Values, Attitudes and Lifestyles Based Typologies as Predictors for Consumer Impulsiveness

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Abstract

The paper examines the influence of some psychological typologies and demographics on the impulsive behavior of the consumers, trying to analyze if the personality typologies can predict the degree of consumer impulsiveness and proving information regarding the extent of the presence of impulsive consumers.

The study was realized using a multiple cluster sampling method, surveying state employees from each domain of activity except for the special services and army, due to the existent information gathering restrictions.

Through the association of a personality type generator questionnaire (VALS survey) with a Likert scale of impulsivity (Puri's Consumer's impulsivity scale, 1966), the general hypothesis is that consumer typologies based of Values, Attitudes, Lifestyle and demographic factors predict the consumer impulsiveness.

Key words: VALS typology, consumer impulsiveness, consumer prudence, hedonic response
J.E.L. classification: D11, D12, D31, E21

1. Introduction

Due to the fundamentally different nature of the acts and processes that define consumer behavior, how people behave economically is not a summation of repeated acts mechanically, but the result of the accumulation of life experiences. Simple registration and quantification of consumer acts is not enough, you have researched and psycho-physiological processes that determine these acts and explained the interdependence between them.

Besides being very careful how they spend in a store, Romanians began to have very many places from which they buy. Loyalty is to work increasingly harder. Consumers have now begun to look increasingly more to consuming in terms of health, looking at organic products, products with a lower salt content and freshness. Before they were less careful, but now they have become very responsible.

This research was designed to analyze the consumer behavior, beyond the impact of the economic and marketing environment, by focusing on psychographics information that along with demographics information contribute to understanding a wide range of factors that provide perspective about why consumers behave the way they do.

The research focused on the consumer behavior of employees because, having a monthly income they have the necessary means to engage in the purchase processes and, as they are employed, their age is big enough to assume that their personality is more stable than the personality of adolescents and teenagers. The study was made concerning state employees, as they represent a big number from the total number of employees from Romania and they are said to be more financially secured in terms of job stability, and also by the fact that the majority of the population chooses as a first employment alternative to be a budgetary, due to this stability.

2. Literature review

Even though no precise definitions of impulsive buying can be found, early researchers considered that it is a sudden experience that pushes the customers into engaging in immediate purchase, action driven by a somewhat powerful and persistent urge. (Rook, 1987, p.191)

This impulsivity of the consumer usually does not come with a twinge of conscience regarding consequences. (Rook et al. 1993, p. 27).

The impulsive purchase is made even though the individual was not actively looking for that item (Hubert et. al, 2018, p.120) and had no pre-shopping plans referring to purchasing that item, and also the time interval between seeing the item and buying it is rather short because the decision to buy is made rapidly without thoughtful consideration and alternative information of choices. (Moayery at al., 2014, p. 363).

Iyer (2020, p. 399) explained that an impulsive consumer has not made plans to buy that specific product category nor did he realize that he has that specific need to fulfill. They described this action as non-reflective and it is triggered by a buying desire.

Zheng (2019, p. 158) define the impulsive purchasing as an act of pleasure caused by hedonic behavior, which is sudden and compelling, opposite to the utilitarian behavior that is seeking for alternative options, functional benefits and economic values.

Values do influence the way in which a consumer might react to advertising, packaging, pricing and selling staff, so it is necessary that marketers should have knowledge on the mix of values within the area of his activity (Teng, 2018, p.51), and also incorporate them when creating a marketing camping (Graham, 2017, p. 101). Retailers also have to pay attention to this problem (Biswas, 2017, p. 7723), as some products and services might not be embraced by society (Becker-Leifhold, 2018, p.788). Values provide insights on how a society operates (Razzaq et al., 2018, p. 1232) and the society's goals are also being perceived as the drivers of individual values (Ladhari et al., 2017, p. 703). It is believed that values are the ones that set the goals towards how behaviors are enacted (Nikolov et al, 2020, p. 9). So values dictate peoples' day by day actions. (Mayasari et al., 2018, p. 333). In other words, the behavior represents the instrument used to achieve a particular value state. Consumers are engaging in all kinds of activities as a result of their values (Sharma et al., 2017, p. 81).

