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Development and test of new dimensions of altruistic buying behavior

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is show how altruism provides a basis for understanding motivations that consumers may possess, especially as it relates to their response to buy-national marketing campaigns. The paper aims to report research that examines traditional measures of altruism to determine whether there are differing or additional dimensions of altruism.

Design/methodology/approach – The research is based on a survey of 212 consumers and their responses to previously validated altruism scales. These scales were factor-analyzed to identify new dimensions of altruism.

Findings – Eight dimensions of altruism are empirically identified and are demonstrated to be different by demographic groupings and their responses to altruism-based marketing programs.

Originality/value – Patterns of altruistic behavior can enable marketers to estimate the relative size and behavioral patterns of altruism-based market segments.

Keywords Altruism, Ethnocentrism, Individual development, Demographics, Market segmentation

Paper type Research paper

An executive summary for managers and executive readers can be found at the end of this article.

Introduction

The impact that altruism has on purchase behavior is an important issue for business firms and it is an increasingly seen topic in the literature (Croson, 2007; Choi and Wang, 2007; Keating *et al.*, 2007; Perlman, 2005; Resick *et al.*, 2006). In today's global economy, environmental and humanitarian issues are increasingly important to consumers and altruism provides a basis for understanding these motivations that consumers may possess (Henry, 2000; Webb *et al.*, 2000). Research on altruistic behavior in the context of business behaviors represents a new and exciting application of the research stream that has developed on altruism (Federouch, 1990; Olsen *et al.*, 1993). The first objective of this research is to test established altruism scales in a consumer purchasing environment to determine if there are differing or additional dimensions of altruism that may provide further understanding of buyer motivations. The previous scales that are examined address the interaction of cultural, cognitive, and behavioral determinants of altruism and provide a basis to identify additional dimensions of altruism. The second objective of this research is to determine if the newly identified dimensions of altruism differ by demographic market segment. The research reported in this

paper extends the literature on altruism that can be applied to several research areas based on the decision-making processes of consumers based on altruistic motivations. The research can also be of interest to several managerial constituencies that may wish to influence the purchase choice of a product or to promote a product or service based on an altruistic appeal. In the findings of the present research, we shed some light on these phenomena.

Perspectives on altruism

The issue of defining and measuring altruism has been addressed by many authors. August Comte (1875) maintained that some social behavior was unselfishly motivated to benefit others. Batson (1991) has defined altruism as a motivational state with the ultimate goal of increasing another's welfare. Research into the construct is directly traced to several theoretical sources: Gouldner's (1960) proposition regarding the prevalence of the universal norm of reciprocity; Leeds' (1963) suggestion regarding the prescription of the norm of giving; Piaget's (1932) and Kohlberg's (1958, 1969) approach towards the development of moral judgment; Aronfreed's (1968) conceptualization of conscience development; and Rushton *et al.*'s (1984) genetic similarity theory suggesting a biological basis for ethnocentrism, or the universal tendency for people to favor their own group over others (Booth, 1979; Worchel and Cooper, 1979). These theories explicitly discuss social conditions for helping behavior or implicitly offer a basis for such conduct. Modern interpretations of altruistic behavior concludes that it voluntarily benefits another without the expectation of reward (Berkowitz, 1972; Krebs, 1970), empathizes with the needs of another (Aronfreed, 1970; Cohen, 1972), is self-sacrificing (Campbell, 1975, 1978;

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Hatfield *et al.*, 1978; Krebs, 1970; Midlarsky, 1968, Wispé, 1978), and is voluntary (Leeds, 1963).

In today's global economy, environmental and humanitarian issues are increasingly important to consumers. Companies and brands that are perceived positively on these dimensions have a real chance to take advantage of people's growing sense of altruism (Insight, 2005). Altruism provides a useful basis for understanding this motivation that consumers may possess (Bendapudi *et al.*, 1996; Henry, 2000; Price *et al.*, 1995; Rieck, 2000; Webb *et al.*, 2000). Although altruism has been researched previously in a social or psychological context, it is considered to have an important influence on consumer behavior (Simon, 1993).

The basis of this research is predicated on the traditional measures of altruism. Previous research has examined altruism in the context of three primary dimensions that reflect an interaction between cultural, cognitive, and behavioral determinants (Bar-Tal, 1976, pp. 14-37):

- 1 *Ethnocentrism* – the universal tendency for people to favor their own group over others (Rushton *et al.*, 1984), that has been applied to consumer behavior by Shimp and Sharma (1987).
- 2 *Cognitive moral development* – the way in which individuals acquire, through time, an increasingly accurate understanding of their moral obligations (Rest, 1979).
- 3 *Altruistic behavior* – that behavior which is carried out to benefit another without anticipation of external rewards and performed for its own end and restitution (Bar-Tal, 1976, pp. 4, 14-37; Kohlberg, 1969; Rushton, 1989).

Ethnocentrism represents a cultural basis for altruism, cognitive moral development represents a cognitive basis, and altruistic behavior is a behavioral basis. The items comprising the traditional measures of altruism – Shimp and Sharma's (1987) CETSCALE, Rest's (1986) Defining Issues Test (DIT) and Rushton *et al.*'s (1981) Self-Report Altruism Scale (SRAS) are detailed in Table I.

In this research, the role of demographic segments is also considered. It has been reported that people are more likely to help members of their own race or country than they are to help members of other races or foreigners (Cunningham, 1981; Rushton, 1989). Similarity in demographic, physical, and psychological characteristics are reported to be an important factor in marriage, attraction, friendship, and group cohesion (Byrne, 1971). As applied to consumer purchase behavior, domestic products have historically provided the frame of reference for the evaluation of foreign products (Shimp and Sharma, 1987). Though large numbers of consumers now are willing to consider foreign products as alternatives to domestic items, some consumers staunchly refuse to buy imported products and chastise fellow consumers for doing this. They claim buying foreign goods puts domestic workers out of work, hurts the economy, or is unpatriotic. However, they may moderate this position when domestic products are judged as being of lower quality, or when they hold higher conspicuous consumption values (Cheng and Chen, 2004). Other consumers are equally vocal in defending their right to buy whatever products they wish, regardless of place of manufacture.

