

MAVENISM, ITS ANTECEDENTS AND MARKET HELPING BEHAVIOUR

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ABSTRACT

Mavenism, its antecedents and market helping behaviour

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The primary objective of this thesis is to understand the antecedents of Mavenism and to investigate how Mavens engage in providing market information to other customers. Mavens are individuals who go out of their way to help others make better choices about products and services, without having immediate or long-term personal gain in mind. In this thesis, building on Geller's (1995) Actively Caring Model, an examination of the antecedents of Mavenism and the factors that contribute to Mavens taking action to help others is investigated through three studies. The Actively Caring Model mainly focuses on the antecedents of altruistic behaviour.

The first study of this thesis focuses on Personal Empowerment, Self-Esteem, and Belongingness as three antecedents of Mavenism. For this investigation, the structural model of the theoretical model was constructed and tested using a PLS-SEM software, SmartPLS 2.0. Personal Empowerment was modeled as a second-order formative construct formed by Optimism, Self-Efficacy, and Personal Control. The results of the analysis confirmed the three dimensions of interest as antecedents of Mavenism.

In Study 2, the factors that moderated the effect of the three previously studied antecedents were investigated. Building on existing literature, Gender, Religiosity, and Culture (collectivism

vs. individualism) were included as moderators in the structural model. The findings generally supported the moderating role for all three moderators, although the moderating effect of Gender on the influence of Self-Esteem, and the moderating role of Religiosity on the influence of Personal Empowerment were found only marginally significant.

Finally, Study 3 of this thesis focuses on the outcomes of Mavenism, namely the acts of recommendation. In this study, the factors that further encouraged, or even inhibited Mavens from acting out and making recommendations were investigated. The findings showed that individuals who are less Susceptible to Interpersonal Influence are more likely to act out and take action than those who are more Susceptible to Interpersonal Influence. Additionally, the finding showed that while lower Self-Esteem Mavens are less likely to make recommendations, availability of Media that requires less face-to-face interaction may compensate for their lower Self-Esteem and lead to their increased Helping Behaviour through recommendations.

Keywords: *Market helping behaviour, Mavens, Mavenism, Information Diffusion*

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The diffusion of market information plays an important role in the success or failure of marketing attempts by companies. The circulation of information is often facilitated through promotional campaigns and as the result of deliberate actions by companies. However, with increasing acceptance of social networks and enhancements of peer-to-peer information technologies, the role of individuals is becoming more prominent. Therefore, marketers are in urgent need to understand the forces underlying the newly shaping paradigm.

The pace of diffusion of market information depends on those individuals in the networks whom communicate information through their social linkages. Not all customers pick up the phones to tell story their or their friends shopping experience or write on their weblogs about a product. On the other hand, some of these individuals even guide others step by step through the shopping process to help them achieve what they found amazing. So who are these individuals and what are the characteristics that drive them to speak? Price and Feick (1984) define these individuals as mavens. Mavens distribute market information to their network. They enjoy sharing their information to help others make the best decision. They look for information and contact their peers to share their findings.

While much attention has been placed on the role of opinion leaders, some of them already being recruited by companies to assist them in promotional campaigns, Mavens have remained neglected to a great extent. Unlike many sources of information diffusion, Mavens tend to embark on information circulation based on a selfless motive: to help others find the right product they need. Therefore, they tend to be more passionate and considered more trustworthy to general customers. But the question remains: what are the forces that drive them to constantly seek out ways to share their information? Geller (1995) identifies three characteristics that motivate individuals to actively care for their environments. Using Geller's (1995) "actively caring model" we show that Belongingness, Self-Esteem, and Personal Empowerment influence Mavenism.

The aim of this dissertation is to identify the antecedents of Mavenism and to explore the factors that influence the effect of those antecedents, as well as the effect of Mavenism on subsequent helping behaviour. To achieve this objective, three studies have been designed. The designed studies will be integrated to test the overall theoretical model for this thesis (Figure 1.1).

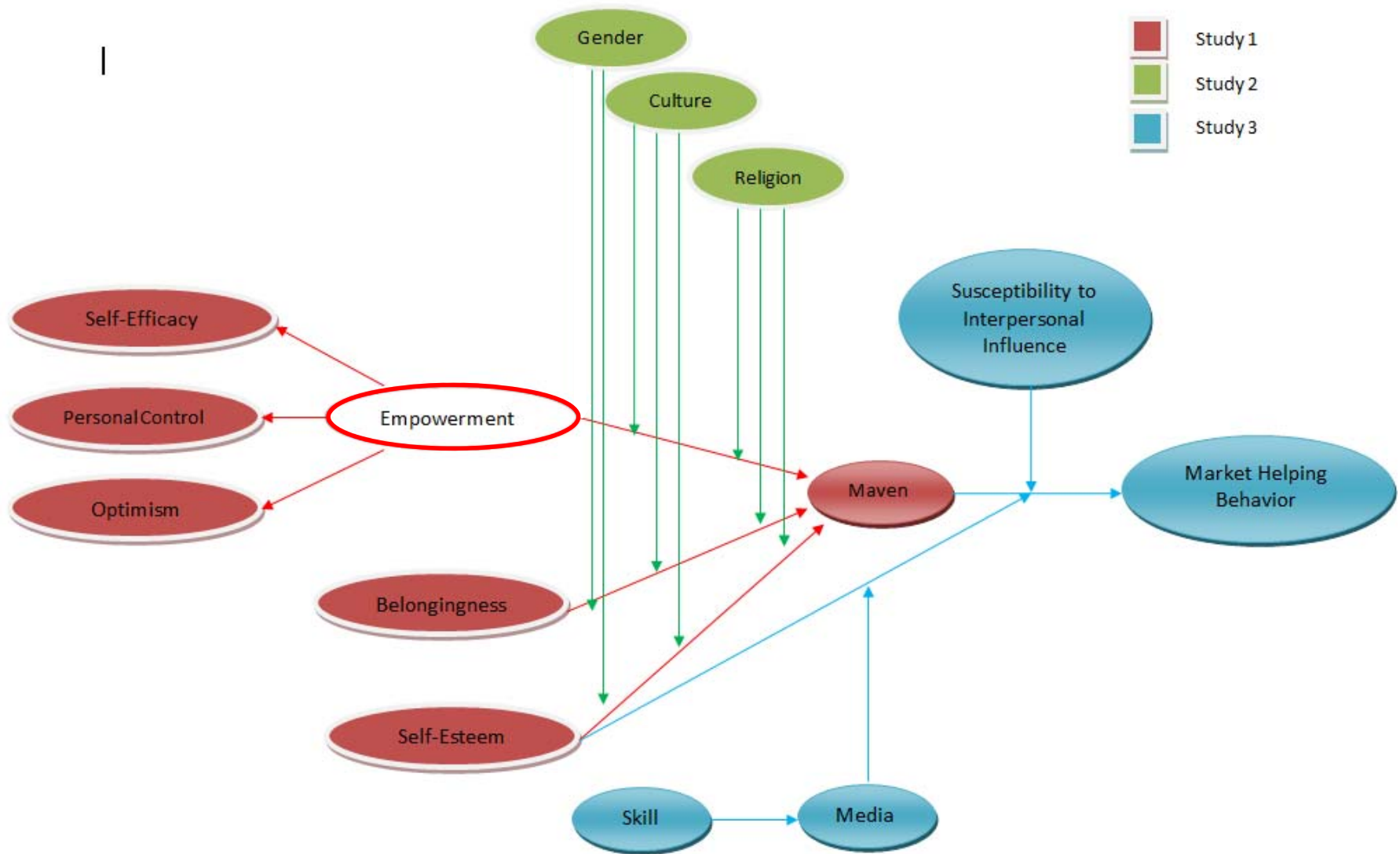


Figure 1.1: Antecedents of Mavenism and Helping Behaviour

Following this introduction, Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature on several of the main constructs included within the theoretical model. To this end, in this chapter, definitions for the main independent variables and the theoretical models used to make arguments in subsequent chapters have been provided. The construct definitions for the moderating variables and the ultimate outcome variable of this thesis—Helping Behaviour—have been provided in each study that corresponds to them.

Chapter 3 of this thesis focuses on the first study of this research. The first study sets out to shed light onto the characteristics that define Mavens. The main question asked in this thesis is “what are the characteristics of Mavens?” To answer this fundamental question, a literature review has been conducted to identify a range of characteristics and have tested them using a sample. In particular, the focus has been on the roles of Personal Empowerment, Self-Esteem, Gender, and Belongingness on adoption of Mavenism characteristics by individuals. The study includes explaining the measures to test the proposed hypotheses. To develop the instrument for this study, measures used and validated in past research have been used. The instruments are then used to collect data from a sample of undergraduate students. The chapter then proceeds with providing detailed descriptions of the methods of data analysis and the statistical techniques used to operationalize the second-order formative construct, Personal Empowerment, into the model. Chapter 2 concludes with explaining the findings from statistical analysis.

In Chapter 4, the details of Study 2 have been provided. This study focuses on the factors that moderate the influence of Personal Empowerment, Belongingness and Self-Esteem on development of Mavenism characteristics in individuals. In particular, Study 2 focuses on three factors of interest: Gender, Culture, and Religion. Throughout Chapter 4, the theoretical

background and supporting arguments for each moderating effect are presented. Each section includes the statement of the moderation hypotheses. Chapter 4 also includes explanation of the methodology employed to test the hypotheses. The measures for the three moderator variables—Gender, Culture, and Religiosity—have been explained. The chapter includes detailed descriptions for the development of moderating variables and the techniques used to include them in the theoretical model for the purpose of statistical testing. The chapter concludes with an explanation of the results and comparing them to the hypothesized relationships.

Chapter 5 which entails the final study of this dissertation, Study 3, focuses on factors that influence the choice of individuals with Mavenism characteristics to engage in helping behaviour towards others. In particular, Study 3 proceeds with hypothesizing moderating roles for the medium of recommendation, susceptibility to personal influence and Self-Esteem in the effect of Mavenism characteristics on subsequent helping behaviour. The study then proceeds with explaining the methodology used to analyze the data and to test the hypotheses. The chapter concludes with a detailed description of the results and comparing them against the hypothesized relationships.

