

# **DO MARKETING STUDENTS HAVE PERSONALITY TRAITS DIFERENNT FROM OTHER MAJORS? DO THEY EVER!**

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## **Introduction**

Consumers tend to have higher life satisfaction when they have a good balance between their personality and the environment in which they function. A good balance, in this study regarding choice of major and career preference, can lead to satisfaction, longevity, and higher levels of performance. At the same time, dissatisfaction and withdrawal result when an environment does not feel like a good balance and this can lead to low performance. Identifying personality traits of different majors should help educators determine the relationship between personality traits and student majors, thus enabling marketing educators to better understand this new generation of students in their classrooms.

Over recent years, there has been a growing pool of research on personality traits that distinguish students in business majors from students in other majors, and a body of research differentiating business specialty areas (Gibson, Frederick, Levy, Lounsbury, & Smith, 2009). According to Holland's Vocational Theory, personality traits and choice of major are highly correlated because when it comes to business majors, it reflects a "preference for activities that entail the manipulation of others to attain organizational goals or economic gain" (Holland, 1973).

In their research, Benet-Martinez and Ozer (2006) developed The Big Five model which includes conscientiousness, openness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neurotism as important personality traits. Additionally, other research has found that business majors have a tendency to score higher in conscientiousness, emotional stability, extraversion, assertiveness, and tough-mindedness, but they score lower on agreeableness and openness (Gibson, Frederick, Levy, Lounsbury, & Smith, 2009). Interestingly, accounting, management, and marketing majors differ on outgoingness, abstract thinking, emotional stability, enthusiasm, sense of adventure, imaginativeness, tension, and self-monitoring behavior (Filbeck & Smith, 1996).

When a student selects marketing to be his or her major, he or she is not just choosing to receive the benefits and attributes of the major, but also to become something through a process of role-identity development. The more effectively this identification process occurs, the more beneficial the outcomes for the student and even for their educators (Kleine, 2002).

Other studies have found that academic reputation, course work, curriculum, influence of parents and peers, as well as variety of career prospects were the reasons behind students' selection of marketing as their major (Pappu, 2004).

## **Technology and Online Users**

Some research shows that marketing students have a high level of technology knowledge and skill, especially in social networking. However, Vicknair, Elkersh, Yancey, & Budden (2010) found that nearly half of the students were not aware of the possibility that potential employers could be looking at students' social networking profiles. Zaccardi, Howard, & Schusenberg (2012) concluded that students who exhibit more openness, conscientiousness, or extraversion are more likely to think that a company/employer will view students' social networking accounts. Another study found that students who exhibit neurotic personalities are less likely to use social networking accounts to connect with employers. Individuals with a high degree of openness will

shop online for the purpose of stimulation and excitement, and to encounter something interesting while shopping (Huang & Yang, 2010).

### **Feelings of Entitlement**

Previous studies of personality have observed that a healthy individual maintains a level of entitlement (Boyd & Helms, 2005). Another study also found narcissism to be correlated with a sense of entitlement (Baer & Cheryomukhin, 2011). It has also been shown that non-marketing majors tend to have an advertising/salesperson related view of marketing as a profession. In the meantime, students that choose marketing as a major and adopt it as part of their identity tend to adopt much more of an internal, professional, and dynamic understanding of marketing (Hugstad, 1997).

### **Materialism**

Hong, Koh, & Paunoen (2012) found that agreeableness was the most prolific dimension predicting materialism and unethical behavior. Therefore, other research supports that materialism may not have any correlation with marketing majors because business majors tend to score low when measured on agreeableness (Gibson, Frederick, Levy, Lounsbury, & Smith, 2009).

### **Price**

Previous research has shown consistent relationships between personality traits, materialism and excessive buying. In a recent study, the results showed that extraversion correlated positively with an impulsive buying tendency; conscientiousness and agreeableness correlated negatively with the impulse buying tendency; and the cognitive dimension, neuroticism, was positively associated with impulse buying behavior (Otero-López & Villardefrancos, 2013). Since business majors have scored high on the traits other than agreeableness (Gibson, Frederick, Levy, Lounsbury, & Smith, 2009), they potentially could be more impulsive with their buying behavior and therefore not be mindful of price.

### **Hypotheses**

Based on discussion above, Hypotheses 1 through 14 were developed.

- H<sub>1</sub>: Marketing majors are more likely to complain to businesses about unsatisfactory products.
- H<sub>2</sub>: Marketing majors are body-consciousness people (skin, hair, and body).
- H<sub>3</sub>: Marketing majors have problems managing their budget.
- H<sub>4</sub>: Marketing majors are impulsive buyers.
- H<sub>5</sub>: Marketing majors demonstrate risk-taking behavior.
- H<sub>6</sub>: Marketing majors like a great deal of variety (things and styles).
- H<sub>7</sub>: Marketing majors are price-conscious consumers.
- H<sub>8</sub>: Marketing majors use mobile phones anytime, in every place, and for every purpose.
- H<sub>9</sub>: Marketing majors live under the time pressure of “so much to do, so little time.”
- H<sub>10</sub>: Marketing majors rate their knowledge of technology as high.
- H<sub>11</sub>: Marketing majors value a product with status (snob appeal).
- H<sub>12</sub>: Marketing majors demonstrate materialistic behavior.
- H<sub>13</sub>: Marketing majors do the majority of their shopping and purchasing online.
- H<sub>14</sub>: Marketing majors like to have power and rule the world.