Several other demographic variables influence the occurrence of prosocial behavior (Bryan and Test, 1967; Latane and Dabbs, 1976; Piliavin *et al.*, 1969). Age has been

positively reported to influence prosocial behavior (Handlon and Gross, 1959; Midlarsky and Bryan, 1967; Urgurel-Semin, 1948). As individuals mature and experience physiological, psychological, and social change their altruistic behavior tends to increase (Krebs, 1970). The relationship between prosocial behavior and household income remains subject to question. Smith *et al.* (1995) found that household income played no role in the decision to give; however, it positively influenced the subsequent decision about donation size. Traits of generosity and consideration increase with education (Almond and Verba, 1963), although there is a greater interest in the literature on the relationship of prosocial behavior and intelligence. Unger (1964) reports that more intelligent subjects tend to react to experimental conditions with socially approved behavior.

Hopkins and Powers (2007) found age and education to be differentiators across the dimensions of altruism. Specifically, they found that older consumers had higher levels of two of the three dimensions of altruism. Older consumers had higher levels of consumer ethnocentrism and cognitive moral development, but not altruistic behavior. In addition, they found that more educated consumers preferred foreign products, but at the same time had higher levels of all of the three dimensions of altruism – consumer ethnocentrism, cognitive moral development, and prosocial behavior. The results determined gender is not a differentiator in terms of product choice or in terms of the three dimensions of altruism that could be used for targeting buy-national programs. Lastly, household income was shown to not be a possible differentiator that could be used for targeting buy-national programs. Although no difference in household income in terms of choice of a domestic or foreign product were reported, some differences in levels of the consumer ethnocentrism dimension of altruism were observed. Middle-income groups had higher levels of consumer ethnocentrism and lower levels of cognitive moral development and prosocial behavior than did low income or higher income groups. This finding very well could reflect the fact that these income groups are more likely to represent workers that are at the crux of the impact of consumers buying domestic products. In addition, middle-income groups may have a heightened awareness of world economic events and the impact these events have on their earning ability and spending habits. Based on these findings, it is clear that the concept of altruism and the instruments that measure the interaction between its cultural, cognitive and behavioral dimensions are useful tools for identifying individuals that may be interested in buying products from their own country and receptive to a message from local marketers.

Research method

The first step in this research was to identify and refine the previously established scales that measure the cultural, cognitive, and behavioral elements of altruism. These scales were for ethnocentrism, the 17-item CETSCALE developed by Shimp and Sharma (1987); for cognitive moral development, Rest's (1986) Defining Issues Test (DIT); and for altruistic behavior, the 19-item Self-Report Altruism Scale (SRAS) developed by Rushton *et al.* (1981). The emphasis in this research was on developing measures that have desirable reliability and validity properties enabling their use by marketing researchers in more than one context. Only by

Table I Variables and factor loadings for altruism items

	Patriotic purchasing altruism	High action altruism	Moderate action altruism	Giving altruism	Multi-ethnic purchasing altruism	Low personal altruism	Cognitive moral development	High personal altruism
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
CET1	Americans should not buy foreign products because this hurts American business and causes unemployment	0.875						
CET10	There should be very little trading or purchasing of goods from other countries unless out of necessity	0.853						
CET6	It is not right to purchase foreign products because it puts Americans out of jobs	0.841						
CET14	Foreigners should not be allowed to put their products on our markets	0.790						
CET17	American consumers who purchase products made in other countries are responsible for putting their fellow Americans out of work	0.783						
CET16	We should buy from foreign countries only those products that we cannot obtain within our own country	0.778						
CET7	A real American should always buy American-made products	0.758						
CET12	Curbs should be put on all imports	0.751						
CET15	Foreign products should be taxed heavily to reduce their entry into the USA	0.750						
CET5	Purchasing foreign-made products is un-American	0.736						
CET8	We should purchase products manufactured in America instead of letting other countries get rich off us	0.698						
CET4	American products first, last and foremost	0.692						
CET9	It is always best to purchase American products	0.648						
CET2	Only those products that are unavailable in the USA should be imported	0.608						
CET13	It may cost me in the long run but I prefer to support American products	0.586						
CET1	American people should always buy American-made products instead of imports	0.562						
ALT18	I have offered to help a handicapped or elderly stranger across a street							0.697
ALT14	I have let a neighbor whom I did not know too well borrow an item of some value to me (e.g. a dish, tools, etc.)							0.683

(continued)

Table I

	Patriotic purchasing altruism	High action altruism	Moderate action altruism	Giving altruism	Multi-ethnic purchasing altruism	Low personal altruism	Cognitive moral development	High personal altruism
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
ALT15		0.668						
	I have bought "charity" Christmas cards deliberately because I knew it was a good cause							
ALT19		0.657						
	I have offered my seat on a bus or train to a stranger who was standing							
ALT9		0.587						
	I have helped carry a stranger's belongings (books, parcels, etc.)							
ALT17		0.573						
	I have, before being asked, voluntarily looked after a neighbor's pet or children without being paid for it							
ALT20		0.416						
	I have helped an acquaintance to move household goods							
ALT12			0.665					
	I have given a stranger a lift in my car							
ALT3			0.640					
	I have made change for a stranger							
ALT1			0.633					
	I have helped push a stranger's car out of the snow (or a rut)							
ALT5			0.580					
	I have given money to a stranger who needed it (or asked me for it)							
ALT13								
	I have pointed out a clerk's error (in a bank, at the supermarket) in undercharging me for an item							
ALT4				0.827				
	I have given money to charity							
ALT6				0.786				
	I have donated goods or clothes to a charity							
ALT7				0.606				
	I have done volunteer work for a charity							
CET3					0.661			
	Buy American-made products. Keep America working							
ALT10								
	I have delayed an elevator and held the door open for a stranger							
ALT2						0.690		
	I have given directions to a stranger							
ALT11						0.577		
	I have allowed someone to go ahead of me in a line-up (at Xerox machine, in the supermarket)							
DIT							0.794	
	I have helped a classmate who I did not know that much with a homework assignment when my knowledge was greater than his or hers							
ALT16								0.697
	I have donated blood							

developing and refining valid measures can marketing researchers use similar measures, compare their findings and systematically develop knowledge in the field of marketing (Churchill, 1979).

In order to examine the possible dimensions of altruism across a spectrum of consumers, a multistage cluster sampling of households was used with demographics that corresponded to the demographics of the general population of Maricopa County, Arizona, USA, a suburban metropolitan area of approximately one million households. Six street intersections were randomly chosen from standard municipal maps available from local political jurisdictions and a 40-address sampling frame was devised, based on the 40 addresses nearest the intersection. Thus, 1,440 ($6 \times 6 \times 40$) addresses made up the sampling frame. From this frame, 18 addresses were randomly selected from each of the previously designated 36 intersections resulting in 648 addresses being selected. The study utilized a drop and collect technique to collect survey data (Brown, 1987).