Chapter 6 focuses on the overall conclusion of the three studies in this thesis. In Chapter 6, the contributions are divided into theoretical and practical contributions. In the section which focuses on theoretical contributions, the implications of the findings of this study and the additional value provided to the body of literature are explained in detail. For practical contributions, the chapter focuses on the managerial implications and the actionable aspects of this study which can benefit marketing managers in economic enterprises.

In the final chapter of this thesis, Chapter 7, the limitations and suggestions for future research have been addressed. Due to limitations resulting from sample and the instruments, the findings have several boundary conditions. These limitations, in turn, provide opportunities for future research to further improve our understanding of the Mavens, and to increase external validity of the findings.

In addition to the aforementioned chapters, the survey instrument developed and used for this research has been included in the Appendix section. As explained in chapters 3, 4, and 5, several stages of analysis was conducted to refine the scales and to eliminate the items that were problematic.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The three studies in this dissertation seek to better clarify the antecedents of Mavenism and the moderating factors that influence the effect of these antecedents, as well as the effect of Mavenism on market helping behaviour. This chapter provides a review of the literature on several of the main constructs included within the theoretical model. To this end, in this chapter, definitions for the main independent variables and the theoretical models used to make arguments in subsequent chapters have been provided. The construct definitions for the moderating variables and the outcome variable—Helping Behaviour—have been provided in each of the three studies.

2.1 Market Mavens

The word Maven refers to someone who has knowledge in a specific field and would like to share that information with others. Feick and Price (1987) conveyed the term ‘Market Maven’ to the marketing literature as someone who has knowledge about the marketplace and would like to share it with others. This knowledge is about a product, a place to shop or any other dimension of the market.

Market Mavens are defined as individuals who voluntarily take part in circulating market information (Feick and Price 1987) in order to fulfill their own desire; they actively approach others to share information with them, either because they want to help, feel the obligation to share information, or simply because they get satisfied to inform others about the products (Walsh, Gwinner, and Swanson, 2004). The actions of Market Mavens are not due to their expertise or their early adoption of a product or a service. It is the personal characteristics of Market Mavens that motivate them to step up to help other customers by providing them with information related to products or services and through this process they fulfill their own social needs. In other words, Market Mavens wish to position themselves as someone who provides information (Walsh et al., 2004)

Market Mavens play a distinctive role in spreading market information. They communicate retailers' information more than other customers (Abratt, Nel, and Nezer, 1995; Higie, Feick, and Price, 1987). People tend to rely more on the information that they receive from their reference groups than commercial sources (Bickart and Schindler, 2001). Therefore, the influence effect of Market Mavens is important and cannot be easily ignored by companies. The focus on Market Mavens becomes even more critical when these active agents –Market Mavens–have access to powerful communication facilitators such as social networking media.

While other influencers (information distributors) such as Early Adopters and Opinion Leaders exist in the marketplace with certain similarities to Market Mavens, this study focuses only on Market Mavens.

Opinion Leaders are people who are experts on a specific type of product (e.g. camera) (Chaney, 2001). Customers refer to Opinion Leaders to obtain opinions only when they want to

buy a product. However, Market Mavens differ from Opinion Leaders in that their influence does not depend on their specialization related to a product or a service, but rather derives from their general market knowledge. Market Mavens are not necessarily experts in a specific group of products subject to their information sharing. They like to gather and share information about a wider range of products and services. Still, with great awareness, Market Mavens, similar to Opinion Leaders, stand a good chance to become experts on specific product categories due to their development of in-depth knowledge.

On the other hand, Opinion Leaders are customers who are crazy about trying all kind of new products. They cannot wait to get their hands on the latest version of the products. Their knowledge is all about new products. Unlike early adopters, Mavens are not essentially among the first group of people to try everything. They are just search for any new information. This could be a new promotion for their favourite product or their new finding on an existed shopping place. Mavens do not necessarily include early adopters of products and their circulation of information does not even imply that they are users of the product or service. Due to their general market knowledge and expertise, Mavens find early awareness of a product or service, once it becomes available. While this awareness increases the likelihood of adoption, it does not always lead to that end.

Market Mavens are often evaluated on the basis of their general knowledge of products, services or markets as well as their influence on others. Due to their intrinsic motivation, Market Mavens have the tendency to play an initiating role in engaging other customers in discussions on different facets of products or service experiences. They are also willing parties in responding to inquiries of fellow customers when additional information is required. The customers mostly perceive a Maven's expertise to be based on more general market information. This means that

Market Mavens with more established expertise on general market knowledge tend to make a stronger impact on other customers' judgement and decision regarding a product or a service experience. Due to the scope and effect of Market Mavens' influence on the marketplace, this research primarily focuses on their role and tries to find the characteristics that define and distinguish Market Mavens.

2.2 Altruism

Some of the reasons that motivate Mavens to actively seek out ways to share their market information and knowledge have been identified as to include an obligation to share information, strong desire to help others, and the intrinsic pleasure of sharing information with others (Walsh, Gwinner, and Swanson, 2004). Altruistic tendencies are a significant contributor in attempts to influence other customers' decisions to make better purchasing decisions (Phelps, Lewis, Mobilio, Perry, Raman, 2004; Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, Gremler, 2004). Altruism has been defined as actively caring for other individuals and getting engaged in helping behaviour towards others (Allen and Ferrand, 1999). The degree to demonstrate altruistic behaviour depends on his/her personal need for affection (Price et al., 1995). Affectionate behaviour requires the individual demonstrating it to be emotionally involved and with a sense of intimacy towards another individual (Schutz, 1966).

Individuals may get engaged in discussions with others and share their own satisfaction or dissatisfaction from using a product or a service based on their concern for those they engage in conversations (Arndt 1967; Dichter 1966; Engel, Kegerreis, and Blackwell 1969). Past research findings suggest motives such as care for others' welfare (Price et al., 1995) or expressions of love

and friendship (Dichter, 1966) to stand behind instances of altruistic sharing of information. Similarly, altruistic acts of sharing information in the marketplace have been linked directly to individuals' need for affection (Ho and Dampsey, 2010) and individuals in both online (Phelps et al., 2004) and offline (Sundaram et al., 1998) are similarly driven by their altruistic tendencies to engage in information sharing behaviours. Therefore, altruism has been suggested to have a direct effect on information sharing (Ho and Dampsey, 2010) as one form of market helping behaviour.

2.3 Actively caring model

The 'actively caring' dimension of altruism has been the subject of interest in the past. Actively caring has been found to influence behaviours that are associated with environmental friendliness. Individuals that adopt such behaviours have been found to demonstrate a stronger interest to conserve energy or to recycle waste (Geller, 1995). Such behaviour has been suggested to stem from the 'actively caring' behaviour; individuals with stronger 'actively caring' tendencies take action on behalf of the environment in order to make changes necessary that would see through its protection. Such behaviour could also go beyond the environment and include individuals and societies. Consequently, stronger 'actively caring' in individuals could lead to their proactive approach in stepping up to help others, even when not requested directly.

However, 'actively caring' is not without antecedents. Past research has suggested that the 'actively caring' dimension of altruism will be influenced by needs for Self-Esteem, Group Belongingness, Personal Control, Self-Efficacy, and Optimism (Geller, 1995). Those individuals with higher levels of these five dimensions show stronger concern for others and through that concern develop a sense of 'other directedness' (Geller, 1995). Subsequently, those with higher

levels of ‘other directedness’ tend to demonstrate more altruistic behaviours directed towards their communities. Identifying ‘Actively Caring’ as a form of altruistic behaviour, Geller (1995) identified its mediating role in the relationship between each of the five antecedents of ‘Actively Caring’ (i.e., Self-Esteem, Belongingness, Personal Control, Self-Efficacy, and Optimism) with Environmentally Responsible Behaviour as one form of altruism. Similarly, in this paper, I argue that Mavenism, another form of altruism, is influenced by these dimensions.

2.4 Self-Esteem

Self-Esteem refers to the evaluation that one makes and maintains of himself (Coopersmith, 1967). The degree to which individuals perceive themselves capable, successful, significant, worthy, and with self-respect defines their Self-Esteem. Past research has shown Self-Esteem to have a significant role in influencing behaviour that is directed towards helping others. In studies focusing on bystander intervention, it was found that individuals with higher Self-Esteem scores demonstrated a higher likelihood to offer their assistance to total strangers (Michilini, Wilson, and Messe, 1975), disrupt their ongoing work to intervene to help others in perceived situations of danger (Wilson, 1976) and to compromise their own safety, willing to undergo physical harm to protect others by taking their place in an experiment they perceived as physically painful (Batson 2014).

2.5 Belongingness

Belongingness is defined as the degree to which individuals perceive themselves to be part of a social group or community. While the 'Actively Caring' concept does not directly refer to Belongingness, its Group Cohesion dimension is widely considered to be the social psychological construct most analogous to it. Group Cohesion is defined as the sum of positive and negative forces which attract individuals within groups (Wheeless, Wheelless, and Dickson-Markman, 1982).

Past research has found support for the role of belongingness in the likelihood of individuals to engage in voluntary actions to help others. For instance, individuals have been found to show a stronger tendency to help other individuals whom they perceive to be members of relevant groups such as similar ethnicity, nationality or other arbitrary definitions used for distinction (Staub, 1978). These findings have further been supported by (Batson, Bolen, Cross, and Newinger-Benefiel, 1986) focusing on perceived similarity and voluntary help behaviour. Furthermore, research has found that in times of distress, those familiar with the victim are likely to react quicker to help than those without any connection to the victim, however this strength and speed of reaction attenuates as the size of the group to which individuals belong grows larger (Latane and Nida, 1981). Further manipulations of group cohesion have shown changes in strength of altruistic behaviour of subjects (Rutkowski, Gruder, and Romer, 1983), lending additional support to the role of Belongingness in influencing the likelihood for acts of altruism. Research has also shown that need to belong will positively affect the forwarding of online content. (Ho and Dempsey 2010)

2.6 Personal Empowerment

The word Empowerment is used in different fields of science to represent different meanings. For example in the area of Organizational Behaviour, Empowerment refers to actions taken by one which lead to acquisition of power to control another's affairs (Conger and Kanungo, 1988). Whereas in the area of psychology the subject of Empowerment is one's self and a person 'empowered' is defined as someone who has control over aspects of his/her life such as mental health care (Corrigan, Faber, Rashid, Leary (1999). Building on the concept of Empowerment from the area of psychology, Actively Caring Model defines Empowerment as set of attitudes, beliefs, expectations, and experiences that shape one's cognitive map (Geller, 1995). To avoid confusion between various definitions of Empowerment, throughout this dissertation Personal Empowerment will be used to represent the construct of interest.

