Interpersonal influence and consumer innovativeness

Ronald A. Clark and Ronald E. Goldsmith

Department of Marketing, College of Business, Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL, USA

Abstract

Innovators represent a small and somewhat elusive group of consumers who are often the earliest adopters of new products. As such, marketing researchers and practitioners alike are interested in determining the personality characteristics that influence innovators to purchase a new product early in the product life cycle. This correlational study examined the relationships of three of these characteristics (susceptibility to interpersonal influence, attention to social comparison information, and role-relaxed consumption) to individual innate innovativeness. Data were collected using self-report surveys administered to 326 students at a large public university in the south-east United States. The results supported hypothesized negative relationships between consumer innovativeness and both susceptibility to interpersonal influence and attention to social comparison information, as well as a positive relationship between consumer innovativeness and role-relaxed consumption.

Keywords  Interpersonal influence, social comparison, innovativeness, role-relaxed consumer.

Introduction

Every year businesses spend millions of dollars researching, developing, and launching new products and services to consumers all over the world. More often than not, however, these new products fail to be adopted. The costly nature of research and development as well as the expense associated with launching new products result in a need for companies to better understand consumer innovativeness, a key concept in the diffusion of new products. Consequently, organizations and scholars alike have sought to delineate the characteristics of the small percentage of consumers who are the early adopters of new products because these consumers are often the key to successful diffusion. This effort has been conducted in both the consumer (B2C) as well as the industrial (B2B) marketing contexts. The more the influences on and the dimensions of innovativeness are understood, the better marketers will be able to predict and to explain new product diffusion.

Although a large body of research describes many innate characteristics related to consumer innovativeness, a significant gap in this research concerns susceptibility to interpersonal influence and the extent to which innovators respond to social comparison cues in making purchasing decisions. Consumer innovators are known to be avid information seekers who use a variety of information sources. But scholars argue that innovators prefer to use and to rely on impersonal sources instead of interpersonal sources of information. Midgley and Dowling specifically proposed that, ‘Innovativeness is the degree to which an individual makes innovation decisions independently of the communicated experience of others’ (p. 235). Bass’s diffusion model assumes that innovative consumers are acting independently of social imitation. Innovativeness has been shown to be more strongly associated with opinion leadership than with opinion seeking. There is little empirical research, however, to verify the assumption that innovativeness is unrelated or negatively related to use of interpersonal sources of information at the trait level.

Understanding these general personality traits will facilitate the explanation of the purchasing behaviour of this market segment that is so critical to the introduction of new products. The purpose of this study therefore was to assess the extent to which innovators are susceptible to interpersonal influence and are attentive to social comparison information. By delineating these relationships more clearly, this research can improve
our theoretical understanding of the key construct of innovativeness as well as assist marketing management in their attempts to appeal to innovators when promoting new products.

Background and hypotheses

Innovativeness

Diffusion of innovations and innovativeness are well-established constructs in consumer research. This is evidenced by the plethora of articles on the subject over the last three decades. Marketing professionals and scholars alike place high priority on identifying, profiling, and influencing innovators. Rogers defined innovativeness as ‘the degree to which an individual or other unit of adoption is relatively earlier in adopting new ideas than other members of a system’ (p. 22). This individual difference variable distinguishes one consumer from another. Innovators, those consumers characterized by the highest levels of innovativeness, make up less than 2.5% of the population. Midgley and Dowling described innate innovativeness as a personality trait present in all people to varying degrees and emphasized consumer innovativeness as a central part of the theory of innovation diffusion. We chose to operationalize innovativeness using the Hurt, Joseph, and Cook scale because it provides a general trait measure not limited to a specific product category.

Innovators and early adopters are important to the successful diffusion of new products because they exert influence (orally and by example) on later adopters, both in B2C and B2B markets. A significant body of research ties consumer innovativeness to other personality traits and to adoption behaviours. Lacking, however, are studies of the relationship between innovativeness and interpersonal influence. It is assumed that innovators act in the absence of the influence of others, gathering their information instead from impersonal sources such as the mass media, but empirical verification of the absence of interpersonal influence on innovators is lacking.

Consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence

Bearden, Netemeyer, and Teel defined consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence as ‘the need to identify or enhance one’s image with significant others through the acquisition and use of products and brands, the willingness to conform to the expectations of others regarding purchase decisions and/or the tendency to learn about products and services by observing others and/or seeking information from others’ (p. 474). Consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence is an aspect of McGuire’s influenceability construct. Early development of the concept of susceptibility to interpersonal influence as a general personality trait was present in the psychology literature of the 1950s. McGuire’s seminal work summarized the theoretical and empirical literature on susceptibility to interpersonal influence and extended it by addressing the concept of influenceability and relating it to other individual traits. Subsequently, the concept of interpersonal influence has been applied to consumer research with emphasis on conforming to group norms or modifying judgements based on evaluation by others. Conformity is closely related to susceptibility to interpersonal influence and may be viewed as one manifestation of social influence resulting from differences between group views and individual views.

Interpersonal influence or the opinions of others is a pervasive type of social influence and is especially important to the diffusion of new products because it represents the driving force behind the spread of new things. This is one reason why innovators and early adopters are so important in the diffusion process: they influence later adopters by word and deed. Their power comes in part from two principles of social influence: authority and social validation. Authority (credibility) comes from expertise (knowledge) and experience, key characteristics of innovators and early adopters. Social validation comes from the visibility of many adoptions, where others can see the innovators and especially the early adopters exhibiting and using the new product and learn that it may be appropriate for them. But what about the innovators themselves? To whom do they look for social validation? Our argument is that they don’t need this resource and adopt in the absence of the influence of others.

Bearden et al. point out that few studies have focused on the impact of interpersonal influence on decision-making processes, particularly in a consumer context. Early literature argued that interpersonal
Interpersonal influence and consumer innovativeness • R.A. Clark and R.E. Goldsmith

Influence manifests itself through either normative or informational influences. Burnkrant and Cousineau described normative influence as the tendency to conform to others’ expectations. Subsequent research in consumer behavior subdivided normative influence into value expressive and utilitarian influences. Value expressive influence is generally defined as adopting the behavior or opinions of another because of a satisfying self-defining relationship with a group or individual. Utilitarian influence is an individual’s tendency to comply with the expectations of others to avoid punishment or to receive rewards. The tendency to accept information from others as reality is referred to as ‘informational influence’. Informational influence can result from either a search for information from others who are considered knowledgeable or from observation of others’ behavior. Based on these dimensions of susceptibility to interpersonal influence, Park and Lessig were the first to develop a useful but somewhat limited self-report measure of the construct. In addition to the product and situation specific nature of the individual items they used to measure susceptibility to interpersonal influence, Park and Lessig did not report reliability, validity, or dimensionality of their measure.

Building on this foundation, Bearden et al. developed a multi-item scale to measure consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence (SUSCEP) as a personality trait that varies across individuals. Fundamentally, a high SUSCEP score indicates a tendency to be influenced by others in making decisions, while a low SUSCEP score indicates more independence in decision making. Several researchers have used the SUSCEP scale successfully (for example). D’Rozario and Choudhury concluded that consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence varies with the level of assimilation into one’s host culture and is therefore not a stable trait as was assumed in the previous literature. As cited by Lalwani, previous research indicates that there is an inverse relationship between a person’s SUSCEP score and innovativeness. This is consistent with Manning, Bearden, and Madden’s assertion that individuals who do not seek new product advice from others tend to be early adopters who are willing to take risks without obtaining information from their referent social systems. Because both constructs are considered dimensions of consumer conformity, one can logically infer a negative relationship between the constructs.

Susceptibility to interpersonal influence implies a tendency to rely or at least reference the opinions of others before making decisions. As such, a high score on the scale used to measure this construct (SUSCEP) indicates greater reliance on others in decision making. Innovators can be defined as the first to adopt new products. However, Midgley and Dowling argue that innovativeness is not merely a function of the time at which an individual is willing to adopt a product, but further reflects an individual personality trait that causes a consumer to be willing to adopt a product early in its diffusion in the absence of interpersonal influence. Thus, those who are more susceptible to the interpersonal influence are probably low in innovativeness. This is the basis of our first hypothesis:

