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The Market Maven: A Diffuser of Marketplace Information

The research focus is individuals who have information about many kinds of products, places to shop, and other facets of the market, and initiate discussions with and respond to information requests from other consumers. Specifically, the authors develop a Likert-type scale to measure consumers' propensity to provide general shopping and marketplace information. Consumers scoring high on this scale are referred to as "market mavens." Based on a national sample of 1531 households, the findings indicate that market mavens exist and that other consumers recognize them. Consumers believe market mavens are influential in their purchasing decisions. The authors document the distinctness of market mavens from other influencers. They test several propositions about the market attitudes and behaviors of market mavens, but find no clear socioeconomic and demographic profile of these influencers. The results have implications for marketing managers and suggest a reexamination of the approach to information diffusion.

PERHAPS the best established idea about the transmission of marketplace information is the importance of interpersonal communication. In 30 years of research, remarkably consistent results have documented the significance of interpersonal sources, particularly in influencing marketplace choices (Katona and Mueller 1955; Kiel and Layton 1981; Price and Feick 1984; Udell 1966) and in diffusing information on new products (Arndt 1967; Engel, Kegerreis, and Blackwell 1969; Katz and Lazarsfeld 1955; Sheth 1968, 1971). Research has demonstrated interpersonal information exchange is widespread (King and Summers 1967), interpersonal communication affects preferences and choices (Arndt 1967), interpersonal sources are often the most important sources of information (Katona and Mueller 1955; Kiel and Layton 1981; Price and Feick 1984; Robertson 1971), and interpersonal sources are seen as more credible than nonpersonal sources (Assael, Etgar, and Henry 1983).

Traditional approaches to interpersonal influence have focused on two types of influencers—the opinion leader and the early purchaser or adopter. These approaches are characterized by two fundamental assumptions. One is that we can understand the important aspects of interpersonal information exchanges by studying opinion leaders and early adopters. The other is that we can understand interpersonal information usage by examining interpersonal exchanges within product classes—implicitly assuming also that by aggregating the results across product classes we can obtain a picture of interpersonal influence.

The purpose of our research is to develop the concept of a marketplace influencer whose influence is based not on knowledge or expertise in particular product categories, but rather on more general knowledge and experience with markets. We develop a measure of this influencer, whom we call a "market maven," and relate this measure to marketplace behaviors and consumer characteristics. By so doing, we break free of the two assumptions that have guided previous research and obtain a better understanding of the extent and importance of interpersonal influence.

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Personal Influence

Opinion Leaders

Much of current thinking on the importance of interpersonal influence had its origins in the study of the 1940 presidential election by Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet (1948). These researchers identified opinion leaders—individuals who acted as information brokers intervening between mass media sources and the opinions and choices of the population. A later study covering a number of different realms (food and household products, movies, fashions, and public affairs) substantiated the existence and importance of the opinion leader (Katz and Lazarsfeld 1955).

Opinion leaders are still probably the marketplace influencers most described in the literature. Current thinking on opinion leadership varies about the key features distinguishing these individuals. Some writers emphasize influence as the crucial determinant (e.g., Engel and Blackwell 1982; Rogers 1983), others emphasize knowledge (Assael 1984, p. 413), and still others emphasize information transmission (Hawkins, Best, and Coney 1983, p. 129). Most authors, however, see a combination of knowledge or expertise and influence as characterizing the opinion leader (e.g., Midgley 1976; Robertson, Zielinski, and Ward 1984). At least in some product categories, opinion leaders appear to be more knowledgeable about and involved with the product class (Jacoby and Hoyer 1981).

The implicit assumption in examining the personal influence of opinion leaders is that they are motivated to talk about the product because of their involvement with it. For example, Bloch and Richins (1983) view opinion leadership as a manifestation of enduring involvement in a product class. Though some writers have criticized this orientation as undervaluing the communications component and overvaluing the product interest component of opinion leadership (e.g., Midgley 1976), product involvement remains the predominant explanation for opinion leaders' conversations about products. Consequently, opinion leadership has been viewed as being product class specific. There is evidence that interest in a number of products can lead to opinion leadership in more than one product category (Montgomery and Silk 1971), but research suggests there is no general (i.e., multiple product category) opinion leader (King and Summers 1970; Langeard, Crousillat, and Weisz 1978; Myers and Robertson 1972; Silk 1966).

Early Purchasers

The second group of personal influencers that has received substantial research attention is early purchasers. Early purchasers can exert either a passive or active influence on later purchasers. For visible products such as automobiles, much information can be transmitted simply by product use. In contrast, the active diffusion of information by early adopters is generally thought of as occurring through product-related conversations (see, e.g., Midgley and Dowling 1978). Empirical research has indicated that early adopters talk about products (e.g., Arndt 1967; Baumgarten 1975; Lambert 1972) and that there is a group of influential early adopters (Baumgarten 1975). As with opinion leaders, the implicit assumption about early adopters' product conversations is that they talk about the product for product-related reasons. For example, talking about a product may serve to confirm the adopter's assessment of the product (Engel, Kegerreis, and Blackwell 1969). Other reasons for talking about products might include the novelty of the product, the desire to look like a pioneer in having purchased the new product, or the involvement and expertise that come from the actual experience with the new product. As with opinion leaders, research suggests that early adopters are product specific and there is no general early adopter (Robertson 1971; Robertson and Myers 1969).

In summary, research suggests opinion leaders and early adopters influence other consumers because of their product-specific knowledge or expertise. In the case of the opinion leaders, knowledge or expertise has been viewed as arising from involvement with a product or product class. In the case of the early adopter, this expertise arises from product usage or purchase experience. Hence, in explaining the informational superiority of opinion leaders and early adopters, researchers have emphasized their involvement and experiences with specific products.