Attitudes, in terms of consumer attitudes, represent a composite of beliefs, feelings and behavioral intentions regarding a product. Having positive beliefs or feelings towards a product makes a consumer have a specific behavioral intention towards that product (Perner, 2010, p.241).

An attitude can be developed as a result of a positive/negative experience from the past. They can be influenced by other people and are usually long term (Razzaq et al., 2018, p. 1231).

Lifestyle is used in consumer behavior research as a factor that differentiates the way in which people live. Consumer choices are determined by the desired lifestyle and they represent also a reflection of their actual life style. Factors that influence lifestyle and change the consumer behavior are social ideal, education level, occupation, income, residence and aspirations. Religion and culture also shape lifestyle.

The VALS test (stands for Values, Attitudes and Lifestyle) that is going to be used in this research represents a survey framework that segments individuals into eight distinct types based on psychological traits and key demographics, explaining each type and also the reasons of their preferences and attitudes.

The VALS test was first developed in the year of 1978 by Arnold Mitchell, a social scientist and consumer oriented futurist, along with the help of his colleagues from Stanford Research Institute (today known as SRI International). The instrument was developed in order to tailor products and services for the people who were most likely to purchase them. Advertising agencies were thrilled to use this consulting service from SRI as it was embraced very quickly.

The VALS survey is based on the work of David Riesman (1950), Harvard sociologist and developer of the concept of social character and also on the work of Abraham Maslow, sociologist and developer of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The VALS test represents a weighting algorithm of demographic factors, lifestyle variables, values and attitudes.

Nowadays, The VALS test assigns individuals eight primary types, Innovators, Thinkers,

Believers, Achievers, Strivers, Experiencers, Makers and Survivors as well as the secondary type that represents the group that the individuals are next most likely be part of. The test is based on 35 attitudinal and five demographic questions.

Each of the VALS types is described on a customer base profile along with some lifestyle and psychological characteristics. In the table below can be seen a representation of the VALS framework.

Table no. 1. VALS type according to motivation, resources and innovation

VALS Type	Primary motivation			Resources	Innovation
	Ideals	Achievement	Self-expression		
Innovators	✓	✓	✓	High	High
Thinkers	✓			High	High
Believers	✓			Low	Low
Achievers		✓		High	High
Strivers		✓		Low	Low
Experiencers			✓	High	High
Makers			✓	Low	Low
Survivors	-	-	-	Low	Low

Source: self-elaboration

As it can be observed in the table above, six of the VALS types, fall into one of the three primary motivations. This horizontal dimension separates typologies into three categories that represent motivation drivers: ideals, achievement and self-expression. The consumers motivated by ideals are driven by knowledge and principles rather than by desires for approval. The consumers who look to demonstrate success and seek approval from the others are primarily motivated by achievement. Consumers that are primarily motivated by self-expression, desire, social and physical activity, variety and risk taking.

Resources, the vertical dimension segments people based on the degree of innovation and a range of resources such as psychological, physical, demographic, material means and capacities consumers have drawn upon, including income, education, self-confidence, health, intelligence, leadership skills and energy level.

All of the eight typologies of the VALS test are described taking into consideration their lifestyle characteristics, their psychological characteristics and their consumer characteristics. The description of each type of VALS will be further provided. Following these reasons, we have formulated the following research hypotheses, all of them inspired of Arnold Mitchell research.

H1: Innovators have a higher degree of prudence than impulsiveness.
H2: Thinkers have a higher degree of prudence than impulsiveness.
H3: Believers have a higher degree of prudence than impulsiveness.
H4: Achievers have a higher degree of prudence than impulsiveness.
H5: Strivers have a higher degree of impulsivity than prudence.
H6: Experiencers have a higher degree of impulsivity than prudence.
H7: Makers have a higher degree of prudence than impulsiveness.
H8: Survivors have a higher degree of prudence than impulsiveness.

3. Research methodology

Considering the problems presented in the previous stage, this research aims to analyze wherever there are VALS typologies that are more prudent types or more hedonic types, wherever there are significant differences between the degrees of impulsiveness regarding gender, income and education, and also determine if there is a pattern of typologies when it comes to genders.