Past research has established the link between individuals' cognitive maps and their decisions and actions. Similarly, the perception of Personal Empowerment plays an important role in individuals' engagement in voluntary actions that benefit others. Individuals with perceptions of Personal Empowerment that permit altruistic behaviour are more likely to take such actions (Diener and Biswas-Diener, 2005).

Personal Empowerment has been found to be influenced by different factors. These factors include Personal Control, Self-Efficacy, and Optimism (Geller, 1995; Seligman, 1991; Ozer and Bandura, 1990; Rotter, 1966). Individuals derive their perceptions of Personal Empowerment from various environmental factors. For example, an individual may increase his perception of Personal Empowerment by exercising Personal Control through setting personal goals and objective and making commitment to achieve them. Similarly, individuals may increase their sense of Personal

Empowerment through increasing Self-Efficacy with help from environmental feedback loops that increase one's sense of effectiveness over time.

Optimism, on the other hand, is reinforced when individuals come to the belief that events resulting from their personal actions will be associated with positive outcomes (Scheier and Carver, 1985; Seligman, 1991). Studies have shown that individuals with more optimistic attitudes tend to demonstrate a stronger sense of Personal Empowerment and consequently demonstrate a stronger likelihood to engage in altruistic actions. Manipulating levels of Optimism in subjects through exposing them to unexpected outcomes, Isen and Levin (1972) found that individuals with positive outcomes demonstrated stronger willingness to engage in subsequent behaviour to help strangers after building a perception that their actions lead to positive outcomes. The same findings were supported when exposing a group student subjects to unexpected rewards. Those who receive the reward showed stronger altruistic tendencies than those who did not receive them same treatment.

CHAPTER 3

STUDY 1: ANTECEDENTS OF MAVENISM

3.1 Development of hypotheses

This study sets out to shed light onto the characteristics that define Mavens. The main question asked in this research is “what are the characteristics of Mavens?” To answer this fundamental question, a literature review has been conducted. A range of characteristics have been identified and tested using a sample. In particular, this research focuses on the roles of Personal Empowerment, Self-Esteem, Gender, and Group Belongingness on adoption of Mavenism characteristics by individuals.

Self-Esteem has been defined as the evaluation that one makes and maintains of himself (Coopersmith, 1967). Past research has established the link between individuals’ Self-Esteem and their willingness to intervene in situations to help others who are total strangers to them (Michilini et al., 1975, Pyszczynski, Greenberg and Goldenberg, 2003) even under conditions of perceived danger and at the face of risk to their interests or even lives (Batson, 2014).

Similar to instances of danger, individuals with higher Self-Esteem may feel the need to intervene should they perceive other customers to make product choices that they understand to be harmful to them. Therefore, individuals with higher Self-Esteem would be in a more likely

position to share their knowledge regarding the market, its products and services with others even if they have not been requested to do so. Consequently, individuals with higher Self-Esteem are more likely to take the role of Mavens compared to those with lower Self-Esteem .Therefore:

Hypothesis 1: Self-Esteem will positively affect Market Mavenism.

Belongingness explains the extent to which individuals perceive themselves to be a part of a social group or a community. Past research has found Belongingness to influence voluntary behaviours that involve altruism (Rutkowski et al., 1983). In extreme situations, individuals with high sense of Belongingness may take actions at risk to their own lives in order to help others identified with their own group (Blake, 1978).

Belongingness also plays an important role in influencing individuals' decision to engage in voluntary informative actions to help other customers. Individuals with a stronger sense of Belongingness are more likely to feel the urge to intervene to protect interests of fellow customers, even at the expense of their own time and energy. Therefore, they are more likely to take the role of Market Mavens and voluntarily circulate information they find useful to others. Hence:

Hypothesis 2: Group belongingness will positively affect Market Mavenism.

Personal Empowerment has been defined as the set of attitudes, beliefs, expectations and experiences that form one's cognitive map (Geller, 1995). Individuals' Personal Empowerment has been suggested to be influenced by factors such as Personal Control, Self-Efficacy and Optimism (Geller, 1995; Seligman, 1991; Ozer and Bandura, 1990; Rotter, 1966). Past research has found individuals with higher perceived Personal Empowerment to be more likely to get engaged in voluntary actions that benefit others.

When exposed to product or service experiences, individuals with higher perception of Personal Empowerment are more likely to take voluntary steps to help other individuals through providing them with useful information and sharing their own experiences. Therefore:

Hypothesis 3: Personal Empowerment will positively affect Market Mavenism.

3.2 Methodology

3.2.1 Sample and data collection

To collect data for this research, a student sample was used. The sample collected for this research consists of 496 students from undergraduate and MBA programs from two business schools in Montreal and Toronto. During the last two sessions of their classes, the participants were asked to voluntarily participate in this study. A trivial class credit reward (1%) was promised in exchange for returning a complete survey.

The volunteers are provided with a three page survey. On the first two pages questions with answers on seven-point Likert-scale were used to measure the personal trait and Mavenism and the last page was the demographic questions. Although five-point and seven-point Likert-scales are comparable (Dawes, 2008), seven-point Likert-scales were used to prevent high neutral responses. To ensure the quality of responses the students were notified that the credit would be given to complete survey after a screen check. Of the 496 respondents, 232 (47%) were female and 264 (53%) male with the overwhelming majority (> 95%) falling within the age group 18-24.

3.2.2 Measurements

Roberts and Geller (1994) tested the “Actively Caring” model (Geller, 1995) for Self-Esteem, group cohesion and Optimism personalities. In this study we used the same scales to measure these personalities. The Rosenberg (1965)’s 10 item Self-Esteem Scale was used to measure Self-Esteem. To measure Optimism the Scheier and Carver (1985)’s 12-item Life Orientations Test (LOT) was used. In order to measure belonging Wheelless, Wheelless, and Dickson-Markman’s (1982) 18-item was slightly modified to fit this study. For instance, the word “Group” was replaced with “Groups (e.g., Friends, relative, social communities, etc.)” to point to different groups which they might be involved with. Also, to avoid making respondents tired, two screen questions were removed to shorten the questionnaire. To measure self-control and Self-Efficacy literature was searched for well-established scales. The Tangney et al. (2004) 12 item Self-Control and Schwarzer and Renner (2000) generalized Self-Efficacy scale were selected. Feick and Price (1987) have developed a scale to measure market mavenism. The same scale was used to measure mavens in our study. All the scales used in this study have been tested for

reliability and validity by their developers. The reliability coefficient for the seven-point scale items that were used for measure Market Mavens was 0.92, and those used to measure Self-Esteem, Belongingness were 0.88 and 0.95 respectively. For the Personal Empowerment construct, the reliability coefficients for the three second order latent variables used (Self-Efficacy, Optimism, and Self-Control) were 0.89, 0.85 and 0.85, respectively.

3.2.3 Method of Analysis

A structural model using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to test the hypotheses of this research. PLS is a second-generation method of analysis and consists of a series of Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) analyses with little demand on measurement scales (Chin, 1998). PLS focuses on predictor specifications as well as the variance from the dependent variables. There are no assumptions made about joint distribution of the indicators or the independence of the sample cases (Chin, 1998; Chin and Newsted, 1999).

As a second generation modeling approach, PLS-SEM holds several advantages. First, similar to other SEM methods, PLS-SEM permits the estimation of the measurement model within the theoretical context. Therefore, constructs get their meaning from the items used to measure them and the theoretical context in which they are embedded. Second, PLS explicitly measures the error model. Third, Structural Equation Models, in general allow for multiple dependent and independent variables to be included and analyzed in the same model. In addition, PLS-SEM software has some advantages over other SEM software which do not use PLS. One main advantage of the PLS-SEM software is that they give researchers the ability to directly include and measure moderator effects into the model. This is particularly helpful if the structural model has

many moderating effects. Another important advantage of PLS-SEM software is that they enable researchers to include and measure first-order and second-order formative constructs. This is particularly important in this research since Personal Empowerment, a main construct in the model, is a second order latent variable which is formed by three other first-order latent variables.

The analysis of a PLS model involves two stages. First, the assessment of reliability and validity of the measurement model, and second, the assessment of the structural model. The reliability of the measurement model is assessed through analysis of factor loadings. The assessment of the Cronbach's α , and the Internal Consistency (ρ_{η}) measure developed by Fornell and Larcker (1981) are also used to assess convergent validity.

The analysis of the data was undertaken in two steps. First, the measurement model in the SmartPLS environment was constructed using three two first-order latent variables as independent variables (Self-Esteem and Belongingness) and one first-order latent dependent variable (Mavenism). A second-second order latent independent variable (Personal Empowerment) was constructed with three first-order latent variables (Optimism, Self-Efficacy, and Personal Control) loading on Personal Empowerment. The first-order latent variables loading on Personal Empowerment was used to measure Optimism, Self-Efficacy and Personal Control.

3.2.4 Assessment of the Measurement Model

To assess the measurement model, four components were considered: individual item reliability, internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity.