General Marketplace Influencers

Kassarjian (1981) proposed that marketplace involvement need not be restricted to a particular product class or purchase situation. He argued that certain individuals may be consistently more involved in marketplace activities. This proposition is supported by the literature that suggests many people enjoy browsing and window shopping (Hirschman 1980; Raju 1980) and certain people are more careful and concerned in making purchase decisions (Thorelli, Becker, and Engeldow 1975; Thorelli and Thorelli 1977). Recently, Slama and Tashchian (1985) documented a characteristic they call "purchasing involvement." They report that individuals with greater purchasing involvement tend to know where to shop for certain items, where to get a good price on products, and what outlets are having sales. Though undocumented by research, individuals characterized by the type of involvement described by Kassarjian and by Slama and Tashchian could also be marketplace influencers.

Concept of the Market Maven

In this section we introduce the concept of an influencer characterized by general marketplace expertise. We have called such individuals "market mavens"[1] and define them as

> individuals who have information about many kinds of products, places to shop, and other facets of markets, and initiate discussions with consumers and respond to requests from consumers for market information.

The definition of the market maven includes both general marketplace knowledge or expertise and influence. Thus, the definition is comparable with the definition of the opinion leader in that influence derives from knowledge and expertise, but differs in that the expertise is not product specific. The market maven's influence is based on more general market expertise. The definition of the market maven does not require that these individuals be early purchasers of products or necessarily even users of products about which they have information.

Research has demonstrated an overlap of early adoption and opinion leadership (Baumgarten 1975; Feldman and Armstrong 1975; Summers 1970, 1971). Similarly, market mavens also can be opinion leaders or early purchasers of particular products. Market mavens' general marketplace expertise should lead them to earlier awareness of new products (hence, an increased likelihood of early adoption) and may also lead them to acquire not only general market information, but also in-depth information on selected products (hence, an increased likelihood of opinion leadership). The concept of the market maven, however, is distinct from the concepts of opinion leadership and early adoption, as it is predicated on a more general knowledge of markets.

The marketing, consumer behavior, communications, and political science literatures provide a basis for hypothesizing the existence of market mavens. In addition, these literatures suggest several reasons for market mavens' acquisition and transmission of market information. Some individuals may acquire and transmit market information despite having no specific product involvement or experience. One reason for the maven's acquisition of market information may be marketplace involvement. Kassarjian (1981) has suggested some individuals may feel it is their obligation to become knowledgeable consumers. Kassarjian's high involvement consumer appears to be similar to the information seeker described by Thorelli and colleagues (Thorelli, Becker, and Engledow 1975; Thorelli and Thorelli 1977) and the individual who is purchasing involved described by Slama and Tashchian (1985). These writers have suggested that certain individuals may feel obligated to be informed about the marketplace and that purchasing is particularly relevant for these individuals. This involvement or interest is not tied to a particular product class for these individuals, but represents a more general marketplace or purchasing interest.

Other literature suggests individuals may attend to information because they anticipate using it in social exchanges. For example, in examining information seeking on news events, Atkin (1972) found that the expected usefulness of information for future interactions with coworkers, family, friends, and acquaintances was an important predictor of information seeking. In addition, Chaffee and McLeod (1973) found that the anticipation of a future social role affected processing of political information and that the social utility of communication was a more important predictor of political information seeking than was intention to vote. Levy (1978) identified surveillance-reassurance as a reason for watching TV news. This factor accounted for over half the variance in his set of measures that included items such as "I watch television news because I like to get the news first so I can pass it on to other people" (p. 406). In examining word-of-mouth communication, Dichter (1966) noted that some individuals attend to market information they think will be useful to others. He found such individuals to be important in about one-fourth of the buying situations he examined. Finally, Richmond (1977) found that, rather than attending to personally relevant information, opinion leaders seem to attend to information that others might request from them at a later time. These findings suggest the possibility that market mavens obtain marketplace information because they think it will be useful to others or because it will provide a basis for conversations.

If we view the market maven as a role individuals can adopt, research on role accumulators suggests reasons for information transmission by mavens. Sieber (1974) notes that individuals who adopt multiple roles enhance their power in society by becoming more valuable to those with whom they interact. One implication from Sieber's work is that individuals may transmit information as part of an implicit contract in which the information receiver pays for the information by providing information or other rewards to the giver. That is, a market maven may provide general information to individuals who, in turn, give information to the maven, perhaps on specific topics about which they are particularly knowledgeable.

[1]The term "maven" is Yiddish and was used by some pilot study respondents to describe individuals who have information about a variety of products and like to share this information with others. A maven seems to connote a neighborhood expert who has information ranging over several topics.

Propositions

On the basis of the market maven concept, several propositions can be formed about mavens' characteristics. Specifically, because the concept includes the possession and provision of marketplace information, these qualities should be evinced in attitudes and behaviors about the acquisition and provision of marketplace information. All of the propositions compare the attitudes and behaviors of market mavens with those of individuals who are not market mavens.

Possession and Provision of Market Information

One important characteristic of market mavens is their possession of a wide variety of market information. Though information useful to consumers might take many forms, including places to shop and sales, one kind of information of particular interest to marketing managers is awareness of new products (Kotler and Zaltman 1976). Because we expect market mavens to be more attentive to the marketplace generally, we would expect them to find out about new products across product categories before individuals who are not market mavens.

P_1: Market mavens will demonstrate earlier awareness of new products through (a) reported early awareness of new products across product categories and (b) awareness of specific new brands within several product categories.

The concept of the market maven includes initiating conversations about and responding to requests for marketplace information. Though consumers may use market mavens to acquire many kinds of information (e.g., sales, retail outlets, credit arrangements), mavens' propensity to provide marketplace information should be reflected in particular instances of information provision. For example, the concept suggests that market mavens should report more frequent specific information provision across product categories than other consumers.