The primary objective of this research is to analyze the degree of impulsivity of the consumers as they can be framed by a VALS type.

The secondary objectives are:

O1. Analyze the degree of impulsivity of the consumers as they can be framed by a VALS type in relationship with gender.

O2. Analyze the degree of impulsivity of the consumers as they can be framed by a VALS type in relationship with age categories.

O3. Analyze the degree of impulsivity of the consumers as they can be framed by a VALS type in relationship with education levels.

O4. Analyze the degree of impulsivity of the consumers as they can be framed by a VALS type in relationship with income levels.

Even though every person is a product and service consumer, employers are a more attractive and suitable market for this research as they have the advantage of being able to be fund themselves through their monthly salary, thus they have the resources to engage in more shopping than unemployed people. They have impulse buying habits as they have a stable income and are very much influenced by the Internet and TV and in-store advertising. The employees surveyed are residents of Iasi and have an age range from 18 to 66 years and, as it is necessary to be at least 18 years and the maximum employment age for state employees is 66 years.

Employees have been chosen to study because: are exposed to diverse range of advertising channels; they engage often in the process of buying; tend to spend higher amounts compared to other segments; they buy a wider range of products than young people as they engage in household shopping.

In order to the define the population researched, a multi-stage cluster sampling method was used and because the problem studied is a novelty in marketing research in Romania, it was treated as an exploratory research that provides information necessary for further research using a representative sample.

As concerning our research, for our population of interest, the budgetary employment cluster is selected and is further divided into the following sub-clusters representing domains of activity: administrative, financial, judiciary, defense (the Army), internal affairs (the Police), special services (ex: Bureau of secret state information, Bureau for Preventing and Combating Money Laundering), educational, medical, cultural. Due to imposed restriction of providing any type of data information, workers from the army and the special services sector were not surveyed.

In order to achieve this research a number of 140 employers were surveyed. From the 140 questionnaires resulted from the data collecting process, 12 of them were not taken further into consideration due to partially completion of the forms, remaining with a sample of 128 respondents. Both males and females were surveyed in order to see if there are significant differences between the two sexes regarding the topic of the research.

The method of research chosen was the survey in order to obtain statistically representative data regarding VALS type, impulsivity degree and demographic characteristics of buyer.

The instrument was the questionnaire, divided in three parts:

Part 1: The first part represents the actual VALS framework that is a closed-ended questionnaire used to determine the physiological characteristics of consumers, categorizing individuals into eight lifestyle types. After receiving the questionnaires, the VALS test was introduced for every respondent on the official Strategic Business Insights (SBI) website (www.strategicbusinessinsights.com) that offers the possibility to fill online the questionnaire, generating afterwards the primary and secondary VALS type.

The format of the VALS survey was followed precisely as the official one, excepting for the question regarding income. As the average income of US and Romania are significantly different, it was established first the difference, and that difference was then applied for every interval. It was determined that the average monthly household income of Romanians is ... in $, that represents 18,4% from the average monthly household income for Americans, thus, each of the income interval was brought to 18,4% of its initial value, and then computed into Romanian lei.

Part 2: The second part of the questionnaire represents the Puri 1996 Customer Impulsiveness Scale (CIS) that is used to measure the chronic values of people toward impulsiveness. It is a two factor measure composed of a prudence subscale and a hedonic subscale. This framework determines if the consumers behave more impulsively (indices of hedonism) or more in a controlled manner (indices of prudence).

The two factors are distributed in the following way: the attributes self-controlled (3), farsighted (5), responsible (6), restrained (7), rational (9), methodical (10), and planner (12) represent the indices of prudence, where the attributes impulsive (1), careless (2), extravagant (4), easily-

tempered (8) and enjoy spending (11) represent the indices of hedonism. Respondents indicate the degree to which each of the previous adjectives describes them on a seven-point scale. The adjectives scores are summed within subscales, forming two independent variables, indices of prudence and hedonism. According to the author, the mean scores are provided by summing up the attributes scores of the two sub-dimensions of the CIS framework and the dividing by the number of scale items per dimension.