Using SmartPLS, Confirmatory Factory Analysis (CFA) was conducted on items of instruments used for data collection. To this end, items were loaded onto each of the latent variables and the loading values were reviewed. Items that did not meet the cut-off criteria of being at least greater than 0.707, were deemed as unacceptable. Through several stages of elimination, the measurement scales were modified. First, items with loadings values less than 0.6 were discarded and new loadings were calculated. The same steps were repeated several times until only items with loading values greater than 0.707 remained in the pool. To set the cut-off point at 0.707 means that the construct explains at least 50% of the variance in each item. The items used in the measurement model and their corresponding loadings have been included in Table 3.1. To evaluate internal consistency, Fornell and Larcker's (1981) measure for composite reliability (ρ_η) was used. The measure is defined as:

$$\rho_\eta = \frac{(\sum_{i=1}^p \lambda_{y_i})^2}{(\sum_{i=1}^p \lambda_{y_i})^2 + \sum_{i=1}^p VAR(\varepsilon_i)}$$

The composite reliability and Cronbach's α for each of the constructs was screened to ensure they meet the criterion of being greater than 0.7. The screening revealed that this condition was met for all constructs. The results of the tests for internal consistency have been presented in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Factor Analysis

Construct	Item	Loading	AVE	Composite reliability	R2	Cronbach's α
Personal Empowerment	OPT2	Formative				
	OPT6	Formative				
	OPT7	Formative				
	CON6	Formative				
	CON9	Formative				
	CON10	Formative				
	CON11	Formative				
	EFF4	Formative				
	EFF5	Formative				
	EFF6	Formative				
	EFF7	Formative				
	EFF8	Formative				
	EFF9	Formative				
EFF10	Formative					
Self-Esteem	SE3	0.783	0.78	0.87	0.65	0.75
	SE7	0.884				
	SE8	0.896				
	SE10	0.746				
Belongingness	GB2	0.718	0.84	0.94	0.61	0.87
	GB3	0.756				
	GB5	0.833				
	GB6	0.776				
	GB7	0.806				
	GB10	0.761				
	GB11	0.832				
	GB12	0.837				
	GB14	0.738				
Mavenism	MAV1	0.791	0.85	0.86	0.73	0.86
	MAV2	0.815				
	MAV3	0.886				
	MAV4	0.894				
	MAV5	0.705				
Model Fit Statistics						
Chi Square				942.28		
RMSEA				0.077		
CFI				0.88		
NNFI				0.8		
IFI				0.91		

To assess convergent validity, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) which shows the variance shared between a construct and its measures is used:

$$\rho_{vc(\eta)} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^p \lambda^2_{y_i}}{\sum_{i=1}^p \lambda^2_{y_i} + \sum_{i=1}^p VAR(\varepsilon_i)}$$

The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each of them should be at least 0.5 for conditions for convergent validity to be met. A screening of the AVE values provided by the SmartPLS software reveals that this condition has been met.

To assess discriminant validity, two tests are used. First, in the correlations' table (Table 3.2), the correlation between constructs is used to see whether it is smaller than the square root of the AVE of each construct (Chin, 1998). Since each item also loads higher on its respective construct than on any other construct, further support for discriminant and convergent validity is found (Gefen, Straub, and Bourdreau, 2000).

Table 3.2: Correlations Table

Construct	Personal Empowerment	Self-Esteem	Belongingness	Mavenism
Personal Empowerment	1			
Self-Esteem	0.3685*	1		
Belongingness	0.2442	0.0387	1	
Mavenism	0.5831*	0.3912*	0.1726	1

Additional evaluation of the formative construct is required. Since Personal Empowerment is a formative construct, covariance based estimates such as Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and reliability measures used for reflective constructs are not applicable (Chin, 1998). For formative constructs, several criteria such as relevance, item significance and loading, and Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) to check for multicollinearity are used. For relevance, each item should contribute to the sense of its latent construct (Table 3.3)

Table 3.3: Formative item measures

Construct	Item	Loading	VIF
Personal Empowerment	Optimism		
	OPT2	0.749	1.125
	OPT6	0.802	2.211
	OPT7	0.798	30361
	Personal Control		
	CON6	0.713	1.15
	CON9	0.766	2.484
	CON10	0.72	1.237
	CON11	0.749	2.221
	Efficacy		
	EFF4	0.808	1.18
	EFF5	0.843	3.296
	EFF6	0.714	2.309
	EFF7	0.76	4.221
	EFF8	0.795	3.335
	EFF9	0.774	1.254
	EFF10	0.792	4.633

For item loading and significance, item loadings should be greater than 0.7 and significant (Chin, 1998). To check for multicollinearity, VIFs should have values that are less than 10 (Field, 2009; Myers, 1990). Table 3.3 summarizes the assessment for the formative construct in this study. An assessment of the VIFs indicates that multicollinearity is not an issue. The item loadings are all above 0.7 and significant. Therefore, the formative construct meets all acceptable criteria.

3.3 Hypothesis Testing and Results

As mentioned previously, SmartPLS, a PLS-SEM software, was used to complete the data analysis for this thesis. The graphic interface modeling tool of the software was used in the analysis and to interpret the results (Ringle, Wende, and Will, 2005). To test the significance of the path coefficients, a bootstrapping technique with 500 resamples was used. Therefore, PLS provides the estimates of the direct effects.

Figure 3.1 represents the estimate path loadings based on significance and R^2 . A summary of the results for the tests of all hypotheses in this study can be found in Table 3.4. The results in Table 3.4 include the test of hypotheses 1, 2 and 3. For hypothesis 1, Self-Esteem of individuals is found to play a significant role in their development of Mavenism characteristics. Consistent with the hypothesized relationship it is found that individuals who have self-reported higher levels of Self-Esteem are also more likely to participate in voluntarily intervention to influence decisions of fellow consumers for what they perceive is to be the better choice.

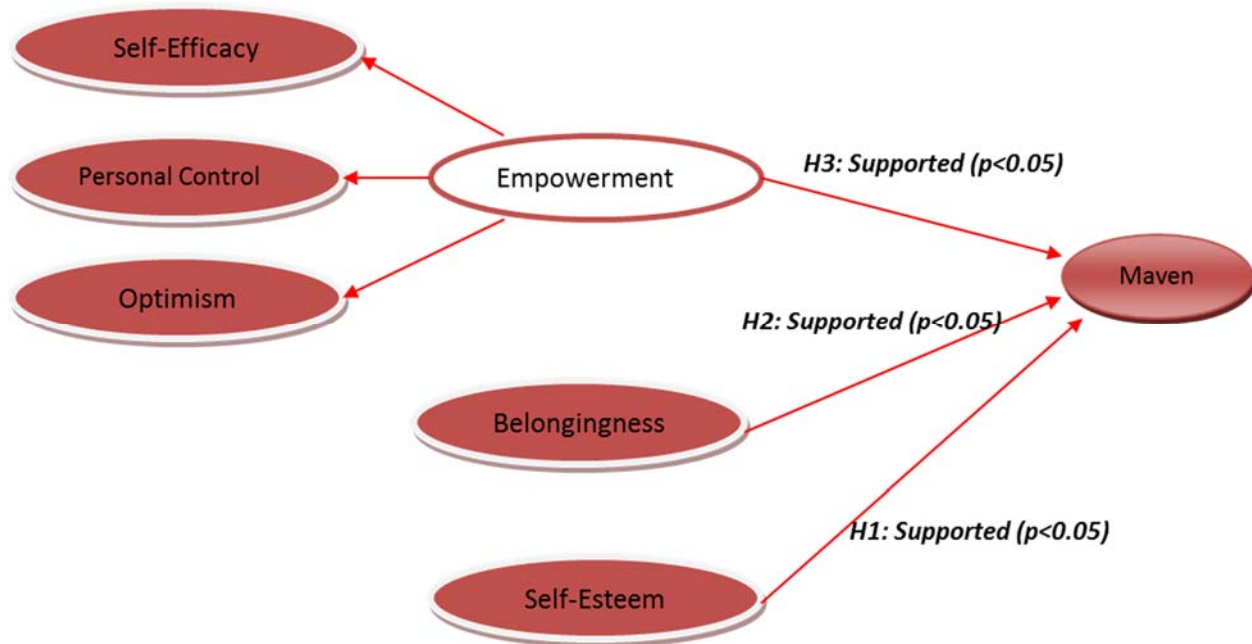


Figure 3.1: Model for Study 1

The results in Table 3.1 also lend support to hypothesis 2. The results from the PLS-SEM analysis show a significant and positive relationship between Belongingness and Mavenism characteristics. As it was expected, individuals who score higher on the Belongingness scale possess stronger Mavenism characteristics.

Consistent with hypothesis 3, the results show a positive and significant relationship between Personal Empowerment and Mavenism. The results show the perception of Personal Empowerment significantly influences adoption of Mavenism characteristics in individuals. Individuals with a stronger sense of Personal Empowerment are more likely to take the role of Mavens and actively participate in voluntary circulation of their own experiences and knowledge on products or services with others.

Table 3.4: Results (DV: Mavenism)

	β Coefficient
Independent Variables	
Personal Empowerment	0.383*
Belongingness	0.275*
Self-Esteem	0.622*

3.4 Conclusion

The results provide overall support for the hypotheses in Study 1. All three hypothesized relationships were supported by data. These findings further emphasize the validity of the three dimensional theorization of Mavenism's characteristics in past research and namely the Actively Caring Model.

The three antecedents of Mavenism which were the focused of Study 1 included: Self-Esteem, Belongingness, and Personal Empowerment. Building on extant theory, Personal Empowerment was hypothesized as a three dimensional formative construct consisting of Optimism, Self-Efficacy, and Personal Control. To conduct the analysis, the scales went through several stages of modification. The results from the analysis confirmed all three constructs as antecedents of Mavenism.

The findings show that individuals with higher levels of Self-Esteem develop stronger Mavenism traits than those who have lower Self-Esteem. Similarly, those with higher perceived Personal Empowerment are more likely to develop Mavenism characteristics which will prompt them to take actions to help others. The results also demonstrate that individuals with stronger sense of Belongingness are more likely to develop Mavenism traits and be inclined to act altruistically, helping others by providing them information on products and services.

Table 3.5: Summary of Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis	Result
<i>Hypothesis 1: Self-Esteem will positively affect Market Mavenism.</i>	Supported ($p < 0.05$)
<i>Hypothesis 2: Group belongingness will positively affect Market Mavenism.</i>	Supported ($p < 0.05$)
<i>Hypothesis 3: Personal Empowerment will positively affect Market Mavenism.</i>	Supported ($p < 0.05$)

CHAPTER 4

STUDY 2: GENDER, CULTURE, AND RELIGION

The results of study 1 demonstrate the role that Personal Empowerment, Belongingness, and Self-Esteem play as antecedents for development of Mavenism characteristics in individuals. The findings showed that individuals with higher levels of either one of these aforementioned antecedents are likely to possess stronger Mavenism characteristics. To complement study 1, study 2 focuses on the factors that moderate the influence of Personal Empowerment, Belongingness and Self-Esteem on development of Mavenism characteristics in individuals. In particular, this study focuses on three factors of interest: Gender, Culture, and Religion. In what follows, the theoretical background and supporting arguments for each moderating effect are presented. Each section includes the statement of the moderation hypotheses. Then, this chapter concludes with explaining the methodology employed to test the proposed hypotheses.