P_2: Market mavens will exhibit higher levels of information provision to other consumers across product categories.

Search Activities

Most previous studies of consumer information search have been product and purchase specific—for example, researchers have investigated the types and sources of information used in making a particular purchase decision (Feick and Price 1984; Newman 1977). One limitation of purchase-specific measures is their lack of inclusion of search activities that span products and purchase situations. Activities such as reading *Consumer Reports* and using a variety of sources to find out about new products are non-product-specific indicators of consumers' information seeking patterns. Thorelli and Thorelli (1977) define information seekers as subscribers to *Consumer Reports,* and Slama and Tashchian (1985) include items in their purchase involvement scale such as "*Consumer Reports* is not very relevant to me."

The market maven's influence derives from useful knowledge about the marketplace—knowledge acquired by information seeking across products and situations. Thus,

P_3: Market mavens will demonstrate higher levels of general market information seeking through (a) readership of *Consumer Reports* and (b) use of diverse sources in acquiring market information.

Other Characteristics of Market Mavens

Market mavens' involvement with the marketplace not only should lead them to seek general information about the marketplace (e.g., by reading *Consumer Reports*), but also should be apparent in other marketplace attitudes and behaviors. For example, extent of interest in and enjoyment of shopping, use of coupons, and interest in and attention to advertising all have been discussed as indicators of general consumer involvement (Guiltinan and Monroe 1980; Kassarjian 1981). In addition, Slama and Tashchian's (1985) purchasing involvement scale includes items on each of these behaviors. Because the market maven concept includes marketplace involvement, we expect market mavens to be more likely to attend to advertising, use coupons, and enjoy shopping.

P_4: Market mavens will demonstrate higher levels of general market interest through (a) enjoyment of shopping, (b) attention to advertising, and (c) use of coupons.

Because we are examining the existence of market mavens for the first time, it seems premature to anticipate the demographic profile of this group. Hence, we consider investigation of the demographic profile of market mavens to be exploratory.

Method

Sample

Data were obtained from a questionnaire administered by telephone and pretested on a randomly selected sample in a large northeastern metropolitan area. This pretesting served to structure and refine the instrument. The final questionnaire was administered by telephone during August 1984. The sample was selected by random digit dialing to the 48 contiguous

states. The researchers assigned sex, alternating male and female, to the telephone numbers. Interviewers then screened for either the male or female assigned head of household. In homes in which that person was not available, callbacks were scheduled; in homes that did not have a household head of the assigned sex, the interviewer spoke with the lone household head. Initial calls were made between 3:30 and 9:30 p.m. local time and callbacks were arranged for any time convenient to the respondent. In an attempt to contact the assigned household head, interviewers made at least three callbacks to numbers that rang with no answer or were busy. A total of 1531 interviews were completed. Average interview length was 18 minutes.

The response rate, calculated by the method described by Dillman (1978) and Kviz (1977)—completed interviews as a percentage of eligible interviewees (completed interviews, refusals, and terminates)—was 47%. The demographic characteristics of the respondents, with the exception of sex, closely mirrored the 1980 census and the relevant 1984 updates provided by the U.S. Department of Commerce. The sex breakdown of the sample, 64% female and 36% male, was significantly different from our estimate of similar percentages for the U.S. population—57% female and 43% male.[2]

Because of our desire to examine a range of product categories, two versions of the questionnaire were administered. The two versions were identical except that certain questions were asked in reference to common food and household products in one subsample (hereafter referred to as the food subsample) and in reference to nonprescription drugs and health and beauty products in the other subsample (hereafter referred to as the drug subsample). Respondents were assigned randomly to the subsamples; 771 respondents were in the food and 760 in the drug subsample.

Measurement and Construct Validation

In this section we report on the measurement of the market maven concept and two related influencer concepts, opinion leadership and purchasing innovativeness. To establish the distinctiveness of the market maven, we also report the relationship of the market maven to the two other influencer concepts.

Market maven scale development. Because of the constraint of telephone interviewing, one goal in our development of the market maven measure was to obtain as small a set of items as possible without compromising reliability and validity. We generated a set of 40 items based on the concept definition. This set of items was reduced by half by a group of marketing academicians and marketing research practitioners. The set of 19 items was administered in a pilot study to a group of 265 part-time MBA students at a major northeastern university. Factor analysis, item-to-total correlations, and Cronbach's alpha were used to select a set of six items (see Appendix) for use in the telephone survey instrument. In the pilot study, Cronbach's alpha for these six items was .84 and item-to-total correlations ranged from .51 to .67. The six items selected from the pilot study were administered in the final instrument to the national sample. Each item was administered on a 7-point strongly disagree to strongly agree scale. The range of the market maven scale was 6 to 42; the mean was 25.6 and the standard deviation was 8.5. Reliability measures on the scale in the final instrument were very similar to those in the pilot study. Cronbach's alpha was .82 and the item-to-total correlations ranged from .48 to .65.

Consumers' identification of others as market mavens. To establish the existence of market mavens, it is essential that consumers be able to identify others as market mavens. To examine consumers' ability to identify market mavens, respondents were asked if they knew someone, other than themselves, "who has information about a variety of products, stores, sales, etc., and likes to share this general information with others." About 46% of the total sample answered "yes" to this question. Further, when asked how important this person is in finding out about new brands or models of products, 57% responded "very" or "extremely important" (6 or 7 on a 7-point scale). Similarly, 55% indicated this person is very or extremely important in evaluating different brands or models of products.