Part 3: demographic questions.

The general framework of the research from the image below, presents the idea that the consumers Values, Attitudes, Lifestyle and demographic characteristics segments them into the VALS types (Innovator, Thinker, Believer, Achiever, Striver, Experiencer, Maker, Survivor) that can predict the degree of consumer impulsiveness.

4. Findings

Figure 1 presents the distribution of the primary VALS types of the sample. It can be observed that the majority of the consumers are Thinkers (67 respondents) followed by Innovators (24 respondents). Also, another observation can be made regarding the fact that only 6 of the VALS types are present as primary types, with Striver and Survivor missing.
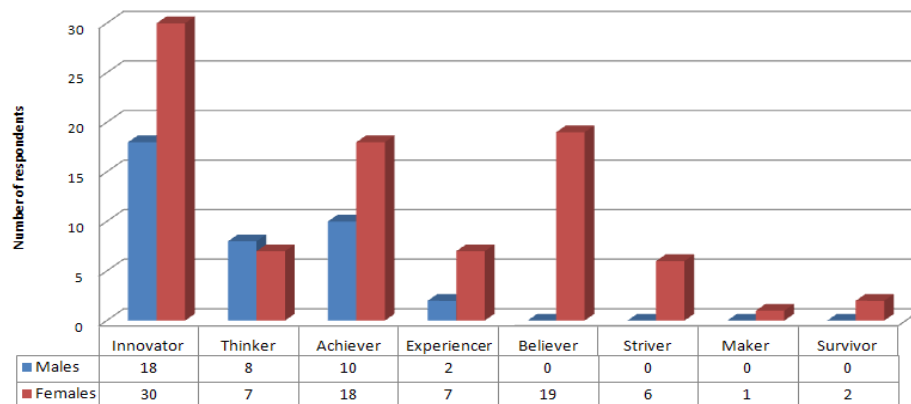
Figure no. 1 Primary VALS type distribution

	Innovator	Thinker	Believer	Achiever	Experiencer	Maker
■ Males	16	16	2	2	2	0
■ Females	8	51	3	10	9	3
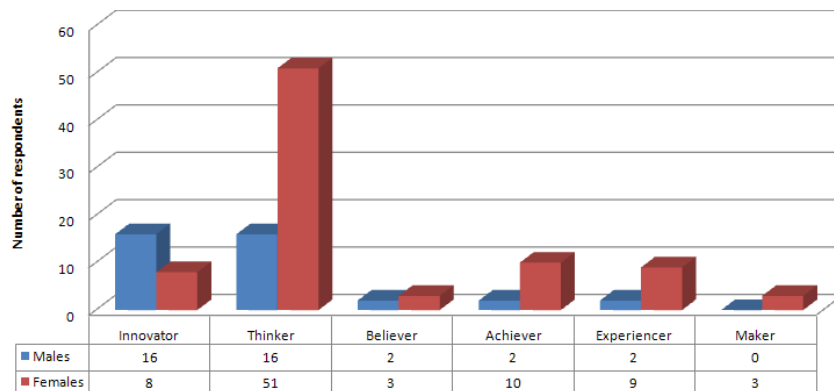
Source: self-elaboration based on research findings

Thus, overall, regarding the VALS type distribution of the data and taking into consideration the descriptions provided for every VALS type, the sample is characterized mostly by VALS types that are strongly motivated by Ideals, Achievement and Self-expression, in special by Ideals as the majority of the respondents are Thinkers (52%). Due to these results, it can be concluded that the majority of the customers are rational decision makers, which search for durability and functionality.

As regarding the secondary VALS types, it can be observed from Figure 2 that all of the VALS types are present. Innovators (48 respondents) and Achievers (28 respondents) were the types that predominated as secondary types, followed by Believers (19 respondents) and Thinkers (15 respondents). Scoring less were Experiencers (9 respondents), Strivers (6 respondents) and least were Survivor (2 respondents) with Maker (1 respondent).