**H1:** Susceptibility to interpersonal influence is negatively related to innate innovativeness.

**Attention to social comparison information**

Some individuals use a tactic called ‘self-monitoring’ to control how they express and present themselves in social situations for the sake of desired public appearances. Snyder developed the multi-item self-monitoring scale consisting of five factors. Snyder describes one of the factors as ‘attention to social comparison information as cues to appropriate self-expression’ (p. 529). Lennox and Wolfe subsequently refined the concept by developing a 13-item Attention to Social Comparison Information (ATSCI) scale (see O’Cass, 2000) and showed it to be a construct distinct from self-monitoring, owing to its strong linkage with social anxiety. Social anxiety is the degree to which one feels discomfort in the presence of others. Attention to social comparison information is the extent to which individuals are influenced by what others may think about their product selections and use. Specifically, Lennox and Wolfe found ATSCI to be correlated with two dimensions of social anxiety: fear of negative evaluation and neuroticism. Bearden and Rose’s important work extended our knowledge of ATSCI by identifying it as a mediator of susceptibility to interpersonal influence and relating the construct to conformity. Fur-
ther, it was determined that there is an inverse relationship between ATSCI scores and self-esteem and a positive correlation with public-self consciousness.\(^\text{36}\)

Moreover, as cited by Bearden and Rose\(^\text{36}\) (p. 462), Fenigstein, Scheier, and Buss\(^\text{37}\) defined public self-consciousness (PSC) as a stable individual trait whereby individuals view themselves as social objects and focus their attention inward. ATSCI has a moderating effect on the relationship between idealized images and self-evaluations; specifically, those who are high in ATSCI tend to be more inclined to lower their self-evaluation when exposed to idealized images than individuals who are low in ATSCI.\(^\text{38}\) Positive scores on SUSCEP and ATSCI are indicators of conformity; however, reverse scoring these measures does not indicate non-conformity.\(^\text{39}\) Lascu and Zinkhan\(^\text{21}\) identify ATSCI and innovativeness as personal characteristics that influence conformity. ATSCI is posited to have a positive effect on conformity in contrast with innovativeness, which is posited to have a negative effect on conformity.\(^\text{21}\)

Individuals who score highly on the attention to social comparison information scale (ATSCI) tend to be more attentive to social cues as a referent for making product selections. They are more concerned about what others think of their purchase and usage of products. Logically, they place less emphasis on the opinions of others and are less easily influenced in their decision making than low scorers are. Bearden and Rose\(^\text{36}\) showed that scores on the SUSCEP and ATSCI scales are positively correlated. It stands to reason that attention to social comparison would be inversely correlated with innovativeness. Accordingly, we propose the following:

\(H_{2a}:\) Attention to social comparison information is positively related to susceptibility to interpersonal influence.

\(H_{2b}:\) Attention to social comparison information is negatively related to innate innovativeness.

**Role-relaxed consumers**

Conceptually related to susceptibility to interpersonal influence, but less widely known, is the concept of the **role-relaxed** consumer.\(^\text{40,41}\) According to Kahle, the role-relaxed consumer is more concerned with utilitarian aspects of a product than superficial aspects (e.g. style, brand name, sex appeal). Kahle posits that a role-relaxed consumer is synonymous with someone who is low on susceptibility to interpersonal influence. Therefore, the role-relaxed consumer is unconcerned with conforming to social expectations. Kahle identified multiple characteristics of role-relaxed consumers (relatively affluent, self confident, self respecting) and posited that role-relaxed consumers view themselves as educated, knowledgeable, logical, sensible, and intelligent. This newly conceived concept describes an important lifestyle dimension of many consumers and therefore is a worthy attribute to study in connection with interpersonal influence, social comparison, and innovativeness.

After defining the construct, Kahle developed a multi-item scale (RRC) to measure the extent to which a person is a role-relaxed consumer. Role-relaxed consumers by definition should tend to score low on the SUSCEP scale.\(^\text{40,41}\) Thus, like SUSCEP, ATSCI should be negatively related to role-relaxed consumption. It is likely that innovators score low on the SUSCEP scale as well. Thus, innovators are likely to be role-relaxed consumers. Thus, we propose the following:

\(H_{3a}:\) Scores on the role-relaxed consumer scale are negatively correlated with scores on the SUSCEP scale.

\(H_{3b}:\) Scores on the role-relaxed consumer scale are negatively correlated with scores on the attention to social comparison information scale.

\(H_{3c}:\) Scores on the role-relaxed consumer scale are positively correlated with scores on the innate innovativeness scale.

**Method**

**Sample**

Data were collected by distributing self-administered questionnaires to 326 undergraduates at a large public university in the south-east US. Removal of 21 subjects owing to missing data, non-response, and random response resulted in a total usable sample of 305 subjects. The final sample was comprised of 137 men (45\%) and 168 women (55\%). Ages of the subjects ranged from 19 to 37 years, with a mean of 21.2 (SD = 2.3). The majority of subjects were white (79.7\%), with African
Americans representing 10.2%, Hispanics accounting for 5.9%, and others representing 4.3% of the sample. The purpose of the study was to examine theoretical relationships among the variables and not to obtain point and interval estimates for the variables; therefore, a convenience sample was appropriate. Moreover, convenience student samples were used in the development and use of the scales in previous consumer research (c.f.12,36).

