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Consumer Alienation: Relationships with Marketplace Interaction Styles

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ABSTRACT

Within today’s shopping environment where discretionary purchases are the norm, individuals’ purchasing activities are affected by the degree to which they interact with the marketplace. One factor which appears to affect the degree of interaction consumers have with the marketplace is the degree of consumer alienation experienced. When attempting to better understand consumer alienation, marketplace interaction styles (e.g., assertiveness and aggressiveness) appear to be an area of particular interest. Individuals with stronger feelings of alienation can logically be expected to possess marketplace interaction styles which differ from those of individuals who are less alienated from the marketplace. These relationships were examined using a chronologically and educationally homogeneous sample of 1008 participants.

Relationships were observed supporting the hypotheses. Individuals who feel more alienated from the marketplace appear to be less aggressive and less assertive in the marketplace than are individuals who feel less alienated from the marketplace. When the consumer alienation factors are examined, the results indicate that the relationships observed between consumer alienation and the assertiveness and alienation and aggressiveness originate in the second and third consumer alienation factors (informed choice and personal norm) and not the first consumer alienation factor (business ethics). When the assertiveness factors are examined, the results indicate the relationship between alienation and assertiveness originates in the first two assertiveness factors (requesting information or assistance and resisting requests for compliance), but not in the third factor (seeking remedy for dissatisfaction).

These results suggest that individuals experiencing differing levels of consumer alienation possess differing marketplace interaction styles.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David J. Burns, D.B.A. (1987, Kent State University) is Professor of Marketing at Xavier University. He has co-authored several books and published over 100 journal articles and book chapters. His research interests include mission integration, retail location and atmospherics, ethics, and consumer culture.