Figure no. 2 Secondary VALS type distribution

	Innovator	Thinker	Achiever	Experiencer	Believer	Striver	Maker	Survivor
Males	18	8	10	2	0	0	0	0
Females	30	7	18	7	19	6	1	2

Source: self-elaboration based on research findings

Regarding the secondary types, the sample is strongly motivated by Ideals and Achievement, as the majorities are Innovators (37%) and Achievers (22%). Thus, it is clearly the consumers are also favoring sophisticated products that reveal their tastes and also to demonstrate their success to the others.

As a general conclusion drawn from the distribution of the typologies, both primary and secondary, it is highlighted that state employee consumers are mostly rational decision maker consumers, which seek for the utilitarian benefits of products and also consumers that are seeking high-end technologies products, sophisticated products, which are bought for self-reflection or to show off.

Making a Cross Tabulation in SPSS, it will be analyzed the intersections between the primary and secondary VALS types.

As a result, we have Table 2, and it can be distinguished that, for example, from 67 respondents being described as Thinkers by their primary VALS type, on their secondary VALS type there were 34 Innovators, 19 Believers, 10 Achievers and 4 Strivers.

Table no. 2 Primary and Secondary VALS type Crosstabulation

**Primary_type * Secondary_type Crosstabulation**

Count

		Secondary_type								Total
		Innovator	Thinker	Believer	Achiever	Striver	Experiencer	Maker	Survivor	
Primary_type	Innovator	0	8	0	10	0	6	0	0	24
	Thinker	34	0	19	10	4	0	0	0	67
	Believer	0	4	0	5	1	0	0	1	11
	Achiever	7	3	0	0	0	2	0	0	12
	Experiencer	7	0	0	2	1	0	1	0	11
	Maker	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	3
Total		48	15	19	28	6	9	1	2	128

Source: self-elaboration based on research findings

The primary VALS types described above represent only typologies situated in the upper part of the VALS framework, meaning that the majority of the respondents are consumers highly motivated by Ideals, Achievement and Self-expression, having also high resources and being characterized also by high innovation.

In order to see if there are differences of VALS types among levels of education it can be observed from Figure 3 that the respondents that graduated only High School or equivalents are the majority Believers, following Experiencers and a Maker.
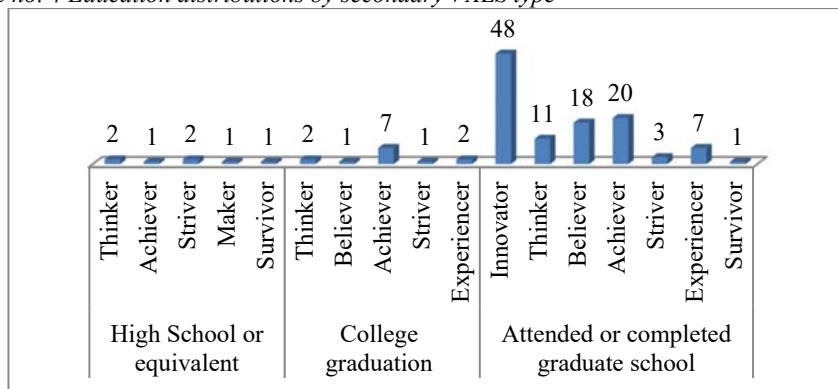
Figure no. 3 Education distributions by primary VALS type
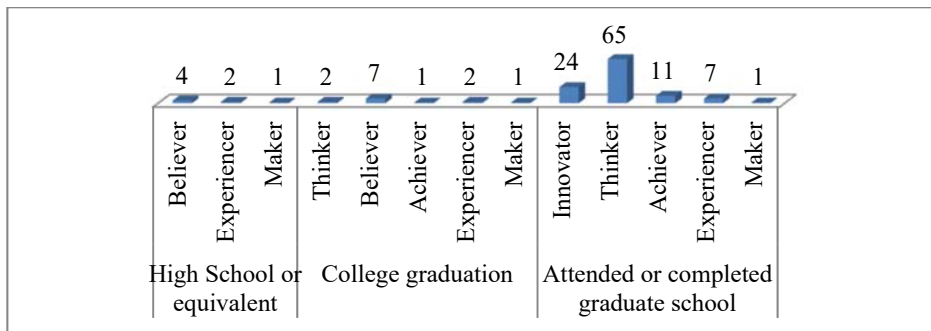
Source: self-elaboration based on research findings

It can observe from the distribution of the VALS types that education plays an important role in establishing the typology, as Innovators are present only on the highest education level.