Measures

The questionnaire contained demographic items and multi-item self-report scales for the four measured constructs. A pilot study was conducted with 27 students who were debriefed regarding the questionnaire items. Demographic items that were confusing to the respondents in the pilot study were removed from the final version of the questionnaire. No hypothesis guessing was apparent in the pilot study. Data quality checks were added to the study to detect random response or otherwise bad subjects. Respondents who answered ‘incorrectly’ to the quality checks were deleted from the final sample. To remain consistent with previous research, the scales used were those developed and tested by others. We summed the individual item scores to form total scale scores so that higher scores indicate higher levels of each construct. A summary of the constructs, sources, examples of the scales’ items, and reliabilities appears in Table 1.

Table 1 Measures used in the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Sources</th>
<th>Operationalization</th>
<th>Reliability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Innovativeness                    | Hurt et al.⁹    | An 8-item scale that measures the degree to which individuals are innately innovative⁹  
1 am willing to try new things’ | 0.72        |
| Susceptibility to interpersonal influence | Bearden et al.¹² | A 12-item scale that measures the extent to which individuals need to enhance their image through buying products and brands; are willing to conform to other’s expectations regarding purchases; and learn about products/services by observing others and seeking information from others  
1 I like to know what brands and products make good impressions on others’ | 0.89        |
| Attention to social comparison information | Bearden & Rose³⁶ | A 13-item scale that measures the extent to which individuals are sensitive to social comparison cues regarding their product choices  
‘At parties I usually try to behave in a manner that makes me fit in’ | 0.88        |
| Role relaxed consumer             | Kahle¹¹         | A 7-item scale that measures the extent to which individuals ignore interpersonal influences in making product and brand decisions and prefer substantive product attributes over stylistic product attributes  
1 I buy brands that will make me look good in front of my friends’ | 0.72        |

*Reliability estimates are Cronbach’s alpha computed from study sample.

The 8 items were adapted from the original 10-item scale to capture the innate personality construct of innovativeness.
the study results. Internal consistency of the scales was evaluated by computing Cronbach’s coefficient alpha (see Table 1), which was found to be acceptable for the purposes of the study.

Bivariate correlations (Pearson product-moment) between the variables (constructs) were computed to test the hypothesized relationships (see Table 2). Sex was not significantly correlated with any of the variables in the study, implying little difference between men and women for the personality characteristics measured in the study. Age was not correlated with ATSCI, innovativeness, or role-relaxed consumerism. However, age was found to be negatively correlated \( r = -0.18, P < 0.001 \) with SUSCEP scores. This relationship was not hypothesized, but is consistent with prior research that suggests susceptibility to interpersonal influence declines with age.\(^{26}\)

In agreement with Kahle’s\(^{40}\) suggestion and \( H_{3b} \), scores on the role-relaxed consumer (RRC) scale were negatively correlated \( r = -0.68, P < 0.001 \) with scores on the SUSCEP scale. Similarly, scores on the RRC scale were negatively correlated \( r = -0.76, P < 0.001 \) with ATSCI scores, supporting \( H_{3b} \). Consistent with \( H_{3c} \), scores on the role-relaxed consumer scale were positively correlated \( r = 0.15, P = 0.012 \) with innate innovativeness. This suggests that role-relaxed consumers are more innovative than non-role-relaxed consumers and that innovators are more likely to be role-relaxed consumers.

Therefore, the scales behaved as expected for relationships hypothesized from the extant literature, supporting the nomological validity for these concepts and measures. Because the hypothesized bivariate relationships between the constructs in the study were found to be significant, the data were further evaluated to examine multivariate relationships among the variables. Specifically, multiple regression was utilized to assess the combined effects of susceptibility to interpersonal influence, attention to social comparison information, and role-relaxed consumerism on innovativeness. Therefore, innovativeness was modeled as the dependent variable with SUSCEP, ATSCI, and RRC as the independent variables.

