rules, and publicly disagree with others are ways of being unique, but they carry a risk of angering and alienating others. People can also pursue uniqueness through more private and/or socially acceptable behaviors, such as by acquiring scarce and nonconspicuous possessions. Indeed, Snyder and Fromkin (1980) argue that people prefer socially acceptable ways of being unique. Thus, their scale is biased in that its items undersample the most common manifestations of uniqueness seeking—those that are inconspicuous and/or socially acceptable.

A final problem with using Snyder and Fromkin's (1977) scale in consumer research is that none of its items involve reactions to consumer goods and services. This omission reduces the sensitivity of the scale as a predictor of consumer behavior. It also limits the use of the scale to service as an independent variable in consumer research. In contrast, a scale measuring individual differences in the desire for unique consumer products would be a more sensitive predictor of consumer behavior and could also be used as dependent measure in research seeking to explain this important consumer disposition. In response to this deficiency of the Snyder and Fromkin scale, and echoing Kassarjian's (1971) injunction to develop marketing-oriented personality scales, Snyder (1992) and Sirgy (1993) have

called for the development of a new scale that is specifically designed to measure the desire for unique consumer products (DUCP). The paragraphs below chronicle our attempt to answer that call.

Scale Development

Item Generation and Selection

The goal of this research was to produce a short, easy-to-administer instrument that reliably and validly measures individual differences in the desire for unique consumer products (DUCP). Because we were interested in a simple, predictive measure of this one construct and not in the unique properties of its different manifestations, we sought to develop a unidimensional scale in which items reflecting various manifestations of the construct were summed into a single score. This corresponds to what Bagozzi and Heatherton (1994) call the total aggregation model of personality construct measurement.

We began by generating 33 clearly worded, nonredundant items that prima facie appeared to tap a broad array of behaviors and dispositions hypothesized to be related to the desire for unique consumer products. Collectively, these items included each of the consumer behaviors discussed in the previous section, as well as several other potentially related characteristics (see Table 1). Although this pool of items is relatively small, it exceeds Nunnall3r's (1979) recommended minimum number of items necessary for using factor analysis to construct a scale with one dimension.

We then administered questionnaires containing these items to a convenience sample of 240 business students who indicated how strongly they agreed with each item by using a 5-point bipolar scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." A principal-components factor analysis was then conducted on these data. If the items all measured a common trait, then they should have all loaded on a common factor. In fact, 26 of the 33 items loaded significantly in the expected direction on the first unrotated factor, which reflected the greatest source of common variance underlying the data (eigenvalue = 4.50). Because the validity of the total aggregation model of measurement we employed depends on the extent to which items share common variance (Bagozzi & Heatherton, 1994), and because we wanted to keep the scale fairly short and easy to administer, only the eight items that loaded most highly on the first unrotated factor were retained (see Table 1). These eight items all had factor loadings of 0.50 or better, and they represented several different manifestations of the desire for unique consumer products. A principle-components factor analysis of these eight items produced only one factor with an eigenvalue greater than 1 (eigenvalue = 3.18). Moreover, a maximum-likelihood confirmatory factor analysis on these eight items indicated that a single factor model fit the data well

(GFI = 0.97; CFI = 0.95; RMSEA = 0.058), despite a statistically significant chi-square (X^2[20] = 36.33, p > .02). The final, 8-item scale had a mean of 24.8 and a standard deviation of 5.26 in this sample.

Generalizability of the Factor Structure

We assessed the consistency and generalizability of the 8-item scale's factor structure by administering it to a convenience sample of 106 working adults (airline employees) and subjecting the data to several analyses. Analyses indicated that the DUCP scale had a mean of 26.2 and a standard deviation of 5.86 in this sample, and that DUCP scores were not related to the respondent's age (r = 0.10, n = 98, ns) or sex (t = 0.01, df= 104, ns). More importantly, a principle-components factor analysis of these data produced only one factor whose eigenvalue exceeded 1 (eigenvalue = 3.13), and a maximum-likelihood confirmatory factor analysis indicated that a single-factor model fit the data well (GFI = 0.94; CFI = 0.97; RMSEA = 0.046; X^2 [20] = 24.41, p > .22).