4.1 Gender differences

There are differences in the helping behaviour between men and women. These differences are due to the differences in the roles of males and females in families and societies (Mesch, Brown, Moore, and Hayat, 2011). With greater global social and economic development, and higher levels of education achieved by women, the balance of power between genders has become

more apparent and roles traditionally defined for each gender have undergone considerable change (Smits, Mulder, and Hooimeijer, 2003). However, socially constructed stereotypes still play a major part in role assignments and expectations of individuals, based on gender (Gupta, Turban, Wasti, and Sikdar, 2009). Women are expected to place the needs of their family members before their own (Bernard, 1981). They are considered more sympathetic and empathic than men (Feshbach, 1982), and are commonly entrusted with holding the nurturing roll in families and to care about the emotional and personal needs of family members (Gilligan, 1982). Also, women are only expected to help specific individual in specific ways, and the accepted role for women to help others in such ways is more expected within their families and their close relationships (Baumeister and Sommer, 1997). So, women take action out of their sense of Belongingness.

One the other hand, males are able to help strangers and put themselves in risk for someone they do not know. Males are found to take action in helping others when help requires heroic action and there are audiences available. Men get involved in more risky altruistic acts for public recognition to boost their Self-Esteem (Eagly and Crowley, 1986).

The helping behaviors of the female gender differ in kind from the male gender. Therefore, it can be argued that there is also a difference between men and women when it comes into developing Mavenism characteristics. As mentioned earlier, although women's higher level of education has reduced the social and economic gap between genders, role assumptions resulting from social influences are still significant in shaping individuals' cognitive patterns. Since Mavenism involves a sense of caring for others, and noting the dominant socially influenced role definitions for genders, we expect that development of Mavenism through Self-Esteem and Belongingness be influenced by the gender of individuals. Therefore we can hypothesise that gender has a moderating effect on the relationships between personal trait and Mavenism. Hence:

Hypothesis 4: Gender moderates the influence of Self-Esteem on Mavenism

and

Hypothesis 5: Gender moderates the influence of Belongingness on Mavenism

4.2 Cultural differences

Culture has been suggested to be responsible for a wide range of differences in patterns of individual behaviour (Yamagishi, Hashimoto, and Schug, 2008; Kim and Markus, 1999). Past literature has focused on behavioural differences that arise from an individual's membership in a collectivist culture compared to behaviours of those from more individualistic ones. The influence of culture has been found on individual's characteristics such as Personal Empowerment (Randolph and Sashkin, 2002), Self-Esteem (Bachman, O'Malley, Freedman-Doan, and Donnellan, 2011) and engagement in helping behaviour (McCarty and Shrum, 1994) have all been found to take influence from individuals' cultural background.

The relationship between Self-Esteem and cultural background has been the focus of much debate in past research. While a direct link between Self-Esteem and culture has not been clearly established, the expression of Self-Esteem and the mechanisms through which it exerts its effect were found to be influenced by culture, with more individualistic cultures stronger encouraging the expression of Self-Esteem compared to cultures that are more collectivist (Bachman et al., 2011).

Unlike individualist cultures—which emphasize ‘I’—collectivist cultures also place stronger emphasis on behaviours that benefit group members, hence emphasizing ‘we’ (McCarty and Shrum, 1994). Past research has found individuals from collectivist cultures to demonstrate a stronger tendency to get engaged in socially responsible behaviours and helping others (McCarty and Shrum, 1994; Triandis, 1989; Wiener, 1993; Wiener and Doescher, 1991, 1994). While the link between culture, spirituality, and religious beliefs has attracted interest for research, (Hoover and Lundby, 1997) the existing body of work still falls short of examining the link between cultural background and the likelihood of voluntary sharing of market information as an alternative to altruistic behaviour.

Stronger sense of belongingness means that one would associate himself with a group of other individuals (Turner, 1982). Belongingness often reveals itself as a need to affiliate with others and to engage in meaningful social relationships (van Prooijen, van den Bos, and Wilke, 2004) To satisfy the ‘need to belong’, individuals form social affiliations and resist their dissolution depending on the strength of the bond they perceive to have formed with their social group (Baumeisterr and Leary, 1995). When the sense of association is strong, one may go beyond calculative norms to pursue the well-being of other group members (Den Hartog, De Hoogh, and Keegan, 2007). This leads to altruistic behaviours by individuals with stronger senses of belongingness, whether it be social, cultural, or spiritual (Schoenrade, Batson, Brandt, and Loud, 1986; De Cremer and Van Knippenberg, 2002). Also, culture influences the sense of social and familial association, which could evolve into developing various definitions of identity. Collectivist cultures emphasize association more than individualistic cultures (Kim and Markus, 1999).

Differences in motives for altruistic behaviour resulting from cultural background differences also play a role in how Self-Esteem, Belongingness, and Personal Empowerment influence the development of Mavenism characteristics in individuals. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, Mavenism refers to specific personal traits possessed by individuals rather than a cultural dimension. However, cultural background of individuals can be an important determinant on the development of Mavenism at the individual level. While people from individualistic cultures may find Self-Esteem to have a stronger influence on their Actively Caring behaviour, hence their Mavenism, those from collectivist cultures will find the influence of social and familial belongingness to be stronger. Consequently, development of Mavenism personal traits through belongingness will be stronger for individuals from collectivist cultural backgrounds than for individuals from individualist cultural backgrounds. Additionally, capabilities held by individuals may be of stronger importance to them with individualistic cultural backgrounds compared to those from collectivist cultural backgrounds. In collectivist cultures, those in possession of a capability or resource will attract more association from their environment. Hence, Personal Empowerment will be a weaker motivation for those from individualist cultures than for those from collectivist cultures when pursuing Actively Caring behaviour. Therefore:

Hypothesis 6: Culture moderates the influence of Self-Esteem on Mavenism; the effect of Self-Esteem on Mavenism is greater for individuals with stronger individualist cultural backgrounds than for individuals with stronger collectivist cultural backgrounds.

Hypothesis 7: Culture moderates the influence of Belongingness on Mavenism; the effect of Belongingness on Mavenism is greater for individuals with stronger collectivist cultural backgrounds than for individuals with stronger individualist cultural backgrounds.

Hypothesis 8: Culture moderates the influence Personal Empowerment on Mavenism; the effect of Personal Empowerment on Mavenism is greater for individuals with stronger individualist cultural backgrounds than for individuals with stronger collectivist cultural backgrounds.

4.3 The role of religious beliefs

Understanding the role of personal beliefs—whether non-religious and moral/ethical, or religious—in demonstrating altruistic behaviour has generated attention in past research (Nurmi, 1993). Among past research, a good amount of work has focused on the relationship between religiosity and altruism. Religiosity refers to the degree to which an individual identifies him/herself with a religion and adheres to its subscribed practices (e.g., Smith, Fabricatore, and Peyrot, 1999; Ritzema, 1979). Religion refers to the set of held beliefs and worldview that define the relationship of individuals with a divine being and their surrounding environment. Religious beliefs often include a set of principles that go beyond the immediate personal interests, and promote actions that endorse the good of a collective (Atran, 2002). Therefore, acts of selflessness and altruism have often been praised and highly regarded in different religions and many of those conducting such acts have been considered to be influenced by strong religious beliefs.

The relationship between altruism and religiosity has received substantial attention in more modern research. Past research has suggested religious beliefs to be the source of ‘reciprocal altruism’ where individuals are rewarded for their altruistic actions, but may also receive punishment when they fail to reciprocate and instead, defect (Bulbulia, 2004). Further research has shown that even when not threatened by punishment during their lifetime, individuals with religious beliefs are more likely to engage in behaviour that benefits others (Bulbulia, 2004). Studies on organ donors have shown the strong role of religion as the motivator of those who agree to make such donations (Dixon and Abbey, 2000). Subsequently, it can be argued that differences in religious beliefs and their strength are linked to the development of Mavenism characteristics in individuals. Since religious beliefs encourage group cohesiveness and emphasize the collective

rather than the individual, it can be expected that Belongingness plays a greater motivating role in acquisition of Mavenism traits. Therefore:

Hypothesis 9: Religion moderates the influence of Belongingness on Mavenism; Belongingness has a greater influence on Mavenism for individuals with stronger religious beliefs than for individuals with weaker religious beliefs.

On the other hand, non-religious individuals may also possess altruistic tendencies for reasons other than religious convictions. Their motivations could include moral and ethical principles that are held by them personally, and resulting from intrinsic motivations. Therefore, rather than affiliation and a sense of belonging, their altruistic motivations result from their fulfillment of Self-Esteem and Personal Empowerment needs. Hence:

Hypothesis 10: Religion moderates the influence of Self-Esteem on Mavenism; Self-Esteem has a greater influence on Mavenism for individuals with weaker religious beliefs than for individuals with stronger religious beliefs.

Hypothesis 11: Religion moderates the influence of Personal Empowerment on Mavenism; Personal Empowerment has a greater influence on Mavenism for individuals with weaker religious beliefs than for individuals with stronger religious beliefs.

4.4 Methodology

4.4.1 Sample and Data Collection

To collect data for this research, a student sample was used. The sample used for studying two of the moderating effects in this research (Gender and Religiosity) consists of 496 students from undergraduate and MBA programs from two business schools in Montreal and Toronto. For the third moderator (Culture), a smaller sample consisting of 136 undergraduate students was used. For data collection, during the last two sessions of their classes, the participants were asked to voluntarily participate in this study. A trivial class credit reward (1%) was promised in exchange for returning a completed survey.

The volunteers are provided with a three page survey. On the first two pages questions with answers on seven-point Likert-scale were used to measure the personal trait and Mavenism and the last page were the demographic questions. Although five and seven Likert-scales are comparable (Dawes, 2008), seven Likert-scales were used to prevent high neutral responses. To ensure the quality of responses the students were notified that the credit would be given to completed survey after a screen check. Of the 496 respondents used for testing the moderating effects of Gender and Religiosity, 232 (47%) were female and 264 (53%) were male with the overwhelming majority (> 95%) falling within the age group 18-24. Of the 136 respondents used for testing the moderating effect of Culture, 62 (46%) were female and 74 (54%) were male with the overwhelming majority (> 95%) falling within the age group 18-24.

4.4.2 Measurement of moderator variables

Study 2 of this research investigates the moderating role of Gender, Culture, and Religion on the model analyzed in Study 1.

Gender. To capture Gender as a moderator variable, a dummy variable was used and included within the measurement model and interactions variables were created for each relationship.