Opinion leadership measurement. Because the opinion leader and market maven concepts are theoretically related, an important test of the validity of the market maven measures is their relationship to opinion leadership measures. To assess this relationship, we constructed an opinion leadership measure that did not contain an investigator-specified product class. Traditional measures that specify a product class (e.g., King and Summers 1970; Rogers and Cartano 1962) would obviously understate the incidence of opinion leadership across product classes. The measure we used allowed respondents to name a brand, product type, product class, or some other product grouping (e.g., health foods, woolen goods, personal computers, Italian spices) as an area of expertise. We classified as an opinion leader anyone who felt that s/he is knowledgeable about some product and that s/he influences other people about this product. Specifically, individuals were defined as opinion leaders

[2]All of the analyses were run both unweighted and with a weighting of the data to match our estimates of the population sex distribution. There were no differences in substantive conclusions between the analyses. As it is not clear what the exact population proportions are for sex given our household head definition, we report unweighted results.

if they answered "yes" to two questions: Is there a particular kind of product that you feel you are very knowledgeable about? If so, do you think that you ever influence other people in their purchase of or opinions about this kind of product?

Because our opinion leadership measure differed from previous measures, a second pilot test examined the relationship between our measure and the King and Summers (1970) opinion leadership scale—perhaps the most commonly employed opinion leadership scale in marketing. Several researchers have reported on the reliability of the King and Summers scale (Gur-Arie, Durand, and Sharma 1979; Riecken and Yavas 1983; Yavas and Riecken 1982) and its validity has been examined by Rogers and Cartano (1962) and Jacoby (1972). In the second pilot test, 160 part-time MBA students completed self-administered questionnaires including our measure of opinion leadership and the King and Summers scale in reference to the same product. Even if respondents did not feel they were very knowledgeable about a particular product, they were asked to respond to these questions for the one kind of product about which they felt most knowledgeable. The point-biserial correlation between the two measures was .75, indicating substantial agreement between our measure and the King and Summers scale.

Opinion leadership and its relationship to the market maven. To examine the discriminant validity of our market maven and opinion leadership measures, we conducted a third pilot study. A probability sample of 303 male and female heads of households in a large northeastern metropolitan area were contacted by telephone. These individuals responded to a short questionnaire that included the market maven measure, our opinion leadership measure, and the King and Summers scale items. A factor analysis of the items suggests the discriminant validity of our opinion leadership measure and the market maven measures. The results of the factor analysis, reported in Table 1, indicate an opinion leadership factor (factor 1) and a market maven factor (factor 2). The market maven measures all have high loadings on the market maven factor and weak loadings on the opinion leadership factor. Our opinion leadership measure has a high loading on the opinion leadership factor and a very weak loading on the market maven factor.

The opinion leadership results from the national sample are included in Table 2. Forty-six percent of the total sample reported being an opinion leader in some self-selected product category. The correlation between the market maven and opinion leader measures is .22. With such a large sample, this correlation is significant, despite being modest in size. On the basis of the products mentioned, opinion leaders were divided into opinion leaders on durable and nondurable products. Ten and 26% of the sample, respectively, were classified as opinion leaders on durable and nondurable products. (An additional 12% reported opinion leadership in other categories, e.g., work-related products, restaurants, and plants.)

Because of our assumption that opinion leadership would require more detailed and technical knowledge in many durable product categories than in many nondurable categories, we expected a stronger correlation between the market maven and opinion leadership in nondurables than in durables. This expectation was confirmed. The correlation between nondurable goods opinion leadership and the market maven measure is .25; the correlation between durable goods opinion leadership and the market maven measure is −.06.

TABLE 1
Factor Analysis of the Market Maven Items, Opinion Leadership Measure, and King and Summers' Scale Items

	Factor 1	Factor 2
MM1[a]	.13	.42
MM2	−.01	.73
MM3	−.07	.76
MM4	−.11	.69
MM5	−.02	.79
MM6	.18	.39
OL[b]	.55	.01
KS1[c]	.49	.00
KS2	.67	.12
KS3	.61	−.01
KS4	.63	.01
KS5	.37	−.07
KS6	.51	−.05
KS7	.63	.19

N = 303
Correlation between the factors: .26
Proportion of variance explained by two factors: .46

[a]MM = market maven items (see Appendix).
[b]OL = opinion leadership measure (described in text).
[c]KS = King and Summers' opinion leadership measures (see King and Summers 1970).

TABLE 2
Relationship of Market Maven Measure with Opinion Leadership Measure

	Sample Proportion	Correlation with Market Maven Measure
Opinion leader (total)	.46[a]	.22[a]
Opinion leader (nondurable products)	.26[a]	.25[a]
Opinion leader (durable products)	.10[a]	−.06[b]

N = 1531.
[a]$p < .01$.
[b]$p < .05$.

Results of both the third pilot study and the national sample suggest the market maven and opinion leader concepts are related but distinct. The national study results indicate the market maven is related most strongly to opinion leadership in nondurable product categories. Though we expected the correlation between the market maven and the durable goods opinion leader to be small, we did not expect it to be so near zero. The correlation is statistically significant ($p < .05$), but substantively suggests that being a market maven is unrelated to durable goods opinion leadership.

Innovativeness measurement. In examining the tendency of respondents to be early purchasers of products, we focused on consumer package goods. Though it would have been desirable to sample also from consumer durable products, early adoption in durables is affected by a number of factors: the long lifespan and large expense of many durables and the tendency for some durables to be characterized by enduring involvement for some consumers. We therefore chose to concentrate on measurement of innovativeness in nondurable product categories. Three types of questions, varied in specificity, were asked. One item asked about innovativeness in broad product categories. A second set of items asked about innovativeness in specific product categories and the third set asked about the trial of several brands introduced in the year prior to the study. In the food subsample, respondents were asked when they tended to adopt new food and common household products; whether they tended to be early triers of new coffees, frozen entrees and main dishes, diet soft drinks, and breakfast cereals; and whether they had tried Master Blend, Lean Cuisine, Diet Sprite, and Post Fruit and Fiber. The drug sample was asked the same questions about nonprescription drugs and health and beauty products; pain relievers, vitamins, deodorants, and suntan products; and Nuprin, Caltrate, Dial Solid, and Eclipse. These brands, products, and product categories are not exhaustive, but represent a broad cross-section of consumer package goods.