For the multiple regression analysis the preliminary analysis was extended to include an evaluation of potential outliers and observations with excessive influence. Review of residual statistics did not disclose any observations with excessively large residuals (outliers).

| Table 2 Bivariate correlations (Pearson product-moment) |
|-----------------|-----------|---------|--------|-------|----------|--------|--------|
| Age             | 21.07     | 2.05    | –      | –     | –        | –      | –      |
| Sex             | NA        | NA      | –0.076 | –     | –        | –      | –      |
| INNOV           | 41.3      | 5.51    | –0.002 | –0.031| –        | –      | –      |
| SUSCEP          | 42.3      | 12.2    | –0.181*| –0.023| –0.205*  | –      | –      |
| ATSCI           | 50.5      | 12.0    | –0.093 | 0.061 | –0.151*  | 0.706* | –      |
| RRC             | 29.4      | 6.13    | 0.059  | 0.021 | 0.147*   | –0.684*| –0.757*|
| Error SD        | 2.05      | 2.05    | –      | –     | –        | –      | –      |

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

SD, standard deviation; INNOV, innovativeness; SUSCEP, susceptibility to interpersonal influence; ATSCI, attention to social comparison information; RRC, role-relaxed consumer.

List-wise deletion resulted in \( N = 295 \).
Further, a review of the delta betas indicated that no observations exerted excessive influence on the regression coefficients. Visual inspection of a plot of the model residuals vs. the predicted standardized outcomes did not suggest any violations of the distributional regression assumptions of correct fit (mean residual of zero), constant variance, and normality. Reliabilities of the independent variables were high enough to assume robustness to the slight violation that all independent variables were known exactly. Finally, no conditions suggested a violation of the independence assumption.

The model $R^2$ of 0.042, which reflects the overall strength of the relationship between innovativeness and the independent variables, was significant at the 0.05 level ($F = 2.60, P = 0.006$). The adjusted $R^2$, compensating for the positive bias in the $R^2$, was .032, reflecting a comparatively weak overall strength of relationship. The standard error of the estimate was 5.42.

Effects of the individual independent variables on innovativeness were evaluated. The direct effects of ATSCI and RRC on innovativeness were not significant at the 0.05 level. However, the negative effect of SUSCEP on innovativeness ($\beta = -0.194, P = 0.024$) was significant at the 0.05 level. Utilizing a common convention for interval independent variables that states that a standardized regression coefficient of about 0.1 is at the threshold of practical importance, the corresponding threshold for a raw score coefficient in the current study, based on the standard deviations, is approximately $(5.507/12.203)(0.1) = 0.05$. The majority of the confidence interval (78%) is greater in magnitude (absolute value) than this threshold, providing reasonable confidence that the effect of SUSCEP on innovativeness is of practical importance. The unique contribution of SUSCEP to the model $R^2$ ($\Delta R^2$) was 0.017. The implication in the regression results is that the variability in an individual’s innovativeness is more directly attributable to their susceptibility to interpersonal influence than to their attention to social comparison information or tendency to be a role-relaxed consumer. ATSCI and RRC may effect innovativeness indirectly (mediated by SUSCEP), but apparently have little in the way of a direct effect. A summary of the regression results is provided in Table 3.

### Table 3 Summary of multiple regression results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Effect estimate</th>
<th>95% Confidence interval</th>
<th>$\Delta R^2$**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SUSCEP</td>
<td>$-0.194^*$</td>
<td>$-0.163, -0.011$</td>
<td>$-0.017$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATSCI</td>
<td>$-0.009$</td>
<td>$-0.090, 0.082$</td>
<td>$-0.000$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RRC</td>
<td>$0.008$</td>
<td>$0.157, 0.171$</td>
<td>$0.000$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$^*$Significant at the 0.05 level.
**$\Delta R^2$ calculated as the square of the part correlations.

SUSCEP, susceptibility to interpersonal influence; ATSCI, attention to social comparison information; RRC, role relaxed consumer.

None of the VIF’s for the independent variables was larger than 3.0 and no tolerance value was below 0.1, so multicollinearity was not deemed a concern.

### Discussion

This study looked specifically at how dimensions of consumer conformity associated with interpersonal influence and attentiveness to social cues are related to innovativeness. Our results confirm that innovativeness as a personality characteristic of individuals is significantly correlated with measured dimensions of conformity. The findings suggest that, as hypothesized, innovators are less susceptible to interpersonal influence in making new product decisions than other consumers. Further, the results imply that innovators are less likely than later buyers to look to social cues or exhibit conforming behaviours when making product or brand decisions. It appears that innovators are more likely to be role-relaxed consumers.