A test for equality of variance-co variance matrices across the original student sample and the airline employee sample produced a significant chi-square (X^2 [360] = 63.39, *p* > .004). Although the fit indices for this model were fairly good (GFI = 0.92, CFI = 0.95, RMSEA = 0.05), the highly significant chi-square prompted us to test additional confirmatory factor analysis models across the two samples. In all of these models, the metric for the factor was determined by setting the factor loading of a single observed variable to a value of 1. Model 1 held the factor pattern constant across both samples, but allowed the factor loadings, the factor variance, and the error variances to differ. This model fit the data very well (GFI = 0.94, CFI = 0.96, RMSEA = 0.04), despite a significant chi-square (X^2 [40] = 60.56, p < .02). Model 2 held the factor loadings constant across the two samples (X^2 [47] = 70.39, p < .02). Subtracting Model l's chi-square from that of Model 2 indicated that the factor loadings were not significantly different for the two samples (difference X^2 [7] = 9.83, p > .10). Model 3 held the factor loadings and the factor variance constant across the two samples (X^2 [48] = 71.58, p < .02). Subtracting Model 2's chi-square from that of Model 3 indicated that the factor variance was not significantly different for the two samples (difference X^2 [1] = 1.19, p > .25). Finally, Model 4 held the factor loadings, factor variance, and error variances constant across the two samples (X^2 [56] = 101.95, p < .0002). Subtracting Model 3's chi-square from that of Model 4 indicated that the error variances were significantly different for the two samples (difference X^2 [8] = 30.37, p <.005). In summary, these analyses indicated that the factor loadings and factor variance (but not the error variances) of the DUCP scale generalized across our student and nonstudent samples.

Table 1. Scale Items and Factor Loadings

Item		Loading
25.	I am very attracted to rare objects.**	0.67
27.	I tend to be a fashion leader rather than a fashion follower.**	0.62
30.	I am more likely to buy a product if it is scarce.**	0.62
33.	I would prefer to have things custom-made than to have them ready-made.**	0.61
7.	I enjoy having things that others do not.**	0.59
6.	I rarely pass up the opportunity to order custom features on the products I buy.**	0.59
29.	I like to try new products and services before others do.**	0.57
5.	I enjoy shopping at stores that carry merchandise which is different and unusual.**	0.52
1.	I dislike owning products that everyone else has.	0.46
13.	I have always wanted to design my own house.	0.41
20.	When on vacation, I would rather explore new places on my own than take a guided tour with others.	0.39
15.	I feel no need to personalize the products I buy.*	−0.36
4.	Limited editions hold no special appeal for me.*	−0.33
3.	Often, I choose less popular brands of products in order to be different.	0.33
14.	I often put patches and/or stickers on my possessions to make them reflect who I am.	0.32
18.	Some of my favorite entertainers (i.e., musicians, actors, etc.) are people who have not yet made it to the big time.	0.32
22.	I often see new products and innovations that I wish I could have.	0.29
31.	The idea of having my initials monogrammed on some of my clothes appeals to me.	0.26
32.	New products hold little appeal for me until they have been tested in the market place.*	−0.26
28.	I enjoy using old, out-of-date products that few others still use.	0.24
8.	My dream home would be located in some planned community.*	−0.24
26.	I prefer shopping at antique shops and flea markets to shopping at department stores and malls.	0.20
17.	The idea of belonging to an exclusive country club appeals to me.	0.19
9.	When buying large ticket items, I usually go with the best selling brands and models.*	0.17
11.	I would not mind wearing a uniform to work.*	−0.17
24.	I have always wanted a pen and pencil set with my name engraved on them.	0.16
16.	I think I would enjoy a group vacation as long as I liked the other people in the group.*	0.15
23.	I tend to buy the most popular brands of grocery store products.*	0.13
10.	I tend to prefer local brands of products to national brands.	0.11
19.	I often continue to wear clothes long after they are out of fashion.	−0.07
2.	I feel uncomfortable owning things that others do not have.*	−0.07
12.	I dislike going to large concerts and/or sporting events where I would be part of a large crowd.	0.04
21.	I would never go out to eat at a nice restaurant by myself.*	0.00

Note. Factor loadings greater than 0.10 are significantly different from zero at the 0.05 level.
*Indicates a reversed item.
**Indicates an item retained in the final DUCP scale.

Reliability

The reliability of the scale was assessed with the use of internal-consistency and test-retest methods. Internal consistency was estimated with the use of Cronbach's coefficient alpha. The alpha

values for both the student and nonstudent samples described above were 0.78. To estimate test-retest reliability, a new sample of 50 business students completed the scale on two occasions, 2 weeks apart. The correlation between the two sets of scores was 0.85. Thus, the DUCP scale displays adequate internal and test-retest reliability.

Personality Correlates of DUCP

The validity of the DUCP scale was assessed by determining its relationships with theoretically related personality scales. With business and psychology students used as subjects, data were collected in several studies and collapsed across studies for analysis. In this combined sample *(n* = 337), the DUCP scale had a mean of 26.2, a standard deviation of 6.44, and a coefficient alpha of 0.86. The results of the correlational analyses are discussed briefly in the following paragraphs, and are summarized in Table 2.