Identifying new dimensions of altruism

A total of 252 questionnaires were returned and 212 responses were usable for an effective response rate of 32.7 per cent. The response rate was considered acceptable and is consistent with previous studies using the drop and collect survey procedure (Brown, 1987). Of the 212 respondents, 98 (46.2 per cent) were male and 114 (53.8 per cent) were female. The average ages of these individuals were 52 (range = 18 – 65 +). Of the sample, 74 per cent were married living in a household consisting of two adults. The level of education ranged from having a high school education or less to having a postgraduate degree with the average respondent having attended college. The average respondent's total household income was just under \$50,000 per year. A comparison of the demographic profiles (age, education, and household income) of the respondents revealed no difference between the sample and the general population from which it was drawn. Beyond questions designed to determine the demographic profile of respondents, the questionnaire contained the 17-item CETSCALE, the 19-item Self-Report Altruism Scale and Rest's (1986) Defining Issues Test. A principal component analysis with a Varimax rotation was performed on all the items from the previously established scales to explore the structure of altruism. As shown in Table II, the 38-items from the three scales loaded on eight factors that explain 62.991 per cent of the variance in responses.

Factor 1 that includes 16 items explains 26.922 per cent of the variance in responses constituting a dimension we refer to as Patriotic Purchasing Altruism. Factor 2 includes seven items explaining 14.242 per cent of the variance in the responses constituting a dimension we refer to as High Action Altruism. Factor 3 includes four items and explains 5.544 per cent of the variance in the responses constituting a construct we refer to as Moderate Action Altruism. Factor 4 includes three items and explains 3.844 per cent of the variance in the responses. It constitutes a dimension called Giving Altruism. Factor 5 includes one item (CET3) and explains 3.45 per cent of the variance in the responses constituting a dimension we refer to as Multi-ethnic Purchasing Altruism. Factor 6 includes three items and explains 3.193 per cent of the variance in the responses constituting a dimension we refer to as Low Personal Altruism. Factor 7 includes two items and

Table II Eigenvalues for the Self-Report Altruism Scale (SRAS), CETSCALE and Definitive Issues Test (DIT)

Component	Total	Initial Eigenvalues	
		Percentage of variance	Cumulative percentage
1	10.230	26.922	26.922
2	5.412	14.242	41.164
3	2.107	5.544	46.709
4	1.461	3.844	50.553
5	1.311	3.450	54.003
6	1.213	3.193	57.196
7	1.156	3.041	60.237
8	1.047	2.754	62.991

Notes: Extraction method: Principal Component Analysis in which: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) = 0.891; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity = 4173.591, $p = 0.000$; Rotation Method: Varimax procedure with Kaiser Normalization

explains 3.041 per cent of the variance in the responses constituting one construct called Cognitive Moral Development. Factor 8 includes one item and explains 2.754 per cent of the variance in the responses constituting a dimension called "High personal altruism".

Reliability of the scales reflecting the new altruism dimensions was tested using coefficient alpha. Internal consistency by inter-item correlations was also calculated to assess the validity of the scale. As seen in Table III, the coefficients of the scales had alphas greater or marginally below the 0.70 generally accepted threshold for published empirical research (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). The inter-item correlation analysis also produced desirable results with correlations ranging from 0.307 to 0.556. Cronbach's α and inter-item correlations are seen in Table III. The inter-item correlation analysis we ran also produced desirable results with correlations ranging from 0.307 to 0.556. The dimensions identified provide new insights into how specific attitudes and actions may exist consistent with the original conceptualization of altruism. Each of these dimensions is now described.

"Patriotic purchasing altruism" can be considered a motivating force in the purchase of a product or service, given a consideration of country-of-origin in the product consideration process. This is particularly true in the context of early adopters of a product (Wiser *et al.*, 2001). For example, the use of an altruistic appeal for early adopters was used by Toyota in the marketing of its first gas-electric hybrid automobile (Child, 2003). Supporting the strategy that Toyota has undertaken, purchase motivations have been shown to shift from materialistic motivations to altruistic concerns as individuals age (Goodhead, 1991). "Multi-ethnic purchasing altruism", based on the items that loaded on this dimension, like "Patriotic purchasing altruism", can be considered a motivating force in the purchase of a product or service, involving a moderated consideration of country-of-origin in the product consideration process.

Second, "High action altruism", "Moderate action altruism" and "Low personal altruism", based on the items that loaded on each of these dimensions, and each in successive levels, can be considered personal extensions of

Table III Reliability and inter-item scores

Dimension of altruism	Factor	Alpha	Inter-item	Original number of items	Revised number of items
Patriotic purchasing altruism	1	0.9519	0.5560	16	16
High action altruism	2	0.7991	0.3651	7	7
Moderate action altruism	3	0.6732	0.3403	4	4
Giving altruism	4	0.6471	0.4479	3	3
Multi-ethnic purchasing altruism	5	0.0000	0.0000	1	0
Low personal altruism	6	0.6554	0.4880	3	2
Cognitive moral development	7	0.4703	0.3075	2	2
High personal altruism	8	n/a	n/a	1	1

altruistic behavior across the whole spectrum of relationships, from strangers to acquaintances to best friends (McGuire, 2003) shedding light on the personal characteristics of those prone to helping others and those being helped. Perhaps helping one you know is less involved or risky than for a stranger, a charity or an established entity that may have more credibility than individuals may by themselves. For some time social scientists have considered similarity in human relationships to be an important factor in marriage, attraction, friendship, altruism and group cohesion (Byrne, 1971). According to Rushton *et al.*'s (1984) genetic similarity theory, there may be a biological basis for ethnocentrism (Booth, 1979; Worchel and Cooper, 1979). There may also be implications for the study of social behavior in small and large groups for national and international corporations. In 1989, Rushton connected the theory with altruism, suggesting that genetically similar people tend to seek one another out and direct altruism to genetically similar individuals.

Third, based on the items that loaded on this dimension, "Giving altruism" can be considered a reflection of altruistic behavior involving financial costs to the caregiver. There are circumstances where one's altruistic behavior involves not only monetary cost, but perceived cost as well. Perceived costs to the helper can be distorted downward as it can be seen as a pleasure to make self-sacrifices on behalf of a loved one (McGuire, 2003). Giving altruism increases understanding of altruistic behavior, assuming people analyze the cost of helping from an economic perspective that maximizes rewards and minimizes monetary and perceived costs to arrive at the best personal outcome (Piliavin *et al.*, 1981). For example, this cost/reward approach might entail approaching intervention as an opportunity for personal development (Perlow and Weeks, 2002), a means of enhancing mood (Gueguen and DeGail, 2003), or even a means of avoiding guilt or shame for inaction (Dovidio *et al.*, 1991).