*Figure no. 4 Education distributions by secondary VALS type*

Source: self-elaboration based on research findings

Thus, as a general conclusion for both primary and secondary VALS types, the majority of the consumers had attended or completed graduate school and are reasoned consumers and seekers of products for expressing their fine tastes

For the distribution of the income level, segmented on the primary VALS type, Figure 5 shows that Thinkers and Innovators have higher monthly household income, thus having a higher purchasing power than the rest of the respondents.

Figure no. 5 Income distributions by primary VALS type
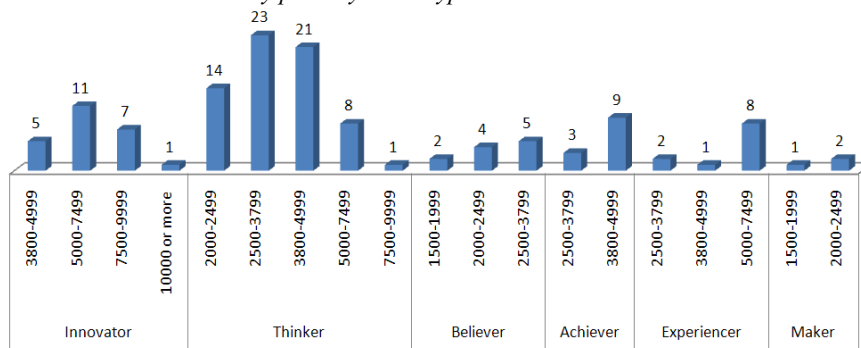
Source: self-elaboration based on research findings

For the primary VALS typologies we compared the means calculated following Puri's specifications. We intended to measure the predisposition toward impulsiveness, by the two factor measure composed of a prudence subscale and a hedonic subscale. This framework determines if the consumers behave more impulsively (indices of hedonism) or more in a controlled manner (indices of prudence). The findings are resumed in Table 3:

Table no. 3 Hedonic (impulsive) vs. prudent predisposition. Primary VALS typologies

VALS type	Hedonic Mean	Prudence Mean
Innovators	5.25	1.92
Thinkers	5.56	2.84
Believers	5.65	2.94
Achievers	3.35	3.46
Strivers	-	-
Experiencers	2.62	3.22
Makers	6.6	2.09
Survivors	-	-

Source: self-elaboration based on research findings

Comparing the means between the hedonic (impulse) and prudence behavior for each type of VALS we obtain that there are differences that sustain the hypotheses. Due to the fact that the sample did not provide two typologies (Strivers and Survivors), we could not verify this hypotheses.

For the secondary types we resumed the findings in Table 4:

Table no. 4 Hedonic (impulsive) vs. prudent predisposition. Primary VALS typologies

VALS type	Hedonic Mean	Prudence Mean
Innovators	4.64	2.8
Thinkers	5.37	2.34
Believers	6.01	3.23
Achievers	5.23	2.64
Strivers	5.30	2.78
Experiencers	3.71	4.42
Makers	3.80	4.00
Survivors	6.70	2.21

Source: self-elaboration based on research findings

Making a comparison of the mean through a segmentation of the age groups, it can be seen that the hedonic mean increases with age.