Culture. To capture culture as a variable, this study builds on results from Hofstede's (1984) measurement of cultural differences. According to Hofstede's (1984) findings, Eastern Asian cultures score higher on the collectivism compared to Western cultures which score higher on the Individualism on the Individualism-Collectivism scale. More recent findings indicate that individuals from western countries, but of Eastern Asian descent also tend to score higher on Collectivism compared to other individuals from those same countries (Oyserman, Coon, and Kemmelmeier, 2002).

To operationalize the measure, the individualism index developed by Hofstede (2001) was used. To avoid limitations from Hofstede's (2001) original scale and to serve broader situations, modified items were used (Yoo, Donthu, and Lenartowicz, 2012; Triandis, Bontempo, and Villareal, 1988). Strong etic items for individualism such as independence, personal competence, and separation from in-groups were all referenced from Triandis et al. (1993). The instrument used was in accordance with the original scale developed by Yoo et al. (2012), with an alpha coefficient of 0.91.

Religiosity. The majority of religions build on the normative assumption that the members of their faith should engage in behaviour that benefits individuals others than themselves. As

discussed earlier, acts of altruism and selflessness are praised in almost every religion. Therefore, the strength of one's religious faith has been used to measure the effect of religion. Respondents were asked to respond to questions that measure their perceived level of faith in their respective religions on a Likert scale. The results are used as a moderator in the model.

4.4.3 Method of Analysis

A structural model using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to test the hypotheses of this research. PLS is a second-generation method of analysis and consists of a series of Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) analyses with little demand on measurement scales (Chin, 1998). PLS focuses on predictor specifications as well as the variance from the dependent variables. There are no assumptions made about joint distribution of the indicators or the independence of the sample cases (Chin, 1998; Chin and Newsted, 1999).

As a second generation modeling approach, PLS-SEM holds several advantages. First, similar to other SEM methods, PLS-SEM permits the estimation of the measurement model within the theoretical context. Therefore, constructs get their meaning from the items used to measure them and the theoretical context in which they are embedded. Second, PLS explicitly measures the error model. Third, Structural Equation Models, in general allow for multiple dependent and independent variables to be included and analyzed in the same model. In addition, PLS-SEM software have some advantages over other SEM software which do not use PLS. One main advantage of the PLS-SEM software is that they give researchers the ability to directly include and measure moderator effects into the model. This is particularly helpful if the structural model has many moderating effects. Another important advantage of PLS-SEM software is that they enable

researchers to include and measure first-order and second-order formative constructs. This is particularly important in this research since Personal Empowerment, a main construct in the model, is a second order latent variable which is formed by three other first-order latent variables.

The analysis of a PLS model involves two stages. First, the assessment of reliability and validity of the measurement model, and second, the assessment of the structural model. The reliability of the measurement model is assessed through analysis of factor loadings. The assessment of the Cronbach's α and the Internal Consistency (ρ_{η}) measure developed by Fornell and Larcker (1981) are also used to assess convergent validity.

The analysis of the data was undertaken in two steps. First, the measurement model in the SmartPLS environment was constructed using three two first-order latent variables as independent variables (Self-Esteem and Belongingness) and one first-order latent dependent variable (Mavenism). A second-second order latent independent variable (Personal Empowerment) was constructed with three first-order latent variables (Optimism, Self-Efficacy, and Personal Control) loading on Personal Empowerment. The first-order latent variables loading on Personal Empowerment was used to measure Optimism, Self-Efficacy and Personal Control.

Using available features in SmartPLS 2.0, 8 moderating effects that have been hypothesized in this thesis were created and included in the model. For this purpose, the direct effects of the moderating variables (Gender, Religiosity, and Culture) on the dependent variable (Mavenism) were included in the model. The software then allowed for the a new variable which represented the interaction between the moderator and the independent variable to be created and its direct effect on the dependent variable (Mavenism) to be included in the structural model.

4.4.4 Assessment of the Measurement Model

Similar to Study 1, the analysis for results was conducted using SmartPLS. The assessment of the measurement model was made for item reliability, internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity, internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Using SmartPLS, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted on items of instruments used for data collection. To this end, items were loaded onto each of the latent variables and the loading values were reviewed. Items that did not meet the cut-off criteria of being at least greater than 0.707, were deemed as unacceptable. Through several stages of elimination, measurement scales were modified. First, items with loadings values less than 0.6 were discarded and new loadings were calculated. The same steps were repeated several times until only items with loading values greater than 0.707 remained in the pool. To set the cut-off point at 0.707 means that the construct explains at least 50% of the variance in each item. The items used in the measurement model and their corresponding loadings have been included in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Factor Analysis

Construct	Item	Loading	AVE	Composite reliability	R2	Cronbach's α
Personal Empowerment	OPT2	Formative				
	OPT6	Formative				
	OPT7	Formative				
	CON6	Formative				
	CON9	Formative				
	CON10	Formative				
	CON11	Formative				
	EFF4	Formative				
	EFF5	Formative				
	EFF6	Formative				
	EFF7	Formative				
	EFF8	Formative				
	EFF9	Formative				
EFF10	Formative					
Self-Esteem	SE3	0.783	0.78	0.87	0.65	0.75
	SE7	0.884				
	SE8	0.896				
	SE10	0.746				
Belongingness	GB2	0.718	0.84	0.94	0.61	0.87
	GB3	0.756				
	GB5	0.833				
	GB6	0.776				
	GB7	0.806				
	GB10	0.761				
	GB11	0.832				
	GB12	0.837				
	GB14	0.738				
Religiosity	REL1	0.922	0.93	0.81	0.88	0.88
	REL2	0.739				
	REL3	0.929				
	REL4	0.904				
	REL5	0.905				
	REL6	0.904				
Culture	COL1	0.775	0.77	0.75	0.71	0.82
	COL3	0.832				
	COL4	0.814				
	COL5	0.722				
Mavenism	MAV1	0.791	0.85	0.86	0.73	0.86
	MAV2	0.815				
	MAV3	0.886				
	MAV4	0.894				
	MAV5	0.705				
Model Fit Statistics						
Chi Square				942.28		
RMSEA				0.077		
CFI				0.88		
NNFI				0.8		
IFI				0.91		

To evaluate internal consistency, Fornell and Larcker's (1981) measure for composite reliability (ρ_η) was used. The measure is defined as:

$$\rho_\eta = \frac{(\sum_{i=1}^p \lambda_{y_i})^2}{(\sum_{i=1}^p \lambda_{y_i})^2 + \sum_{i=1}^p VAR(\varepsilon_i)}$$

The composite reliability and Cronbach's α for each of the constructs was screened to ensure they meet the criterion of being greater than 0.7. The screening revealed that this condition was met for all constructs. The results of the tests for internal consistency have been presented in Table 4.1.

To assess convergent validity, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) which shows the variance shared between a construct and its measures is used:

$$\rho_{vc(\eta)} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^p \lambda_{y_i}^2}{\sum_{i=1}^p \lambda_{y_i}^2 + \sum_{i=1}^p VAR(\varepsilon_i)}$$

The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each of them should be at least 0.5 for conditions for convergent validity to be met. A screening of the AVE values provided by the SmartPLS software reveals that this condition has been met.

To assess discriminant validity, two tests are used. First, in the correlations' table (Table 4.2), the correlation between constructs is used to see whether it is smaller than the square root of

the AVE of each construct (Chin, 1998). Since each item also loads higher on its respective construct than on any other construct, further support for discriminant and convergent validity is found (Gefen, Straub, and Bourdreau, 2000).

Table 4.2: Correlations Table

	Construct	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Belongingness	1						
2	Personal Empowerment	0.3685*	1					
3	Gender	0.2442	0.0387	1				
4	Mavenism	0.5831*	0.3912*	0.1726	1			
5	Self-Esteem	0.3736*	0.3217*	0.0635	0.4139*	1		
6	Culture	0.2175	-0.077	0.115	0.233	0.1551	1	
7	Religion	0.4223*	0.0231	0.0121	0.2113	0.0214	0.351*	1

Additional evaluation of the formative construct is required. Since Personal Empowerment is a formative construct, covariance based estimates such as Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and reliability measures used for reflective constructs are not applicable (Chin, 1998). For formative constructs, several criteria such as relevance, item significance and loading, and Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) to check for multicollinearity are used. For relevance, each item should contribute to the sense of its latent construct. For item loading and significance, item loadings should be greater than 0.7 and significant (Chin, 1998). To check for multicollinearity,

VIFs should have values that are less than 10 (Field, 2009; Myers, 1990). Table 4.3 summarizes the assessment for the formative construct in this study:

Table 4.3: Formative item measures

Construct	Item	Loading	VIF
Personal Empowerment	Optimism		
	OPT2	0.749	1.125
	OPT6	0.802	2.211
	OPT7	0.798	30361
	Personal Control		
	CON6	0.713	1.15
	CON9	0.766	2.484
	CON10	0.72	1.237
	CON11	0.749	2.221
	Efficacy		
	EFF4	0.808	1.18
	EFF5	0.843	3.296
	EFF6	0.714	2.309
	EFF7	0.76	4.221
	EFF8	0.795	3.335
	EFF9	0.774	1.254
	EFF10	0.792	4.633

An assessment of the VIFs indicates that multicollinearity is not an issue. The item loadings are all above 0.7 and significant. Therefore, the formative construct meets all acceptable criteria.

4.5 Hypothesis Testing and Results

The tests of hypotheses were conducted using the SmartPLS 2.0 software. The graphic interface modeling tool of the software was used in the analysis and to interpret the results (Ringle, Wende, and Will, 2005). To test the significance of the path coefficient, a bootstrapping technique with 500 resamples was used. Therefore, PLS provides the estimates of the direct effects.

Figure 4.1 represents the estimate path loadings based on significance and R^2 . A summary of the results for the tests of all hypotheses in this study can be found in Table 4.4. Model 1 represents the results from analyzing the direct effects from the three antecedents of Mavenism and corresponding to hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 in Study 1. The results for Model 2 consist of values after the inclusion of the three moderating variables, Gender, Religiosity, and Culture.