Fourth, based on the items that loaded on this dimension, "Cognitive moral development" (Rest, 1979) increases understanding of altruism, given the premise that altruism is one aspect of the many that comprise morality (Krebs, 1978). Lastly, "High personal altruism" can be considered a level of personal involvement that exposes oneself to greater risk, improves understanding of altruistic behavior in those life threatening situations in which a competent adult aware of the risk and benefits involved, seeks to unconditionally offer himself in an act of altruism (Walton-Moss *et al.*, 2005). Altruistic acts that include solid organ donation/transplants and giving blood make a "useless" death or serious illness take on social, symbolic, and moral importance (Lock, 1996). Individual willingness to engage in acts of high personal

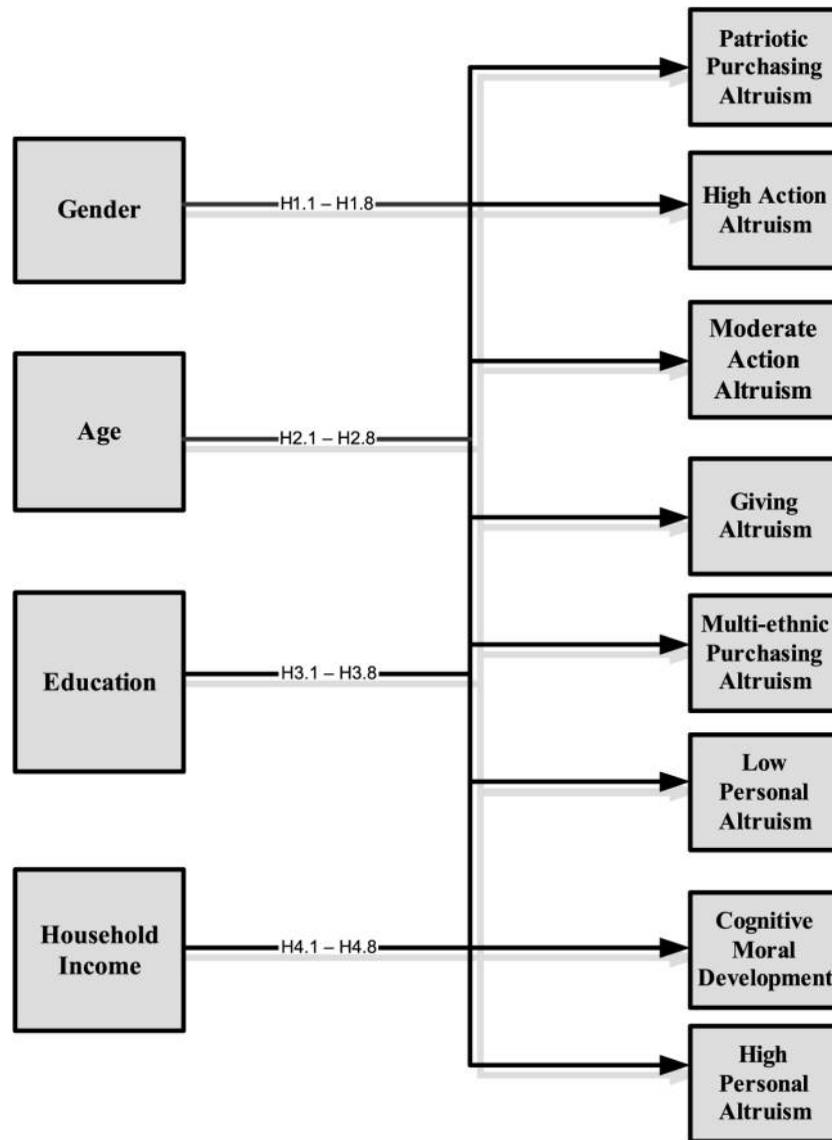
altruism may increase when more is known about potential recipients, even when recipients remain anonymous (Singh *et al.*, 2002).

Testing for differences by demographic group

The second objective of this research is to determine if the eight previously unidentified dimensions of altruism differ by demographic market segment. By identifying such segments, managers may better target consumers more receptive to altruism-based product and service promotions. In order to examine this issue, each set of hypotheses successively addresses the relationship between the demographic variables and the eight previously unidentified dimensions of altruism. The research framework is seen in Figure 1 and the specific hypotheses are:

- H1.1 There is a significant difference in the level of patriotic purchasing altruism based on gender.
- H1.2 There is a significant difference in the level of high action altruism based on gender.
- H1.3 There is a significant difference in the level of moderate action altruism based on gender.
- H1.4 There is a significant difference in the level of giving altruism based on gender.
- H1.5 There is a significant difference in the level of multi-ethnic purchasing altruism based on gender.
- H1.6 There is a significant difference in the level of low personal altruism based on gender.
- H1.7 There is a significant difference in the level of cognitive moral development based on gender.
- H1.8 There is a significant difference in the level of high personal altruism based on gender.
- H2.1 There is a significant difference in the level of patriotic purchasing altruism based on age.
- H2.2 There is a significant difference in the level of high action altruism based on age.
- H2.3 There is a significant difference in the level of moderate action altruism based on age.
- H2.4 There is a significant difference in the level of giving altruism based on age.
- H2.5 There is a significant difference in the level of multi-ethnic purchasing altruism based on age.
- H2.6 There is a significant difference in the level of low personal altruism based on age.
- H2.7 There is a significant difference in the level of cognitive moral development based on age.
- H2.8 There is a significant difference in the level of high personal altruism based on age.
- H3.1 There is a significant difference in the level of patriotic purchasing altruism based on education.

Figure 1 Research framework



- H3.2 There is a significant difference in the level of high action altruism based on education.
- H3.3 There is a significant difference in the level of moderate action altruism based on education.
- H3.4 There is a significant difference in the level of giving altruism based on education.
- H3.5 There is a significant difference in the level of multi-ethnic purchasing altruism based on education.
- H3.6 There is a significant difference in the level of low personal altruism based on education.
- H3.7 There is a significant difference in the level of cognitive moral development based on education.
- H3.8 There is a significant difference in the level of high personal altruism based on education.
- H4.1 There is a significant difference in the level of patriotic purchasing altruism based on household income.
- H4.2 There is a significant difference in the level of high action altruism based on household income.

- H4.3 There is a significant difference in the level of moderate action altruism based on household income.
- H4.4 There is a significant difference in the level of giving altruism based on household income.
- H4.5 There is a significant difference in the level of multi-ethnic purchasing altruism based on household income.
- H4.6 There is a significant difference in the level of low personal altruism based on household income.
- H4.7 There is a significant difference in the level of cognitive moral development based on household income.
- H4.8 There is a significant difference in the level of high personal altruism based on household income.