**Table 1.** Sample characteristics

<b>Sample Characteristics</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Age</b>		
Under 24	68	44.2
25-29	49	31.8
30-39	23	14.9
40 & older	14	9.1
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	84	54.5
Female	70	45.5
<b>Major</b>		
Marketing major	55	35.7
Management major	14	9.1
General Business major	8	5.2
Finance major	3	2.0
Accounting major	9	5.8
Economics major	2	1.3
Non-business major	53	34.4
Have not attend college	10	6.5
<b>Years Attended College</b>		
Under 1 year	9	5.9
2-4 years	113	73.4
Master Degree	15	9.6
Doctor Degree/JD	11	7.2
Other	6	3.9
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
Caucasian	105	68.2
African American	5	3.3
Asian American	13	8.5
Hispanic American	22	14.3
Other	9	5.7

### Testing and Results

The primary objectives of this study are to test the hypotheses which are presented above. In order to test the proposed hypotheses, students' responses to a survey were collected during Spring semester of 2013 at a large western university. The data were collected from a convenience sample of 154 students taking undergraduate marketing courses, as well as other respondents of various demographic characteristics. The students took the survey voluntarily. All items were assessed consistently using a five-point Likert scale format (from 1-strongly disagree to 5- strongly agree). The survey included the items described above along with items assessing the respondents' demographics.

Table 1 presents sample characteristics. The gender composition of the sample was 55% male and 45% female. The age range of 20 to 29 years represented 76% of the sample. The most

students attended from 1 to 4 years in college. Approximately 36% of the students were marketing majors; with almost 41% of students being non-business majors. The sample appears to represent today's traditional, undergraduate marketing, business, and non-business students.

The following relationships were tested using Pearson correlation analyses to measure the linear relationships between variables and student majors (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003).

A measurement model was constructed to determine the correlation between variables in the model. Table 2 presents the results of correlation analyses of the hypothesized relationships. For each of the fourteen hypotheses, the correlation coefficient was calculated.

Correlation coefficients less than 0.1 indicate a small relationship; correlation coefficients between 0.1 and 0.4 indicate a medium relationship and coefficients of 0.4 and higher suggest a strong relationship (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003). The results suggest that seven hypotheses (from  $H_1$  to  $H_6$ ) did not show a significant level of correlation. Since statistical evidence for seven hypotheses were not identified in our case, it indicates that the relationships between the student majors and any of these hypotheses do not exist. At the same time, the results show that the remaining eight hypotheses had the significant level of correlations and Table 2 presents the final results of the hypotheses testing as well.

The final results of the hypotheses indicate that two out of eight hypotheses, which have a significant level of correlations, were not supported. There are  $H_7$  and  $H_8$ . Based on the results, it shows that marketing major students are not price-conscious consumers and they are not hunting for the sale or low price compared to non-business students. The results also indicate that marketing students do not "abuse" their mobile device, in term of texting, gaming, or social. Another relevant funding of our study is that marketing students value a product with status or snob appeal (-.189). The explanation of this result can be the fact that marketing students have more knowledge of the branding strategy and product status than students with other majors. The marketing students recognize a product status as part of the value of the product more than a product price. To support this statement,  $H_{12}$  was developed as a connection to  $H_{11}$ . And the results also show that marketing students demonstrate more materialistic behavior compared to other students (-.196). This result contradicts other research where authors have found that materialism may not have any correlation with marketing majors because business majors tend to score low when measured on agreeableness (Gibson, Frederick, Levy, Lounsbury, & Smith, 2009). As hypothesized, marketing students do the more of their shopping online than do other non-business majors. This finding illustrates that marketing students are more creative individuals. Because some research found that adventurous people are more inclined to shop online in search for various forms of novelty (Huang & Yang, 2010). Also, our findings support previous research that found marketing majors like to have power and an attitude of "rule the world."

It is important to note that the present study is preliminary research and has a number of limitations. For instance, future research may want to expand our sample size and further explore the issues to measure student knowledge of technology, their materialistic behavior, their purchasing power, their mobile phone usage, etc.

**Table 2.** Results of Hypotheses Testing

Items	Hypotheses	Major, Correlation coefficient, Rxy	Significance	
7	<i>H1: Marketing major students have complaints to businesses about unsatisfactory product</i>	-.028	.730	
6	<i>H2: Marketing major students are body consciousness people (skin, hair, and body)</i>	-.105	.197	
3	<i>H3: Marketing major students have problem managing their budget</i>	.074	.361	
4	<i>H4: Marketing major students are impulsive buyers</i>	-.082	.313	
5	<i>H5: Marketing major students demonstrate risk taking behavior</i>	-.069	.395	
3	<i>H6: Marketing major students like a great deal of variety (things and styles)</i>	-.055	.496	
3	<i>H7: Marketing major students are price conscious consumers</i>	.162*	.045	did not support
6	<i>H8: Marketing major students use mobile phones anytime, in every place, and for every purpose</i>	.234*	.003	did not support
3	<i>H9: Marketing major students live under the pressure “so much to do, so little time”</i>	-.204*	.011	support
1	<i>H10: Marketing major students rate their knowledge of technology as high</i>	-.226*	.005	support
5	<i>H11: Marketing major students value a product with status (snob appeal)</i>	-.189*	.019	support
5	<i>H12: Marketing major students demonstrate materialistic behavior</i>	-.196**	.150	support
4	<i>H13: Marketing major students do majority of their shopping and purchasing online</i>	-.140**	.083	support
6	<i>H14: Marketing major students like to have a power and ruled the world</i>	-.156**	.053	support

Note: \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .10$

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