### Theoretical and managerial implications

Innovators appear to be less attentive observers of others’ product and brand choices and rely less on the opinions of others regarding their purchases. This is an important finding because it is consistent with Midgley and Dowling’s speculation and suggests special challenges to marketing to the earliest adopters of new products. Because innovators depend less than other consumers on these social cues and information provided by others, they may be less responsive to certain types of advertising such as testimonials, celebrity endorsements, or expert opinions. While innovators do not exhibit conforming behaviours, many consumers do.
Diffusion theory proposes that these consumers who exhibit conforming behaviours rely on the innovators’ guidance before adopting. If this is true, then the importance of innovators as the target of new products is increased, but advertising appeals incorporating social comparison and interpersonal influence may be ineffective. However, we conceptualized and measured innovativeness at the domain-general level and not at the domain-specific level of a product category. The extent of the generalizability of our findings depends on replicating them in multiple product categories to show that innovators behave similarly across different product domains.

Just how does a marketer appeal to product innovators? A review of the literature on consumer innovativeness suggests that promotions that focus on the superior knowledge and enhanced product interest of innovators may be the most effective means of persuading them to try the new product. Consumer innovators are attracted to new products in specific product fields because they are involved in the product category and are more venturesome and risk tolerant than other consumers. Their involvement leads them to acquire knowledge of the product (hence their ability to act as opinion leaders for other consumers) and be curious about the product. Thus, giving them information about the product and making it relevant to their category-related needs would appear to be a more successful way to appeal to them than using celebrity endorsers whom they must trust to persuade them to try the product.

But what about product categories where celebrity endorsers are often used to introduce new products to the innovators? Michael Jordan and other sports celebrities are avidly followed by cutting edge fashion buyers. In these instances, the celebrities are successful in leading innovators because they are valuable sources of information about what is and is not fashionable. Thus, it is the informational influence and not necessarily the social influence that makes them guides for innovators. Moreover, innovators are more interested in leading than it fitting in, so that they identify with these fashion leaders and consequently follow their recommendations where fashionable products are concerned.

On the other hand, while consumer theorists argue that innovators buy without the communicated experience of others and act as opinion leaders to influence the behaviour of others, the size of the relationship among our measures was small. SUSCEP, ATSCI, and RRC together explained less than 5% of the variance in innovativeness scores. This suggests that while interpersonal influence is negatively related to innovativeness, it is not a major influence. Perhaps innovators are chiefly indifferent to the influence of others, so we should not expect a strong, negative, linear correlation, but should anticipate a general non-relationship between these constructs. Perhaps innovativeness is accompanied more by independence and lack of attention to others’ opinions rather than a rejection of interpersonal influence. Future research should try to make this clear.

**Limitations and future research directions**

Generalizability of the study is limited. The fact that the sample was a convenience sample consisting of US college students limits the external validity of the results. However, because the study fundamentally tested theory, the convenience sample was appropriate. Second, the study is necessarily limited by the constructs measured. Certainly many other dimensions of conformity may be related to innovativeness. Third, the study was conducted using a self-report questionnaire and may be extended by conducting experimental or scenario-based research. Finally, the study was limited by the specific scales used to measure the constructs.

The general premise of early adopters as an important route to product acceptance is sound. Are innovators socially remote? If so, their social remoteness may render them of limited influence in practice. However, if innovators are socially integrated, and simply prefer to influence rather than be influenced, it can be argued that their lack of susceptibility to interpersonal influence is based upon their desire to be distinctive (i.e. their need for uniqueness) rather than an unawareness of it. If the latter is the case, their value to marketers increases. This issue is of both theoretical and practical importance and deserves further study.

Additional future research should analyse the personal dimensions of consumer conformity such as self-esteem, fear of negative evaluation, social independence, tendency to conform, self-monitoring, etc. Many correlational studies have been conducted on the inter-
relationships of the various conformity constructs. However, little empirical research has examined the nomological relationships between the constructs specifically identifying antecedents and outcomes of consumer conformity. Because of the potential impacts of conforming behaviour on purchase intent and brand equity, this type of study would be worthwhile. Further research should examine the extent to which socio-economic status constrains through perceptions of risk innate innovativeness, thereby influencing the relationships among the constructs. Studies using data from countries other than the US should be done. Further research should also examine other social relationship constructs as they bear on innovativeness. There is evidently a great deal to be learned about social influences on innovators, and the importance of this construct should make that effort worthwhile.

References