The data in this research were analyzed using independent sample t-tests and one-way ANOVA. H1.1 through H1.8 were analyzed using independent sample t-tests. The remaining H2.1 through H4.8 were analyzed using one-way analysis of

variance (ANOVA) performed to test the hypotheses that address the various relationships of constructs in the research framework (Figure 1). One-way ANOVA, the standard method for analyzing variation in means, most reasonably reflects a model describing the relationship between a set of independent variables and dependent variables (Kirk, 1982; Montgomery, 1984). A post hoc test was performed using Gabriel’s pair-wise comparison test where the null hypothesis was not rejected. Pearson’s correlation analysis was also used to measure the direction and strength of the association between the two variables in two cases. The results are seen in Tables III-VII. A total of 15 of 32 hypotheses were supported and these are now discussed.

H1.2 High action altruism based on gender

The results indicate that there is a significant difference in the level of High Action Altruism between the mean scores of the two gender groups ($t = -1.181, p = 0.022$) with the mean difference higher for females than for males.

H1.3 Moderate action altruism based on gender

The results indicate that there is a significant difference in the level of moderate action altruism between the mean scores of the two gender groups ($t = 4.705, p = 0.043$) with the mean difference higher for females than for males.

H1.6 Low personal altruism based on gender

The results indicate that there is a significant difference in the level of moderate action altruism between the mean scores of the two gender groups ($t = -1.477, p = 0.004$) with the mean difference higher for females than for males.

H2.1 Patriotic purchasing altruism based on age

The results indicate that there was a significant difference in patriotic purchasing altruism across the seven age groups ($F = 3.545, p = 0.002$). The hypothesis was supported. Post hoc analysis using Gabriel’s test indicated the mean differences in patriotic purchasing altruism for respondents in the age group 18 to 24 are significantly higher than respondents in the age group 45 to 49 years, respectively at the 0.05 level. In addition, the mean differences for respondents in the age group 65 years and older are significantly higher than respondents age group 45 to 49 years at the 0.05 level.

H2.4 Giving altruism based on age

The results indicate that there was a significant difference in “Giving altruism” across the seven age groups ($F = 2.455, p = 0.026$). The hypothesis was supported; however, the Gabriel *post hoc* test did not indicate specific differences between groups. This is not unusual as post hoc tests have a

Table V Age and the dimensions of altruism

H	SS	df	MS	F	Sig
H2.1	16.105	6	2.684	3.545	0.002
	155.203	205	0.757		
H2.2	3.580	6	0.597	1.152	0.334
	106.157	205	0.518		
H2.3	2.350	6	0.392	0.822	0.554
	97.705	205	0.477		
H2.4	8.054	6	1.342	2.455	0.026
	112.115	205	0.547		
H2.5	16.048	6	2.675	2.372	0.031
	231.197	205	1.128		
H2.6	5.441	6	0.907	1.718	0.118
	108.234	205	0.528		
H2.7	3.105	6	0.518	1.768	0.107
	60.009	205	0.293		
H2.8	15.031	6	2.505	1.243	0.286
	413.172	205	2.015		

Table VI Education and the dimensions of altruism

H	SS	df	MS	F	Sig
H3.1	23.954	4	5.988	8.412	0.000
	147.355	207	0.712		
H3.2	3.637	4	0.909	1.774	0.135
	106.100	207	0.513		
H3.3	6.819	4	1.705	3.785	0.005
	93.237	207	0.450		
H3.4	1.708	4	0.427	0.746	0.562
	118.462	207	0.572		
H3.5	17.052	4	4.263	3.834	0.005
	230.193	207	1.112		
H3.6	5.438	4	1.359	2.6	0.037
	108.237	207	0.523		
H3.7	2.817	4	0.704	2.418	0.050
	60.297	207	0.291		
H3.8	13.236	4	3.309	1.651	0.163
	414.967	207	2.005		

relatively low level of power (Hair *et al.*, 1998). Therefore, a correlation analysis was used to further identify the relationship. A significant positive correlation ($r = 0.150$,

Table IV Gender and the dimensions of altruism independent sample *t*-test

H	Dimension of altruism	Mean		<i>t</i>	<i>F</i>	Sig.
		Male	Female			
1.1	Patriotic purchasing altruism	2.3138	2.6020	-2.347	0.966	0.327
1.2	High action altruism	2.7362	2.8534	-1.181	5.292	0.022
1.3	Moderate action altruism	2.7347	2.3092	4.705	4.137	0.043
1.4	Giving altruism	3.7177	4.2135	-5.037	0.321	0.572
1.5	Multi-ethnic purchasing altruism	3.5714	3.9123	-2.309	0.673	0.413
1.6	Low personal altruism	3.6888	3.8377	-1.477	8.408	0.004
1.7	Cognitive moral development	1.5778	1.6531	-0.999	0.939	0.334
1.8	High personal altruism	2.8163	2.3421	2.445	1.644	0.201

Table VII Household income and the dimensions of altruism

H	SS	df	MS	F	Sig
H4.1	30.354	9	3.373	4.833	0.000
	140.955	202	0.698		
H4.2	3.589	9	0.399	0.759	0.655
	106.148	202	0.525		
H4.3	9.080	9	1.009	2.24	0.021
	90.975	202	0.450		
H4.4	8.059	9	0.895	1.613	0.113
	112.111	202	0.555		
H4.5	14.493	9	1.610	1.398	0.191
	232.752	202	1.152		
H4.6	7.704	9	0.856	1.632	0.108
	105.970	202	0.525		
H4.7	2.830	9	0.314	1.054	0.399
	60.284	202	0.298		
H4.8	35.667	9	3.963	2.039	0.037
	392.535	202	1.943		

$p = 0.028$) between age and giving altruism was identified. Thus, as age increases, “Giving altruism” increases.

H2.5 Multi-ethnic purchasing altruism based on age

The results indicate that there was a significant difference in “Multi-ethnic purchasing altruism” across the seven age groups ($F = 2.372$, $p = 0.031$). The hypothesis was supported; however, again the Gabriel post hoc test did not indicate specific differences between groups. A significant positive correlation ($r = 0.138$, $p = 0.044$) between age and “Multi-ethnic purchasing altruism” was identified. Thus, as age increases multi-ethnic purchasing altruism increases.