Figure no. 6. Hedonic mean distribution for age intervals
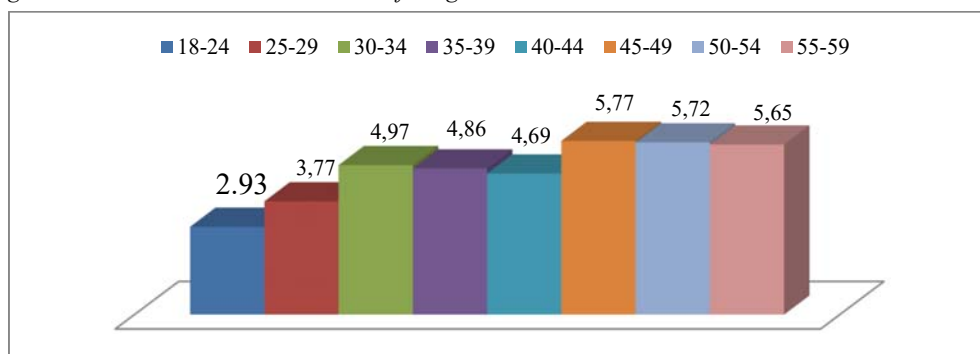
Source: self-elaboration based on research findings

As these items are reversed, the higher the value of the hedonic mean, the lower the impulsivity degree, it can be said that the impulsive buying decreases along with the increases in age, so there is a negative relationship.

5. Conclusions

Overall, this research was created to investigate the consumer purchasing behavior, as a result of personal characteristics. It was intended to find significant results for each of the VALS types and correlate them with their impulsivity scores, but as sample size was narrow, for several VALS types like Striver, Maker and Survivor the number of respondents was too small so the correlations could not provide significant information.

Comparing the hedonic mean for the primary VALS type it can be observed that Experiencers and Achievers are the ones that are the most characterized by impulsivity and the least are Makers.

Comparing the hedonic mean for the secondary type, it can be observed that the Maker respondent is the most impulsive, followed by Experiencers, and the least characterized by impulsivity are Survivors and Believers.

Also we observed that those with the lowest income are the ones that are less impulsive, but there isn't a pattern of increases and decreases of impulsivity degree simultaneously with the increasing or decreasing levels of income. For education, it can be observed that the hedonic means do not differ significantly from an education level to another, so a significant difference was not found between the degree of impulsivity and the education level. Taking into consideration the Income levels, primary VALS type and hedonic mean it was intended to found out if there are any significant differences. It can be observed that segmenting the sample through levels of income, Achievers and Experiencers remain the ones with the highest degree of impulsivity, for each level of monthly household income. Regarding income level, Thinkers and Innovators have higher monthly household income, thus having a higher purchasing power than the rest of the respondents.

Taking into consideration the education, primary VALS type and hedonic mean it was intended to be found out if there are any significant differences. It can be observed that college graduated Believers and Experiencers are more impulsive than high school graduated Believers and Experiencers. And college graduate Achievers are less impulsive that graduate school Achievers.

Taking into consideration the education, secondary VALS type and hedonic mean it was intended to found out if there are any significant differences. It can be observed that High school Thinkers are less impulsive than college graduated and graduate school Thinkers. It can observe from the distribution of the VALS types that education plays an important role in establishing the typology, as Innovators are present only on the highest education level.

Making a segmentation of the impulsivity degree by education level, no important differences were found; a reason might be that the sample was concentrated on the graduate school consumers. Thus, relevant data was found only for graduate school consumers; the majorities are Thinkers and Innovators.

Taking into consideration the age, hedonic mean and primary types no significant differences were found between the degree of impulsivity of the VALS types based on categories of age, except that Innovators with ages between 30-34 and 50-54 are less impulsive than those with ages between 35-39 and 40-44. Regarding age and the impulsivity degree a negative relationship was found, in the sense that impulsivity declines as age increases.

No significant difference was found between the degree of impulsivity regarding men and women, but it was found that the majority of women are Thinkers, whereas the majority of males are Innovators.

The findings indicate that overall state employees are mature and educated consumers, with a low degree of impulsivity, that seek products reflecting their taste and that prove to be useful and durable.

Several limitations must be taken into consideration regarding the results of this research. First of all, the study was limited to the analysis of state employees, with the possibility that private employees might generate different results. A further research can be made to determine if there are differences among state and private employees. Due to time and budget constraints, the sample size is a small one and could not cover a sufficiently diverse and meaningful number of respondents for each category of VALS type, age categories and education level, as statistical procedures are very sensitive when it comes to number of subjects. If the research could have been done on a larger sample size, the results would have been more conclusive. Respondents could not be drawn from the special services and the army due to their restrictions of providing information.

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