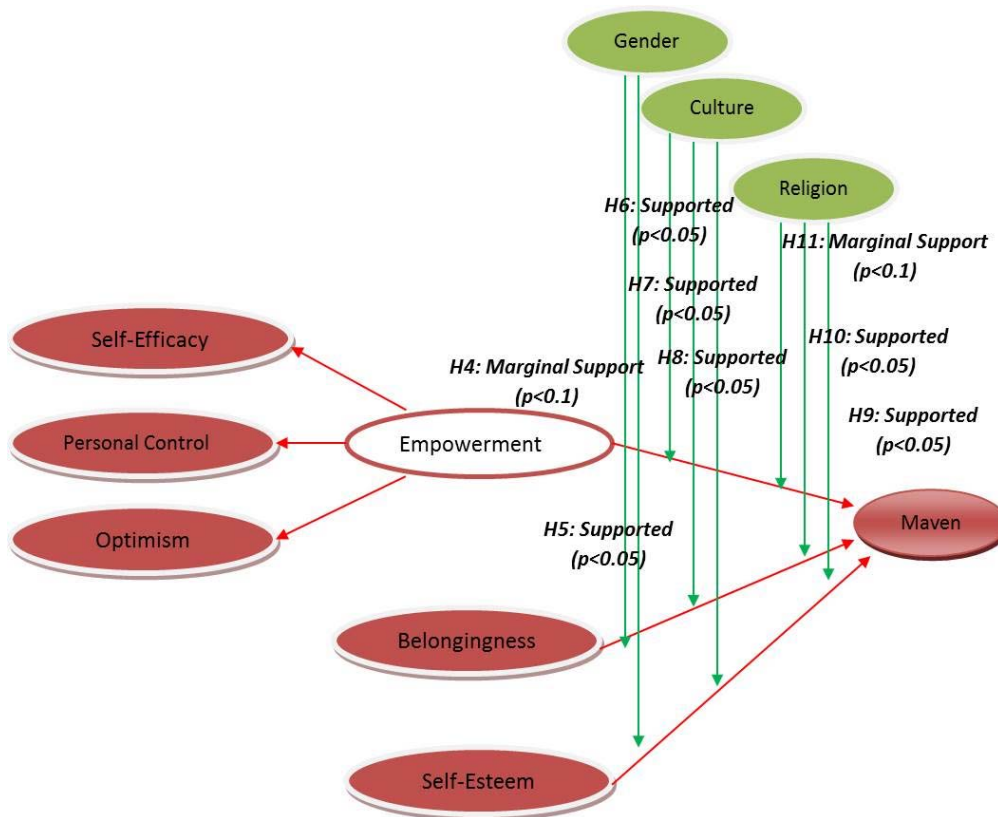


Figure 4.1: Model for study 2

The results show support for most of the hypothesized relationships. The analysis reveals marginal support for hypothesis 4, and a marginally significant, yet opposite support for hypothesis 11, but lends full support to hypotheses 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10.

For the moderating role of Gender, results included in Table 4.4 show that while Gender significantly moderates the effect of Belongingness on Mavenism ($p < 0.05$), it only marginally moderates the effect of Self-Esteem on Mavenism ($p < 0.1$). Further analysis of the direction of the effect shows that for female respondents, the influence of Belongingness on Mavenism is stronger than in the case for male respondents. This is consistent with the hypothesized relationship which argues that Belongingness is a stronger motivator for females to engage in helping behavior. On the other hand, while moderating effect of Gender on the relationship between Self-Esteem and Mavenism is found to be marginally significant, its direction correctly reflects the hypothesized relationship which argues Self-Esteem to be a stronger motivator for male Mavens than for female Mavens.

The results in Table 4.4 also show that Culture has a significant moderating effect ($p < 0.05$) on the relationship between Self-Esteem and Mavenism. Consistent with the hypothesized relationship (H6), the results show that the effect of Self-Esteem on development of Mavenism characteristics is stronger for individuals from individualist cultures. On the contrary, and also consistent with hypothesis 7, the effect of Belongingness on Mavenism is significantly weaker ($p < 0.05$) for individuals from individualistic cultures and stronger for those who possess collectivist cultural traits. Hypothesis 8 which predicts a moderating effect for Culture on the relationship between Personal Empowerment and Mavenism, also receives significant support ($p < 0.05$). The results from the analysis reveal that for individuals from individualist cultures, the

effect of Personal Empowerment is stronger on Mavenism than it is for people from collectivist cultures.

Hypotheses 9, 10, and 11 focus on the moderating effects of Religiosity on the influences of Mavenism's antecedents. The findings show that consistent with what was hypothesized, Belongingness is a significantly greater motivator ($p < 0.05$) for individuals who hold stronger religious beliefs. On the other hand, the results show that for individuals with weaker religious beliefs, the main motivation for Mavenism comes from elsewhere. The findings show that Self-Esteem is a significantly greater motivator ($p > 0.05$) for individuals with weaker religious beliefs to adopt Mavenism traits. The most interesting finding for Religiosity belongs to the moderating effect of Religiosity on the effect of Personal Empowerment on Mavenism. Contrary to the hypothesized relationship, the findings reveal a marginally significant ($p < 0.1$) but opposite moderating effect which suggests that for individuals with weaker religious beliefs, Personal Empowerment is a weaker motivator for Mavenism than it is for individuals with stronger religious beliefs.

Table 4.4: Results (DV: Mavenism)

	Model 1	Model 2
Independent Variables		
Personal Empowerment	0.383*	0.355*
Belongingness	0.275*	0.311*
Self-Esteem	0.622*	0.498*
Moderating Variables		
Gender		0.8213*
Culture		0.4511*
Religion		0.8221**
Interaction Effects		
Gender × Self-Esteem		0.1224 [†]
Gender × Belongingness		0.661*
Culture × Personal Empowerment		0.662*
Culture × Self-Esteem		0.511*
Culture × Belongingness		0.489*
Religion × Personal Empowerment		0.366 [†]
Religion × Self-Esteem		0.841*
Religion × Belongingness		0.517*

4.6 Conclusion

The findings showed that the majority of the hypothesized relationships in Study 2 received statistical support. While Study 1 investigated the antecedents of Mavenism, the findings of Study 2 demonstrate that the effects of the antecedents can be influenced by several moderators. The three moderator variables that were included in the theoretical model and tested were: Gender, Religiosity, and Culture.

The findings corresponding to the moderating role of Gender showed that females and males have differences in motivating factors that lead to their adoption of Mavenism traits. For females, the sense of Belongingness plays a significantly bolder role ($p < 0.05$) compared to males. However, when it comes to Self-Esteem, males find it a marginally stronger motivator ($p < 0.1$) for adopting Mavenism traits.

The results also show that cultural differences play an important role in the significance of the effect of each set of antecedents. The findings showed that for people who possess cultural traits that related to collectivism, Belongingness is a significantly stronger antecedent for Mavenism ($p < 0.05$) compared to those individuals from individualist cultures. On the other hand, those with individualist cultural backgrounds are more likely to find Self-Esteem and Personal Empowerment ($p < 0.05$) as stronger motivators for engaging in behaviors to help others.

Finally, the degree to which individuals are religious also plays a role in the effect of Mavenism's antecedents. The findings reveal that higher Religiosity will lead to a stronger effect of Belongingness on Mavenism ($p < 0.05$), while weaker Religiosity will increase the effect of Self-Esteem on Mavenism ($p < 0.05$). However, the results showed that contrary to the hypothesized

relationship, those with weaker Religiosity found Personal Empowerment as a marginally significant ($p < 0.1$) motivator for becoming Mavens.

Table 4.5: Summary of Hypothesis testing results

Hypothesis	Result
<i>Hypothesis 4: Gender moderates the influence of Self-Esteem on Mavenism</i>	Marginal Support (p<0.1)
<i>Hypothesis 5: Gender moderates the influence of Belongingness on Mavenism</i>	Supported (p<0.05)
<i>Hypothesis 6: Culture moderates the influence of Self-Esteem on Mavenism; the effect of Self-Esteem on Mavenism is greater for individuals with stronger individualist cultural backgrounds than for individuals with stronger collectivist cultural backgrounds.</i>	Supported (p<0.05)
<i>Hypothesis 7: Culture moderates the influence of Belongingness on Mavenism; the effect of Belongingness on Mavenism is greater for individuals with stronger collectivist cultural backgrounds than for individuals with stronger individualist cultural backgrounds.</i>	Supported (p<0.05)
<i>Hypothesis 8: Culture moderates the influence Personal Empowerment on Mavenism; the effect of Personal Empowerment on Mavenism is greater for individuals with stronger individualist cultural backgrounds than for individuals with stronger collectivist cultural backgrounds.</i>	Supported (p<0.05)
<i>Hypothesis 9: Religion moderates the influence of Belongingness on Mavenism; Belongingness has a greater influence on Mavenism for individuals with stronger religious beliefs than for individuals with weaker religious beliefs.</i>	Supported (p<0.05)
<i>Hypothesis 10: Religion moderates the influence of Self-Esteem on Mavenism; Self-Esteem has a greater influence on Mavenism for individuals with weaker religious beliefs than for individuals with stronger religious beliefs.</i>	Supported (p<0.05)
<i>Hypothesis 11: Religion moderates the influence of Personal Empowerment on Mavenism; Personal Empowerment has a greater influence on Mavenism for individuals with weaker religious beliefs than for individuals with stronger religious beliefs.</i>	Marginal Support (p<0.1)

CHAPTER 5

STUDY 3: MAVENISM AND HELPING BEHAVIOUR

Study 1 and study 2 focused on the antecedents of Mavensim and the moderating roles of culture, religious beliefs and gender on the effect of the antecedents. Study 3 complements the previous two studies by demonstrating the link between Mavenism and Helping Behaviour, as the observable outcome. To this end, this study focuses on factors that influence the choice of individuals with Mavenism characteristics to engage in helping behaviour towards others. In particular, this study hypothesizes moderating roles for the medium of recommendation, susceptibility to personal influence and Self-Esteem in the effect of Mavenism characteristics on subsequent helping behaviour. The study then proceeds with explaining proposed methodology for testing the hypotheses using relevant statistical methods of data analysis.

5.1 Market Helping Behaviour

The role and significance of market helping behaviour in the development of a potential selection by customers has been a subject of interest in past research. Existing evidence suggests that customers rely on one another's help to get information regarding existing products or services (Clark and Goldsmith, 2005; Furse, Pun, and Stewart, 1984; Murray, 1991; Price and Feick, 1984).