Innovativeness and its relationship to the market maven. Means for the three types of innovativeness measures and the correlations of these measures with the market maven measure are indicated in Table 3. In the food subsample the measure of the market maven is remarkably consistent in its correlation with the innovativeness measures (.31, .34, .31). The correlation of the market maven measure with the innovativeness measures in the drug subsample is lower and not as consistent across the three types of measures (.27, .23, .14). The weak correlation between the maven and the most specific innovativeness measure in the drug subsample appears to be due to a very low trial of the brands we included. The mean number of

TABLE 3
Relationship of Market Maven Measure with Measures of Innovativeness

Food Subsample[a]			Drug Subsample[b]		
Measure	Mean (S.E.)	Correlation with Market Maven Scale	Measure	Mean (S.E.)	Correlation with Market Maven Scale
When new food and common household products first appear on the market do you . . . 1 = buy much later than most people . . . 5 = among the first to buy	2.69 (.04)	.31[c]	When new nonprescription drugs and health and beauty products first appear do you . . . 1 = buy much later than most people . . . 5 = among the first to buy	2.40 (.04)	.27[c]
Extent to which you make a conscious effort to try new products in the following categories: coffees, frozen entrees, diet soft drinks, breakfast cereals (mean score for the four 7-point items in which 1 = never, 7 = very frequently)	2.71 (.05)	.34[c]	Extent to which you make a conscious effort to try new products in the following categories: pain relievers, vitamins, deodorants, suntan products (mean score for the four 7-point items in which 1 = never, 7 = very frequently)	2.40 (.05)	.23[c]
Number tried of four possible new brands (Master Blend, Lean Cuisine, Diet Sprite, Post Fruit & Fiber)	1.38 (.04)	.31[c]	Number tried of four possible new brands (Nuprin, Caltrate, Dial Solid, Eclipse)	.30 (.02)	.14[c]

[a] N = 771.
[b] N = 760.
[c] $p < .01$.

brands tried of the four we included is .3. The proportion of respondents who had tried the individual brands ranges from .15 for Dial Solid to .01 for Caltrate.

The results in this section suggest that market mavens tend to be innovative across a rather broad range of consumer package goods. However, they also suggest that the concepts of the market maven and the innovative consumer are distinct. The correlations, though significant, are modest in size.

Analysis of the interrelationship of the three influencer groups. To examine the discriminant validity of the market maven measures, we undertook confirmatory factor analysis using LISREL. Confirmatory factor analysis corrects for the attenuation in the relationships between constructs due to measurement error. The analysis was conducted separately on the food and drug subsamples. We compared the fit of a model under an assumption that the six market maven measures, three innovativeness measures, and single opinion leadership measure represented a single construct with the fit of a model postulating the three constructs.

In Table 4 we report the results of the model fitting. For both halves of the sample, there was a dramatic and significant improvement in fit (reduction in chi square) from moving from a one-factor solution to a three-factor solution (the chi square difference is 146.67 for the food subsample and 81.26 for drugs, both compared with 2 d.f.).[3] These results indicate the three-construct conceptualization is worthwhile as model fit is substantially worsened by forcing the items to be measures of a single construct. In the three-factor solution, the relationship between the market maven construct and the opinion leader in the food and drug subsamples is .23 and .24, respectively; the relationship between the market maven and early purchaser is .54 and .47. These results suggest that after correction for attenuation, the measure of market maven achieves discriminant validity and is distinct from the measures of opinion leader and early purchaser. This test of discriminant validity is stringent because shared method variance would tend to increase the observed correlation between the measures, making discrimination more difficult (Bagozzi and Burnkrant 1985).

Results of Tests of Propositions

In testing propositions about the characteristics of market mavens, we report both the correlation between the attitude or behavior examined and respondents' scores on the market maven scale. In addition, we report an analysis of variance or chi square analysis based on trichotomization of respondents into the lower 31% (low), middle 37% (medium), and upper 32% (high) of the distribution of market maven scores.[4] In reporting results we refer to respondents scoring in the high category as market mavens. In each case where the F-value for the analysis of variance was significant, we performed *post hoc* comparisons between groups using the Scheffé test at the .05 significance level.

Possession and Provision of Market Information

The concept of a market maven explicitly includes possession of general market information. Two measures were used to test P_1, that market mavens will have market knowledge in specific instances spanning product categories and brands. One measure is an av-

[3]A three-factor solution compared to a one-factor solution involves the estimation of three additional parameters: the correlations between the factors. However, because there was a single-item measure of opinion leadership, in the three-factor solution the factor loading between this measure and the opinion leadership factor was set to 1.0. Hence, in the three-factor solution there are three between-factor correlations to estimate, but one fewer factor loadings. Thus, the likelihood ratio chi square difference test has only 2 d.f. rather than 3 d.f. in our analysis.

[4]This trichotomization was as close as possible to thirds given the distribution of responses.