H3.1 Patriotic purchasing altruism based on education

The results indicate that there was a significant difference in “Patriotic purchasing altruism” across the seven age groups ($F = 8.412$, $p = 0.000$). The hypothesis was supported. Post Hoc analysis using Gabriel’s test at the 0.05 level indicated the mean differences in “Patriotic purchasing altruism” for respondents in the education group “High school or less” is significantly greater than that for the education groups “Attended college”, “Graduated college”, “Those with postgraduate study” and “Those with postgraduate degrees”, respectively.

H3.3 Moderate action altruism based on education

The results indicate that there was a significant difference in “Moderate action altruism” across the five education groups ($F = 3.785$, $p = 0.005$). The hypothesis was supported. Post Hoc analysis using Gabriel’s test indicated the mean difference in “Moderate action altruism” for respondents in the education group “Attended some college without graduating” is significantly higher than that for respondents in the education group “High school or less” and the mean difference for “Those that attained postgraduate degrees” is significantly higher than that for respondents in the education group “High school or less” at the 0.05 level.

H3.5 Multi-ethnic purchasing altruism based on education

The results indicate that there was a significant difference in “Multi-ethnic purchasing altruism” across the five education groups ($F = 3.834$, $p = 0.005$). The hypothesis was supported. Post hoc analysis using Gabriel’s test indicated

the mean differences in “Multi-ethnic purchasing altruism” for respondents in the education group “High school or less” are significantly higher than those for respondents in the education groups “Engaged in postgraduate study”, “Graduated from college” or that went on to complete “Postgraduate degrees” respectively.

H3.6 Low personal altruism based on education

The results indicate that there was a significant difference in “Low personal altruism” across the five education groups ($F = 2.600$, $p = 0.037$). The hypothesis was supported. Post hoc analysis using Gabriel’s test indicated the mean difference in “Low personal altruism” for respondents in the education group “Attended some college without graduating” is significantly higher than respondents in the education group “Completed high school or less”.

H3.7 Cognitive moral development based on education

The results indicate that there was a significant difference in “Cognitive moral development” across the five education groups ($F = 2.418$, $p = 0.050$). The hypothesis was supported. Post hoc analysis using Gabriel’s test indicated the mean difference in “Cognitive moral development” for respondents in the education group “Post graduate study without a graduate degree” is significantly higher than that for respondents that “Completed high school or less”.

H4.1 Patriotic purchasing altruism based on household income

The results indicate that there was a significant difference in patriotic purchasing altruism across the nine income groups ($F = 4.833$, $p = 0.000$). The hypothesis was supported. Post hoc analysis using Gabriel’s test indicated that mean differences in patriotic purchasing altruism for respondents in the income group earning less than \$15,000 annually is significantly higher than respondents earning between \$100,000 and \$250,000 annually. The mean difference for respondents earning between \$15,000 and \$24,999 is significantly higher than mean differences for those respondents earning between \$50,000 and \$74,999, and \$100,000 and \$249,999 annually. The mean difference for those earning between \$25,000 and \$34,999 is significantly higher than mean difference for those respondents earning between \$100,000 and \$249,999. The mean difference for those earning between \$35,000 and \$44,999 is significantly higher than mean difference for those respondents earning between \$100,000 and \$249,999.

H4.3 Moderate action altruism based on household income

The results indicate that there was a significant difference in moderate action altruism across the nine income groups ($F = 2.24$, $p = 0.021$). The hypothesis was supported. Post hoc analysis using Gabriel’s test indicated the mean differences at the 0.05 level in moderate action altruism for respondents in the income group earning between \$75,000 and \$99,999 is significantly higher than the mean difference those respondents earning between \$15,000 and \$24,999.

Discussion

The objective of this research was to test established altruism scales in a consumer purchasing environment to determine if there are differing or additional dimensions of altruism that may provide further understanding of buyers’ motivations and whether these dimensions differ by demographic market segment. The process of refinement undertaken in this

analysis has transformed the elements of altruism measured by the CETSCALE, Defining Issues Test and the Self-Report Altruism Scale (SRAS) into new constructs that perhaps more appropriately capture and distinguish the dimensions of altruism. The refined scale remains consistent with the conceptualization of altruism posed by its seminal theorists: Gouldner's (1960) proposition regarding the universal norm of reciprocity; Leed's (1963) suggestion prescribing the norm of giving; Piaget's (1932) and Kohlberg's (1958, 1969) approach towards the development of moral judgment, and Aronfreed's (1968) conceptualization of conscience development.

The identification of these dimensions as well as how they differ by demographic market segments represents a contribution to the literature on altruism. The dimensions identified provide new insights into how specific attitudes and actions may exist consistent with the original conceptualization of altruism. The eight dimensions of altruism identified were:

- 1 patriotic purchasing altruism;
- 2 high action altruism;
- 3 moderate action altruism;
- 4 giving altruism;
- 5 multi-ethnic purchasing altruism;
- 6 low personal altruism;
- 7 cognitive moral development; and
- 8 high personal altruism.

Each of these dimensions has been verified to be different constructs statistically, and also demonstrate clear behavioral dimensions.

The results of this study related to demographic differences are important to this effort and are summarized in Table VIII. The results of the present study generally demonstrate that females in younger and older age groups, more so than those in middle age with less than a college degree, and earning less than \$35,000 a year tend to be more altruistic than their male counterparts. Exceptions to this rule lie in the case of low personal altruism and cognitive moral development where those with higher education levels are more altruistic than those with a high school education or less and moderate action altruism where those earning between \$75,000 and \$99,999 are more altruistic than those earning between \$15,000 and \$25,000. These findings are obviously important in their own right but they also provide a justification and rationale for identifying demographic segments based on the significance of the newly identified dimensions of altruism as they relate to each demographic segment.

The results indicate gender is a differentiating factor for the dimensions of "High action altruism", "Moderate action

altruism", and "Low personal altruism", taking into consideration higher mean differences for females than for males. These results are supported by the notion that altruism implies sensitivity to the needs of others, typically exemplified by feminine stereotypes (DeBeauvoir, 1952; Flax, 1983) suggesting females are perceived as more altruistic (e.g. Seymour and Buscherhof, 1991; Stockard *et al.*, 1988) and more helpful than males, (e.g. Anderson, 1993; Belansky and Boggiano, 1994; Eagly and Wood, 1991; George *et al.*, 1998; Jha *et al.*, 1997). This is not to say that males are not altruistic. On the contrary, our results for males conform to the expectation that males are heroic and perform high-risk helping behaviors (Eagly and Crowley, 1986; Erdle *et al.*, 1992) typified by the dimensions of "Moderate action altruism" and "High action altruism" in which males moderately extend altruistic behavior across the entire spectrum of relationships even to the extent of making solid organ donations/transplants and giving blood. The dimensions of "High action altruism", "Low personal altruism" and "Cognitive moral development" were unsupported indicating there are limits to the extent both genders are willing to engage in altruistic behavior.