Need for Uniqueness. Seeking unusual consumer products is one means of being unique, so the desire for unique consumer products should be related to Snyder and Fromkin's (1977) measure of the general need for uniqueness. However, this relationship should be modest, because many people pursue uniqueness through means other than consumption, and because the Snyder and Fromkin scale is biased toward public displays of uniqueness. Consistent with this reasoning, the DUCP scale correlated 0.33 *(n* = 331; *p* < .0001) with the Snyder and Fromkin (1977) need-for-uniqueness scale.

Table 2. Various Personality Scales, Their Coefficient Alphas, and Their Correlations with the DUCP Scale.

Personality Scale	Coefficient Alpha	Sample Size	Correlation with the DUCP Scale
Status aspiration (Cassidy & Lynn, 1989)	0.72	241	0.44*
Need for uniqueness (Snyder & Fromkin, 1977)	0.64	331	0.33*
Acquisitiveness (Cassidy & Lynn, 1989)	0.47	71	0.33*
Power–prestige (Yamauchi & Templer, 1982)	0.88	239	0.33*
Competitiveness (Cassidy & Lynn, 1989)	0.74	238	0.29*
Informational influence (Bearden, Netemeyer, & Teel, 1989)	0.71	336	0.25*
Normative influence (Bearden, Netemeyer, & Teel, 1989)	0.89	337	0.18*
Possessiveness (Belk, 1985)	0.36	239	0.17*
Envy (Belk, 1985)	0.20	239	0.10
Nongenerosity (Belk, 1985)	0.31	240	−0.04
Social desirability (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960)	0.95	256	0.00

Note. The sample sizes for the correlations are given. These sample sizes vary because not all personality scales were given to all participants and because some participants failed to complete all the scales they were given. Sample sizes for the coefficient alphas were generally 1 or 2 people larger than those for the correlations because a few respondents failed to complete the DUCP scale.

*Significant at the 0.01 level.

Social Status. Products are often used as symbols of status and success, but only unique products can serve as effective status symbols. Thus, highly competitive and status-oriented people should have stronger desires for unique consumer products than do less competitive and status-oriented people. Consistent with this possibility, the DUCP scale correlated 0.29 *(n* = 238; *p* < .0001) with the Cassidy and Lynn (1989) competitiveness scale, 0.44 *(n = 241; p* < .0001) with the Cassidy and Lynn (1989) status-aspiration scale, and 0.33 *(n* = 239; *p* < .0001) with the Yamauchi and Templer (1982) power-prestige scale.

Materialism. People who strongly desire unique consumer products should be more materialistic, that is, more acquisitive and possessive, than people whose desire for these products is less intense. Consistent with this h5^othesis, the DUCP scale correlated 0.33 *(n* = 71; *p* < .0001) with the Cassidy and Lynn (1989) acquisitiveness scale, and 0.17 *(n* = 239; *p* < .01) with Belk's (1985) measure of possessiveness. DUCP scores did not correlate with Belk's (1985) measures of envy *(r* = 0.10; *n* = 239; *ns)* and nongenerosity (r = -.04; n = 240; ns), which are less theoretically relevant dimensions of materialism.

Conformity. Consumers who are easily influenced by others tend to purchase what others do. Thus, we expected the desire for unique consumer products to be negatively related to the susceptibility to interpersonal influence. However, the DUCP scale was positively correlated with the Bearden, Netemeyer and Teel (1989) measures of consumer susceptibility to informational (r = 0.25; *n* = 336; *p* < .0001) and normative (r = 0.18; *n* = 337; p < .001) influence. This result replicates the Harris and Lynn (1996) finding that Bearden et al.'s normative influence scale loaded positively on a latent variable identified as the tendency to pursue uniqueness through consumption. Our post hoc explanation for these results is that the desire for unique consumer products and consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influences are positively related to one another because both are positively related to the use of possessions to define oneself in relation to others. People need to fit in and belong, as well as to be distinctive £and unique (Brewer, 1991). Apparently, people who satisfy one of these needs through consumer products also use consumer products to satisfy the other need.

Social Desirability. In order to assess the DUCP scale's susceptibility to socially desirable response biases, we correlated DUCP scores with scores on the Crowne and Marlowe (1960) social desirability scale. The two scales were uncorrelated with one another (r = 0.00, *n* = 256, *ns).* Thus, we concluded that socially desirable response biases do not pose a problem for the DUCP scale.

Sex and Age. In addition to completing personality inventories, the participants were asked to indicate their sexes and to classify their ages as 19 or younger, 20-24, 25-29, 30-34, or 35 and older. DUCP scores were unrelated to sex *it* = 1.13, *df =320, ns)* but were negatively correlated with age

classification (r = 0.14, *n* = 325, *p* < .02). This later result in inconsistent with the nonsignificant relationship between DUCP scores and age observed among airline employees. Unfortunately, we could find no convincing explanation for the discrepancy in these findings.