TABLE 4
Confirmatory Factor Analysis on the Measures of Market Maven, Early Purchaser, and Opinion Leader

	Food Subsample[a]	Drug Subsample[b]
One-factor model	χ^2 (35) = 254.42[c]	χ^2 (35) = 189.24[c]
Three-factor model	χ^2 (33) = 107.75[c]	χ^2 (33) = 107.98[c]
Difference test	χ^2 (2) = 146.67[c]	χ^2 (2) = 81.26[c]
Correlation among constructs		
Market maven and opinion leader	.23	.24
Market maven and early purchaser	.54	.47
Opinion leader and early purchaser	.12	.15

[a]N = 771.
[b]N = 760.
[c]$p < .001$.

erage perceived early awareness of new products (i.e., finding out before other consumers) in four consumer package goods categories. The other is the average reported awareness of four new brands in the four product categories.[5] The specific questions and results of the analyses are reported in Table 5. For the food subsample, the three market maven groups (formed from high, medium, and low scores on the market maven scale) differ in the expected direction (the higher the market maven scale score, the higher the report of early awareness of new products across the four product categories). This result holds for the drug subsample as well. The rather weak correlation between market maven scores and the new brand awareness for the food subsample may be due to the high levels of awareness of these brands across respondents, and hence low variance. Across all groups the mean food brand awareness is 3.29 of four possible brands. The mean is 1.29 for the four brands in the drug subsample.

The concept of a market maven also includes provision of information to other consumers. P_2 proposes market mavens will provide other people with specific information on particular package goods. Respondents were asked how often they provide other people with specific information on products in the four categories for both the food and drug subsamples. As indicated in Table 5, the three groups differ significantly in the expected direction (the higher the market maven score, the more frequent the information provision across categories of consumer package goods).

Search Activities

Two measures were used to test P_3, that market mavens demonstrate higher levels of general market in-

[5]A nonexistent brand name was included to control for the effect of yea-saying.

TABLE 5
Means (Standard Errors) on Early Awareness and Information Provision Measures by Market Maven Groups

	Food Subsample					Drug Subsample					
	Market Maven Groups				Correlation with Market Maven Scale[a]		Market Maven Groups				Correlation with Market Maven Scale[a]
	Low	Medium	High	F			Low	Medium	High	F	
Early Awareness											
How often do you find out about new products in each of the following categories *before* most other people: coffees, frozen entrees, diet soft drinks, breakfast cereals (mean score for the four 7-point items in which 1 = never, 7 = very frequently)	2.41 (.09)	3.15 (.08)	3.74 (.11)	48.05[b]	.39	How often do you find out about new products in each of the following categories *before* most other people: pain relievers, vitamins, deodorants, suntan products (mean score for the four 7-point items in which 1 = never, 7 = very frequently)	2.33 (.10)	3.34 (.09)	3.50 (.11)	32.68[b]	.31
Awareness (number heard of) of four brands: Master Blend, Lean Cuisine, Diet Sprite, Post Fruit & Fiber	3.16 (.07)	3.32 (.06)	3.39 (.05)	3.70[c]	.13	Awareness (number heard of) of four new brands: Nuprin, Caltrate, Dial Solid, Eclipse	.99 (.07)	1.29 (.06)	1.56 (.08)	17.27[b]	.19
Information Provision											
How often do you provide other people with specific information in each of the following categories: coffees, frozen entrees, diet soft drinks, breakfast cereals (mean score for the four 7-point items in which 1 = never, 7 = very frequently)	2.08 (.09)	2.75 (.07)	3.41 (.11)	52.72[b]	.40	How often do you provide people with specific information in each of the following categories: pain relievers, vitamins, deodorants, suntan products (mean score for the four 7-point items in which 1 = never, 7 = very frequently)	1.72 (.07)	2.74 (.09)	3.42 (.11)	88.05[b]	.47
N	226	283	217				220	258	236		

[a]All significant at $p < .001$.
[b]All significant at $p < .001$. All groups differ from all others using Scheffé at $p = .05$.
[c]Significant at $p < .05$. Low group differs from high group using Scheffé at $p = .05$.

formation seeking than other consumers. One was regular readership of *Consumer Reports,* defined as reading three of the last four issues or more than half the issues in the previous year. The other examined the importance of various sources in finding out about new consumer package goods. Specifically, respondents were asked how important each of eight information sources is in finding out about new food and common household products or nonprescription drugs and new health and beauty products.

The results indicate market mavens are much more likely to be regular *Consumer Reports* readers. Whereas 6 and 7% of the low and medium groups, respectively, read *Consumer Reports,* 15% of the market mavens were regular readers (χ^2=31.09, 2 d.f., $p < .01$) Examined in the opposite way, the results show over 50% of regular *Consumer Reports* readers are market mavens, whereas only about 19% of regular readers rate low on the market maven scale.

There are also significant differences among the three market maven groups on the importance rating of various information sources used in finding out about new consumer package goods. The size of the difference varies somewhat across information sources, but market mavens consistently reported higher mean importance for all of the sources of information in both the food and drug subsamples (Table 6).

Other Characteristics of Market Mavens

P_4 indicates market mavens will give greater attention to the marketplace through greater coupon usage, enjoyment of shopping, and attention to advertising. Tables 7 and 8 report the differences between high, medium, and low market maven groups on the measures of general marketplace attentiveness. The three groups differ significantly in the expected direction in enjoyment of shopping, both generally and for consumer package goods, in attention to advertising, and in couponing. The higher the market maven scale score, the greater the enjoyment of shopping, attention to advertising, and use of couponing.