Age was found to be a differentiator to the extent that three of the eight dimensions – "Patriotic purchasing altruism", "Giving altruism" and "Multi-ethnic purchasing altruism" – were supported. In general, younger and older age groups tend to be more altruistic than middle age groups. These results may be explained by the notion that altruism increasingly influences the attitudes of younger, i.e. (18 to 24 year olds) and older generations (65 years and older) in this sample. Relations between these age groups appear to be characterized by "Patriotic purchasing altruism", "Giving altruism" and "Multi-ethnic purchasing altruism" to the extent that these age subgroups may include country-of-origin, monetary and perceived cost factors among the considerations included in the their purchase of a product or service. Younger respondents may anticipate their own aging and older generations, desiring their autonomy, may reject the notion of becoming a burden to younger/middle-age groups (Logan and Spitze, 1995).

The results indicate education and household income are differentiators. We found education groups with less education than a college degree tend to be more altruistic than college graduates or those that have completed postgraduate degrees. The findings associated with "Low personal altruism" and "Cognitive moral development" are exceptions to this rule where those with higher education levels are more altruistic than those with a high school education or less. This exception might be explained by the

Table VIII Summary of findings

Dimension of altruism/demographic indicator	Gender	Age	Education	Household income
Patriotic purchasing altruism	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
High action altruism	Yes	No	No	No
Moderate action altruism	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Giving altruism	No	Yes	No	No
Multi-ethnic purchasing altruism	No	Yes	Yes	No
Low personal altruism	Yes	No	Yes	No
Cognitive moral development	No	No	Yes	No
High personal altruism	No	No	No	Yes

lower level of risk one perceives in helping an acquaintance or one with whom a greater relationship exists and the accuracy of one's understanding of his/her moral obligation to important others. With respect to household income, we found income groups annually earning less than \$35,000 are more altruistic than income groups that annually earn between \$50,000 and \$75,000 and those earning more than \$100,000, except in the case of "Moderate action altruism" where those earning between \$75,000 and \$99,999 are more altruistic than those earning between \$15,000 and \$25,000. These findings sharply question the strength of the association between those with higher levels of education and household income and volunteering in civic and social activities (Independent Sector, 2002; Hart *et al.*, 2002; Reed and Selbee, 2002). Our findings indicate those at higher socioeconomic levels are not the only demographic attuned and involved with its communities. This result might be attributed to the notion that those closer to those less fortunate than themselves feel a heightened awareness, greater responsibility and more personally involved in securing the safety and well-being of others.

Managerial and policy implications

The results of this study have several important implications for marketing executives for firms in the consumer goods industry and cause-based interest groups. The present study found that females in younger and older age groups, more so than those in middle age with less than a college degree, and earning less than \$35,000 a year tend to be more altruistic than their male counterparts. Exceptions to this rule lie in the case of low personal altruism and cognitive moral

development where those with higher education levels are more altruistic than those with a high school education or less and moderate action altruism where those earning between \$75,000 and \$99,999 are more altruistic than those earning between \$15,000 and \$25,000. This outcome suggests the need to develop a new marketing approach incorporating the eight new dimensions of altruism – "Patriotic purchasing altruism", "High action altruism", "Moderate action altruism", "Giving altruism", "Multi-ethnic purchasing altruism", "Low personal altruism", "Cognitive moral development", and "High personal altruism" – and their differences by demographic market segment. Each dimension characterizes demographics uniquely descriptive of a consumer population most responsive to a marketing campaign that promoting product benefits linked to altruistic causes. The demographic groups represented by the dimensions of altruism are detailed in Table IX.

The results indicate that females are more altruistic and more helpful, males conform to the expectation that they are heroic and perform high-risk helping behaviors. Age was found to be a differentiator with younger and older age groups demonstrating more altruistic behavior than their middle-age counterparts. We found education groups with less education than a college degree tend to be more altruistic than college graduates or those that have completed postgraduate degrees. Managers can adopt targeted marketing using these dimensions to identify consumers who purchase their products for compatibility of the firm and its products with the altruistic cause it promotes. Their efforts could include the use of the new dimensions of altruism identified in this research to measure the strength of consumer altruistic

Table IX Dimensions of altruism and demographics

Dimension of altruism	Basis	Major demographic characteristics
Patriotic purchasing altruism	Age	The "18 to 24" age group is more active than the "45 to 49" age group
	Age	The "65 years and older" age group is more active than the "45 to 49" years age group
	Education	The "High school or less" is more active than any other group with higher levels of education
	Household income	The income group "Less than \$15,000" annually is more active than the income group "\$100,000 to \$250,000" annually
		The household income group "\$15,000 to \$24,999" is more active than the household income groups "\$50,000 to \$74,999", and "\$100,000 to \$249,999" annually
		The household income group "\$25,000 to \$34,999" is more active than the household income group "\$100,000 to \$249,999"
		The household income group "\$35,000 to \$44,999" is more active than the household income group "\$100,000 to \$249,999"
High action altruism	Gender	Females are more active than males
Moderate action altruism	Gender	Females are more active than males
Moderate action altruism	Education	The education groups "Attended some college without graduating" and the "Postgraduate degree" education groups are more active than the "High school or less" education group
	Household income	The household income group "\$75,000 to \$99,999" is more active than the household income group "\$15,000 to \$24,999"
Giving altruism	Age	As individuals age, they engage more in "Giving altruism"
Multi-ethnic purchasing altruism	Age	As individuals age, they engage more in "Multi-ethnic purchasing altruism"
	Education	The education group "High school or less" is more active than any other education group
Low personal altruism	Gender	Females are more active than males
	Education	The education group "Attended some college without graduating" is more active than the education group "High school or less"
Cognitive moral development	Education	The education group "Some postgraduate study" is more active than the education group "High school or less"

tendencies. The use of these dimensions can enable marketers to identify consistent patterns of individual differences in altruistic behavior. Patterns in altruistic behavior identified in combination with demographic data can also enable marketers to estimate the size of altruism-prone market segments.

Summary and conclusions

This study has hopefully made a significant contribution by focusing on the convergence between altruism and consumer behavior. Although past research on consumer behavior has provided much evidence about the activities people undertake when consuming and disposing of products and services, research on the managerial issues as they relate to altruism and marketing has been lacking. The present research has addressed this gap. For the first time since the construct was posited, eight new dimensions of altruism have been empirically identified and validated: “Patriotic purchasing altruism”, “High action altruism”, “Moderate action altruism”, “Giving altruism”, “Multi-ethnic purchasing altruism”, “Low personal altruism”, “Cognitive moral development”, and “High personal altruism”.