Behavioral Correlate of DUCP

A final study was conducted to assess the validity of the DUCP scale with the use of actual consumer behavior and a nonstudent sample of consumers. We began with the premise that patrons of a theater specializing in foreign and artistic films should, on average, have stronger desires for unique consumer products than do patrons of a second-run theater that shows only movies that have already played extensively at other locations. We then administered the DUCP scale to customers at a theater of each type to see if scores on the scale would be able to reflect this hypothesized difference.

We chose an artistic theater and a second-run theater that were within easy driving distance of each other (approximately 10 minutes). A single researcher collected the data at two different times at each location (Friday night and Saturday evening at the artistic theater, and Friday evening and Saturday night at the second-run theater). The researcher recruited participants from the lobbies of the theaters after they had purchased a ticket but before they had seen the movie. Participants were given a questionnaire which they completed immediately. Participation rates were similar across the two theaters (74% and 76%), as were the total sample sizes (60 and 59).

As expected, the DUCP scores of the patrons of the artistic theater were significantly higher than the scores of the patrons of the second-run theater (M: 26.57 vs 23.92; F[l, 117] = 4.68, *p* < .04). This difference occurred despite the fact that the DUCP scale contains no items about movie or other artistic preferences and despite the fact that personality traits are rarely significantly related to single instances of a behavior. The observed relationship remained significant after controlling for age and sex of the respondent and the time of the interview session (F[l, 106] = *5.73;p* < .02).

As in the personality studies reported above, there was a significant correlation between DUCP scores and age in this study (r = -0.20; *p* < .05). DUCP scores were higher for younger customers than for older customers, even after controlling for theater, sex of the respondent, and time of the interview session *(F[l,* 106] = 4.35; *p* < .04). Apparently, the desire for unique consumer products wanes (but does not disappear) with age.

Conclusion

The primary goal of this research was to develop and validate a measure of individual differences in the desire for unique consumer products. The 8-item scale that emerged from these

efforts was shown to be unidimensional, to have a factor structure that generalized across student and nonstudent samples, and to have acceptable internal and test-retest reliabilities. The scale's validity was attested to by its theoretically intelligible relationships with other personality measures and by its ability to differentiate between the patrons of an artistic theater and a second-run theater. Thus, the attempt to develop a reliable and valid measure of the desire for unique consumer products appears to have been successful.

By supporting the reliability and validity of our DUCP scale, the data reported in this article also helps to confirm the existence of individual differences in a general tendency to seek unique consumer products. That is, the research reported here suggests that consumers who are particularly desirous of scarce products also tend to be more desirous of new products, more interested in customizing products, and more inclined to shop at small, unique retail outlets. The existence of this individual difference is of practical importance because it defines a market segment to whom a variety of unique consumer goods, services, and experiences can be effectively promoted (i.e., those with a strong DUCP) and another segment to whom they cannot (i.e., those with a weak DUCP). Marketing practitioners might want to identify the demographic and other characteristics associated with a strong desire for unique consumer products in order to more efficiently target this segment. Marketing academics might want to conduct similar research in an attempt to understand the antecedent causes of this important consumer disposition. The DUCP scale should prove helpful in these endeavors because it is a short, reliable, and valid instrument that can be easily included in psychographic and other marketing surveys.

Marketers should also find the DUCP scale useful in basic research on consumers' responses to unique goods, services, and experiences. For example, several scholars have theorized that a product's scarcity increases the attention and thought that consumers devote to the product, and that this increased attention and thought polarizes evaluations of the product (Brock & Brannon, 1992; Folger, 1992; Harris, Lynn, & Clair, 1991). However, it is not clear why scarcity would increase attention and thought, as hypothesized. One possibility is that this effect results from consumers' desires for unique products; that is, people may scrutinize scarce products because they desire unique possessions and perceive the scarce products as potentially desirable acquisitions. This possibility can be empirically tested by examining the effects on product desirability of a three-way interaction between the strength of arguments about a product's quality, descriptions of the product's scarcity, and consumers' scores on the DUCP scale. If the explanation advanced above is correct, then scarcity should increase the effects of argument strength for consumers with high DUCP scores, but not for consumers with low DUCP scores. Similarly, the effects on consumers of product differentiation, prestige pricing, exclusive distribution,

and many other marketing variables may be moderated by the intensity of the consumers' desires for unique products. We encourage marketing and consumer-behavior researchers to use the DUCP scale to test these possibilities.

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