We did not specify a proposition on the demographic profile of the market maven. Table 9 reports demographic characteristics of respondents in the high, medium, and low groups on the market maven scale. Market mavens are somewhat more likely to be female and to be black, but there are no significant differences between the groups in household size, number of children under 18, age, or income. A significant but weak negative relationship emerged between education and market maven scores—market mavens are slightly less educated than individuals who are low on the scale. Substantively, however, this difference is very small; less than one year of education separates

TABLE 6
Means (Standard Errors) on Search Activities by Market Maven Groups

Food Subsample						Drug Subsample					
Search Activities Measure	Market Maven Groups			F[a]	Correlation with Market Maven Scale[b]	Search Activities Measure	Market Maven Groups			F[a]	Correlation with Market Maven Scale[b]
	Low	Medium	High				Low	Medium	High		
How important are each of the following sources to you in finding out about new food and common household products (1 = not at all important, 7 = very important)						How important are each of the following sources to you in finding out about new nonprescription drugs and health and beauty products (1 = not at all important, 7 = very important)					
Free samples	4.05 (.15)	5.24 (.11)	5.70 (.12)	41.84	.35	Free samples	4.05 (.16)	5.06 (.12)	5.58 (.12)	31.84	.29
Magazines	3.59 (.13)	4.34 (.10)	4.83 (.13)	26.12	.29	Magazines	3.40 (.13)	4.12 (.12)	5.04 (.13)	42.15	.34
Newspapers	3.94 (.13)	4.69 (.10)	5.32 (.10)	33.31	.33	Newspapers	3.60 (.14)	4.12 (.12)	5.12 (.12)	36.19	.29
Radio	3.13 (.13)	4.03 (.12)	4.72 (.13)	37.52	.31	Radio	3.12 (.14)	3.90 (.12)	4.42 (.14)	23.41	.26
Television	3.85 (.14)	4.90 (.10)	5.19 (.13)	33.05	.30	Television	3.93 (.15)	4.80 (.11)	5.09 (.13)	20.77	.24
Salespeople	2.26 (.12)	2.74 (.10)	3.48 (.15)	23.21	.27	Salespeople	2.24 (.12)	2.73 (.11)	3.50 (.13)	24.50	.26
Relatives/friends	4.16 (.13)	4.92 (.10)	5.58 (.10)	38.05	.35	Relatives/friends	3.95 (.14)	4.85 (.10)	5.51 (.10)	45.63	.35
Browsing/shopping	3.73 (.13)	4.66 (.10)	5.34 (.11)	47.96	.38	Browsing/shopping	3.38 (.14)	4.31 (.10)	4.30 (.12)	51.56	.40
N	228	284	219			N	218	258	236		

[a]All F-tests significant at $p < .001$. Using Scheffé at $p = .05$, all three groups are significantly different from one another for all information sources except television. For television, the low group differs from medium and high groups for both subsamples.
[b]All significant at $p < .001$.

TABLE 7
Means (Standard Errors) on Marketplace Attentiveness by Market Maven Groups

Marketplace Attentiveness Measure	Market Maven Groups			F[a]	Correlation with Market Maven Scale[b]
	Low	Medium	High		
In general, to what extent do you enjoy shopping? (1 = not at all, 5 = extremely)	2.22 (.05)	2.88 (.05)	3.25 (.05)	93.44	.36
Often read advertisements just out of curiosity (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree)	3.92 (.10)	4.82 (.08)	5.62 (.08)	88.59	.36
Read advertisements because they are a good source of information about new products (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree	3.79 (.10)	4.66 (.08)	5.72 (.08)	122.29	.41
N	450	543	461		

[a]All significant at $p < .001$. All groups differ from one another for each measure using Scheffé at $p = .05$.
[b]All significant at $p < .001$.

the means for the three groups.

Also included in Table 9 are general media use patterns for the groups. The relationship between the market maven scale score and magazine readership is a positive linear one. Market mavens read the most magazines. A similar relationship holds for total television viewing. In the case of both magazines and television, the relationship is statistically significant, but not large.

In summary, we found support for all four propositions advanced. Market mavens are aware of new products earlier, provide information to other consumers across product categories, engage in general market information seeking, and exhibit general market interest and attentiveness. The demographic characteristics of the market maven appear to be much like those of other consumers; however, women and blacks are somewhat more heavily represented. General media usage for this group of influencers appears to be slightly higher than average.

TABLE 8
Means (Standard Errors) on Marketplace Attentiveness for Food and Drug Subsamples by Market Maven Groups

Food Subsample						Drug Subsample					
Measure	Market Maven Groups			F[a]	Correlation with Market Maven Scale[b]	Measure	Market Maven Groups			F[a]	Correlation with Market Maven Scale[b]
	Low	Medium	High				Low	Medium	High		
To what extent do you enjoy shopping for food and common household products (1 = not at all, 5 = extremely)	2.21 (.07)	2.74 (.06)	3.09 (.08)	38.61	.35	To what extent do you enjoy shopping for nonprescription drugs and health and beauty products (1 = not at all, 5 = extremely)	1.92 (.07)	2.29 (.07)	2.73 (.07)	33.73	.32
When you shop for food and common household products, how often do you use coupons (1 = never, 5 = nearly all the time)	2.70 (.09)	2.99 (.08)	3.45 (.09)	17.40	.25	When you shop for nonprescription drugs and health and beauty items, how often do you use coupons (1 = never, 5 = nearly all the time)	2.32 (.09)	2.81 (.08)	3.10 (.09)	21.31	.26
N	219	284	216			N	206	251	232		

[a]All significant at $p < .001$. All groups differ from one another for each measure using Scheffé at $p = .05$.
[b]All significant at $p < .001$.

TABLE 9
Means (Standard Errors) or Percentages on Demographic Characteristics and General Media Usage by Market Maven Groups

	Market Maven Groups				
	Low	Medium	High	F	χ^2 (1 d.f.)
Demographic Characteristics					
Age	43.8 (.70)	42.0 (.63)	43.3 (.68)	1.90	
Education	13.77 (.12)	13.52 (.10)	13.17 (.12)	6.54[a]	
Income ($)	28,200 (955)	25,661 (762)	26,777 (958)	2.10	
Household size	2.78 (.07)	2.91 (.07)	3.00 (.07)	2.50	
Children under 18	.74 (.05)	.90 (.05)	.74 (.05)	2.15	
Sex (% female)	53.8	63.4	74.9		44.39[a]
Marital status (% married)	64.1	64.5	64.0		.03
Race (% white)	92.2	88.4	82.4		20.47[a]
General Media Usage					
Number of different magazines read per month	2.29 (.04)	2.52 (.07)	2.80 (.08)	9.89[a]	
Hours of television watched per day	3.08 (.10)	3.42 (.09)	3.60 (.11)	6.74[a]	
N	450	545	462		

[a]$p < .001$.