Not only were these new dimensions identified, they show clear differences in altruistic behaviors types. “Patriotic purchasing altruism”, and to a lesser extent “Multi-ethnic purchasing altruism”, are motivating forces in the purchase of a product or service, given a consideration of country-of-origin in the product consideration process. “High action altruism”, “Moderate action altruism” and “Low personal altruism”, each in successive levels, extend altruistic behavior across the whole spectrum of relationships shedding light on the personal characteristics of those prone to helping others and those being helped. “Giving altruism” reflects altruistic behavior involving financial costs to the caregiver. “Cognitive moral development” is the progressive way in which individuals acquire, through time, an increasingly accurate understanding of the nature of their moral obligations in complex social systems with altruism as one aspect of the many that comprise morality. Lastly, “High personal altruism” reflects behavior in those life threatening situations in which a competent adult seeks to unconditionally offer him/herself in an act of altruism. Another major contribution of this study is that these dimensions have been demonstrated to be different by demographic groupings.

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Executive summary and implications for managers and executives

This summary has been provided to allow managers and executives a rapid appreciation of the content of this article. Those with a particular interest in the topic covered may then read the article in toto to take advantage of the more comprehensive description of the research undertaken and its results to get the full benefits of the material present.

With environmental and humanitarian issues increasingly to the fore in today's global economy, altruism is exerting a growing influence on consumer purchase behavior. Analysts believe that organizations evaluated positively in terms of these issues are best positioned to benefit from these altruistic motivations.

Types and determinants of altruism

Altruism has received considerable attention from many academics and a plethora of definitions exist. At various times, altruistic behavior has been described as self-sacrificing, empathizing with the needs of others, unselfish and a voluntary action that is performed without expectation of reward.

Three separate dimensions have been traditionally used to identify determinants of altruism:

- 1 *Cultural*. Numerous studies have shown people around the world to be ethnocentric and naturally inclined to favor their own race over foreigners and to evaluate domestic products higher than those produced abroad.
- 2 *Cognitive*. This refers to people gradual understanding their moral obligations.
- 3 *Behavioral*.

Studies have also examined the influence of demographic factors on altruistic behavior and have found that:

- as people get older and "experience physiological, psychological and social change" they tend to behave more altruistically;
- higher educated individuals are inclined to be more generous and considerate; and
- gender is insignificant.

In addition, the household income variable provided mixed signals. One study found it did not determine whether or not a donation is made but did influence the amount given. Previous research by the current authors found high levels of consumer ethnocentrism among middle-income earners and suggested the variable may be useful in relation to campaigns urging the purchase of domestic products and brands. Beyond that, it was not considered useful as a differentiator.

New dimensions

Building on existing research, Hopkins and Powers aim in the present work to identify new dimensions of altruism. The study was carried out in Arizona, USA and 212 usable responses from households in Maricopa County were obtained. Participants had a mean age of 52 years-old and 114 were female and 98 male. Education levels ranged from postgraduate degree down to having a high school education or less. Annual average total household income was just below \$50,000. In all, the study sample reflected the general population of the area.

Additional dimensions of altruism identified were:

- *Patriotic purchasing altruism.* In this dimension, consumer purchase decision considers the products country-of-origin (COO).
- *Multi-ethnic purchasing altruism.* A more considered perception of product COO influences behavior here.
- *High action altruism, Moderate action altruism and Low personal altruism* reflect altruistic behavior across the entire relationship scale from strangers to associates to best friends.
- *Giving altruism.* Financial and sometimes other perceived costs of behaving altruistically are incorporated in this dimension, where opportunity for personal development, enhancing mood and avoidance of shame or guilt resulting from inaction are perceived as rewards.
- *Cognitive moral development.* In this dimension, altruism is perceived as a key component of morality.
- *High personal altruism.* The high level of personal involvement here means a greater exposure to personal risk. Willingness to give blood or donate organs for transplant are examples of this type of altruism. It is argued that this willingness becomes greater when more is known about potential recipients, even if they remain unnamed.

Study findings

Having identified these new altruism dimensions, the authors investigate whether or not they differ by demographic segments. A large number of hypotheses were formed and tested. Findings indicate that:

- females rate significantly higher than males for High action altruism, Moderate action altruism and Low personal altruism;
- Patriotic purchasing altruism was significantly higher among younger and older respondents than those in the middle-age bracket;
- Giving altruism and multi-ethnic purchasing altruism increase with age;
- Patriotic purchasing altruism and Multi-ethnic purchasing altruism is higher among lower educated groups;

- Moderate action altruism is greater among individuals who attended college than those with lower or higher educational attainment;
- Low personal altruism is higher among individuals who attended college than those less educated;
- Cognitive moral development is greater among postgraduates;
- Patriotic purchasing altruism is higher among low income groups and becomes gradually lower with each increased income bracket; and
- Moderate action altruism may be greater in higher income brackets than among low earners.

On this evidence, efforts to identify demographic segments based on these newly defined altruism dimensions seems justified. The results show gender to be a significant factor where High action altruism, Moderate action altruism and Low personal altruism are concerned. Hopkins and Powers suggest that this helps reinforce the stereotypical view of females being more sensitive to the needs of others, which is acknowledged as a core element of altruistic behavior. The study also provided some support for the notions that males “are heroic and perform high-risk helping behaviors” indicated by the Moderate action altruism and High action altruism categories. However, the authors point to unsupported hypotheses as evidence that both genders have boundaries where engaging in altruistic behavior is concerned.

With the age variable, the general picture is that altruistic behavior is likelier within younger and older groups than those in the middle bracket. The dimensions most relevant to these consumers may indicate that purchase decision making is particularly influenced by COO, monetary and perceived cost factors.

By and large, altruism was higher among the less well-educated and low earning segments. The authors suggest that this may result from such consumers being able to closely empathize with those potentially even worse off than themselves. They in turn believe that this questions the assumption that high earning, well-educated people are likely to be more altruistic.

Marketers should revamp their approach to incorporate the new altruism dimensions and devise strategies that will enable them to target specific demographic market segments. By recognizing significant patterns of individual difference, marketers will be able to “identify consumers who purchase their products for the compatibility of the firm and its products with the altruistic cause it promotes”.

(A précis of the article “Development and test of new dimensions of altruistic buying behavior”. Supplied by Marketing Consultants for Emerald.)

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