Discussion

Our research establishes the existence of the marketplace influencers we have termed "market mavens." We demonstrate that market mavens are distinct from opinion leaders and early purchasers. We find that individuals can recognize the market maven quality in themselves and can identify this characteristic in others. In sum, the research substantiates the existence of this type of influencer and suggests that consumers are able to identify market mavens, use them in making consumption decisions, and distinguish them from individuals with product-based expertise. Further, we document that the market maven concept is related to early awareness of new products, provision of information about products to other consumers, search activities such as readership of *Consumer Reports* and extensive use of numerous sources of market information, and greater participation in market activities, couponing, and reading advertisements. Market mavens enjoy shopping and use browsing and shopping as an important way of finding out about new products. Our findings suggest that one reason for market mavens' acquisition and transmission of information may be their involvement with the marketplace.

Market Mavens' Potential Importance to Managers

Research has suggested that the best prospect for targeting marketing communications about new products is the consumer who buys early and in large quantities and who also influences others to purchase (Kotler and Zaltman 1976). By targeting these best prospects, manufacturers can improve initial sales to defray roll-out costs and obtain more rapid information diffusion about the product. Because of their best-prospect characteristics, opinion leaders and early purchasers of products have been a particular focus of attention in marketing communications. For example, most consumer behavior texts include strategic sections using research results to suggest ways to target early purchasers and opinion leaders (see, e.g., Assael 1984; Horton 1984; Robertson, Zielinski, and Ward 1984). Though these groups are important prospects when a marketer is interested in diffusion of new product information, they may not be as important in communicating other information such as changes in prices or availability of products, new stores, and so on. For example, though early purchasers engage in active as well as passive diffusion of new product information, there is little evidence that they provide information about other marketing mix changes. Further, there is little evidence that early purchasers provide new product information if they are aware of, but have not yet adopted, a new product. In addition, because early adoption tends to be product class specific, marketers are faced with targeting early purchasers separately by product types.

Similar problems occur with targeting opinion leaders. Because opinion leadership tends to be prod-

uct class specific, marketers are faced with product-class-specific targeting of opinion leaders. Moreover, certain product classes generate a disproportionate number of opinion leaders and other product categories have few (Feick, Price, and Higie 1986). Opinion leaders are more likely in product categories in which pleasure or satisfaction is derived from product usage or association with the product provides a form of self-expression. As a consequence, targeting opinion leaders may be very effective in diffusing information about products such as automobiles or personal computers, but ineffective for products such as refrigerators or dehumidifiers (Bloch 1986).

Though early purchasers and opinion leaders certainly warrant the attention of marketing managers, neither group seems to have ideal characteristics for communicating marketing mix changes involving something more than new product introduction and spanning multiple product categories. To diffuse this type of information most effectively, the ideal target of communications should have knowledge about a wide array of goods and services and about the process of acquiring them. In addition, the target should be active in providing other people with information and advice. Market mavens appear to be good targets for general messages about marketing mix changes, messages spanning multiple product classes, and messages about products that may not have much inherent consumer interest. Market mavens may be especially important to retailers, as they often attempt to communicate information about a large assortment of goods. Market mavens may also be good targets for information programs on low involvement products or for information not based on products.

Despite the clear benefits of focusing attention on market mavens, targeting the maven with communications may be difficult. No clear demographic profile of the maven is evident from our results. Market mavens may be difficult for marketing managers to use, at least until further research can provide greater insights into the kind of information transmitted by the maven, the frequency of information transmission, or other means of profiling the maven that do not rely on demographic data.

Perhaps the most important contribution of our research is its implications for the study of interpersonal influence. The identification of an important but previously unknown influencer group suggests a reexamination of our approach to information diffusion. Such a reexamination should center on (1) developing better measures for discriminating influencers who are generalists from influencers who are specialists, (2) examining the motivations for information exchange that are not based on product involvement or experience, and (3) developing better ways to examine the relationship between types of influencers.

Some examples of the kinds of questions that need to be addressed include:

- What are the differences in the kind of information provided by the opinion leader, the early purchaser, and the market maven?
- Are there differences in how these influencer groups are used?
- Do market mavens refer a consumer to a specialist when the purchase problem is unique or complex in much the same way a general practitioner refers a patient to a surgeon?
- Finally, are market mavens more active in *initiating* information diffusion than opinion leaders?

The last question is of particular interest because the market maven may be motivated to provide useful information to friends and associates and may accumulate information for this purpose. In contrast, opinion leaders, motivated by product involvement, may initiate information exchange only with people who share their own product interests (i.e., members of their car club or personal computer club), but may be sought by less knowledgeable individuals who are aware of the opinion leaders' special expertise.

Appendix
Market Maven Scale Items

1. I like introducing new brands and products to my friends.
2. I like helping people by providing them with information about many kinds of products.
3. People ask me for information about products, places to shop, or sales.
4. If someone asked where to get the best buy on several types of products, I could tell him or her where to shop.
5. My friends think of me as a good source of information when it comes to new products or sales.
6. Think about a person who has information about a variety of products and likes to share this information with others. This person knows about new products, sales, stores, and so on, but does not necessarily feel he or she is an expert on one particular product. How well would you say that this description fits you?

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