Recommendation is the most prominently studied market helping behaviour (e.g., Arndt, 1967; King and Summer, 1967) which influences customer behaviour through informal networks (Price and Feick, 1995). Past studies have found a substantial role for market recommendations in decisions that lead to final purchase decisions (e.g., Samli, 1970; Price and Feick, 1984; Kiel and Layton, 1981; Newman, 1977; Thorelli, 1971; Udell, 1966).

While the link between customer choice and market helping behaviour is well established throughout the existing literature, the antecedents and agents of market helping behaviour yet remain somewhat understudied. In one perspective, personal traits that define Mavenism play an important role in individuals' voluntary engagement in providing help to others through offering them helpful market and product information (Price, Feick and Guskey, 1995). Other perspectives have suggested fascination with involvement through product-involvement, self-involvement, other-involvement, message-involvement (Dichter, 1966), gaining and/or attracting attention related to self-enhancement, message intrigue, dissonance reduction (Engle, Blackwell, and Miniard, 1993), and emotion related factors/states such as anxiety reduction, vengeance, and conscious altruism (Sundaram, Mitra, and Webster, 1998) as antecedents of market helping behaviour. While the latter perspectives have been applied to study contexts with unique and constrained characteristics—e.g., Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, and Gremler's (2004) study of word of mouth on the internet—Price and Feick's (1995) perspective which builds on the Actively Caring Model still remains the most widely accepted theoretical perspective.

While past research has pointed out various dimensions of helping behaviour, the aim of this study is to focus on personality traits that also define Mavenism in individuals. In study 1 and study 2, the Actively Caring Model was used to establish the role of Self-

Esteem, Belongingness, and Personal Empowerment as antecedents, and culture, gender, and religiosity as moderators in development of Mavenism characteristics in individuals. Building on the same theoretical model—i.e., Actively Caring Model—it is argued that possession of Mavenism traits also increases the likelihood that one engages in actions that help others in the marketplace. Therefore and consistent with Price et al. (1995) the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 12: Individuals with stronger Mavenism characteristics are more likely to engage in helping behaviour relative to individuals with weaker Mavenism characteristics.

5.2 Medium, Self-Esteem and Market Helping Behaviour

While individuals with stronger Mavenism traits are more likely to engage in helping behaviour, their medium of choice might be different. It can be expected that individuals' be more likely to exhibit helping behaviour when the medium available is also the one with greater alignment with their skillset. Hence:

Hypothesis 13: Individuals with higher web skills are more likely to choose online social networks as their preferred setting to make recommendations compared to those individuals with lower web skills.

Past research has shown the link between preferred medium and Self-Esteem (Niemz, Griffiths, and Banyard, 2005; Joinson, 2004). For instance, studies have shown that individuals with lower Self-Esteem to find greater benefit in non-face to face (i.e., online and virtual) social

networks in building their social connections (Steinfeld, Ellison, and Lampe, 2008; Ellison, Steinfeld, and Lampe, 2007). Therefore, it can be argued that individuals with lower Self-Esteem are more likely to engage in helping behaviour when the medium involves less face to face and direct interaction. On the other hand, individuals with higher Self-Esteem will be less affected by the medium. Therefore:

Hypothesis 14: The interaction between Media and Self-Esteem moderates the relationship between Mavenism and Helping Behaviour. Individuals with lower Self-Esteem are more likely to engage in helping behaviour when the medium is virtual compared to when it is direct and face to face.

5.3 Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence and Helping Behaviour

Susceptibility to personal influence has been defined as “the need to identify with or enhance one’s image in the opinion of 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 or seeking information from others” (Bearden, Netemyer, and Teel, 1989: 474). Individuals with higher susceptibility are also those with stronger preference for interpersonal search as the avenue to access the information they need (Mourali, Laroche, and Pons, 2005). Once they access the information they need, they treat the information as

reality (Burnkrant and Cousineau, 1975) and use it to conform to expectations of others (Deutsch and Gerard, 1955).

The effect of Mavenism characteristics on engaging in helping behaviour is also influenced by susceptibility to interpersonal influence. Market Mavens take the two roles of information seekers and information providers (Higie, Feick, and Price, 1987). The Helping Behaviour resulting from Mavenism characteristics is extrovert behaviour. Individuals who get engaged in such behaviour need to be proactive rather than simply reacting to others' comments and recommendations. Individuals who are introvert or are more under influence of others' recommendations are more likely to continue their course of behaviour. Such individuals have higher levels of susceptibility to external influence and even if they have the desire to help others, they are less likely to engage in such behaviour because of their less proactive approach. However, individuals with Mavenism characteristics who are less susceptible to interpersonal influence are more likely to take a proactive role and to voice their own opinions. Therefore, they will be in a more likely position to take action based on their Mavenism characteristics. Hence:

Hypothesis 15a: The relationship in Hypothesis 12 is stronger for individuals who are less susceptible to personal influence; individuals with Mavenism characteristics who are less susceptible to interpersonal influence are more likely to engage in Market Helping Behaviour relative to individuals who are more susceptible to interpersonal influence.

and

Hypothesis 15b: The relationship in Hypothesis 12 is weaker for individuals who are more susceptible to interpersonal influence; individuals with Mavenism characteristics who are more susceptible to interpersonal influence are less likely to engage in Market Helping Behaviour relative to individuals who are less susceptible to interpersonal influence.

5.4 Methodology

5.4.1 Sample and data collection

To collect data for this research, a student sample was used. The sample collected for this research consists of 496 students from undergraduate and MBA programs from two business schools in Montreal and Toronto. During the last two sessions of their classes, the participants were asked to voluntarily participate in this study. A trivial class credit reward (1%) was promised in exchange for returning a complete survey.

The volunteers are provided with a three page survey. On the first two pages questions with answers on seven-point Likert-scale were used to measure the personal trait and Mavenism and the last page were the demographic questions. Although five and seven Likert-scales are comparable (Dawes, 2008), seven point Likert-scales were used to prevent high neutral responses. To ensure the quality of responses the students were notified that the credit would be given to completed survey after a screen check. Of the 496 respondents, 232 (47%) were female and 264 (53%) male with the overwhelming majority (> 95%) falling within the age group 18-24.

5.4.2 Measurements

Study 3 focuses on the relationship between Mavenism and Helping Behaviour and the factors that moderate this relationship. The moderating factors included in the model are Self-Esteem, Medium, and Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence. For this study, the measurements from Study 1 are used for Self-Esteem and Mavenism. The following explains the measurements for other variables included in this study.

Skills. This variable refers to the extent of computer skills that respondents possess. Study 3 hypothesizes that the medium of choice to be a function of skills that individuals possess. The survey instrument used for data collection asks respondents to rate their perceived capabilities in the use of computer. The instrument utilizes a 7 point Likert scale for this purpose.

Medium. Respondents are asked to recount the number of times that they have made product or service recommendations over a period of three months. The survey requires respondents to separate instances where the recommendation was made through online social networks versus instances that the recommendation was made face-to-face or through another conventional method. To operationalize this measure, a ratio variable was created by fraction that includes the number of recommendations through online methods as the numerator and the number of recommendations through conventional methods as the denominator. Then, the Z-score for the ratio was used. The aim of creating the ratio was to avoid conflict since the aggregate of the number or recommendations through the two methods is used as the measure for the dependent variable.

Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence. To measure this variable, the eight item scale developed by Bearden et al. (1989) was used. The scale measures the degree to which individuals are willing to subscribe to using products or services with the objective of enhancing their image

with others. Individuals who score higher on the scale are considered to be more susceptible to interpersonal influence. The construct reliability reported by the developers of the scale is 0.93.

Helping Behaviour. To measure Helping Behaviour, the scale developed by Price, Feick and Guskey (1995) was used and included in the survey instrument. A simple summation of the number of recommendations made by individuals during a period of three months was used. The respondents were asked to provide specific numbers of recommendations.

5.4.3 Method of Analysis

Similar to Study 1 and Study 2, the analysis for results were conducted using SmartPLS. A structural model using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to test the hypotheses of this research. PLS is a second-generation method of analysis and consists of a series of Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) analyses with little demand on measurement scales (Chin, 1998). PLS focuses on predictor specifications as well as the variance from the dependent variables. There are no assumptions made about joint distribution of the indicators or the independence of the sample cases (Chin, 1998; Chin and Newsted, 1999).

As a second generation modeling approach, PLS-SEM holds several advantages. First, similar to other SEM methods, PLS-SEM permits the estimation of the measurement model within the theoretical context. Therefore, constructs get their meaning from the

items used to measure them and the theoretical context in which they are embedded. Second, PLS explicitly measures the error model. Third, Structural Equation Models, in general allow for multiple dependent and independent variables to be included and analyzed in the same model. In addition, PLS-SEM software have some advantages over other SEM software which do not use PLS. One main advantage of the PLS-SEM software is that they give researchers the ability to directly include and measure moderator effects into the model. This is particularly helpful if the structural model has many moderating effects. Another important advantage of PLS-SEM software is that they enable researchers to include and measure first-order and second-order formative constructs. This is particularly important in this research since Personal Empowerment, a main construct in the model, is a second order latent variable which is formed by three other first-order latent variables.

The analysis of a PLS model involves two stages. First, the assessment of reliability and validity of the measurement model, and second, the assessment of the structural model. The reliability of the measurement model is assessed through analysis of factor loadings. The assessment of the Cronbach's α and the Internal Consistency (ρ_{η}) measure developed by Fornell and Larcker (1981) are also used to assess convergent validity.

Using available features in SmartPLS 2.0, 8 moderating effects that have been hypothesized in this thesis were created and included in the model. For this purpose, the direct effects of the moderating variables (Gender, Religiosity, and Culture) on the dependent variable (Mavenism) were included in the model. The software then allowed for the a new variable which represented the interaction between the moderator and the independent variable to be created and its direct effect on the dependent variable (Mavenism) to be included in the structural model.

Since two of the hypothesized relationships (H15a and H15b) concern three-way interactions, additional steps need to be taken to allow testing those hypotheses. Although SmartPLS includes features that allow moderation effects (two-way interactions) to be included in the model, similar features for three-way interactions are non-existent. To address this issue, a new variable consisting of the interaction of Self-Esteem and Mavenism was created and introduced into the model. Subsequently, a new moderating effect was created using SmartPLS features between the second moderator (Media) and the manually created interaction effect (Self-Esteem \times Mavenism).

5.4.4 Assessment of Measurement Model

Similar to Study 1 and Study 2, the analysis was conducted using SmartPLS 2.0. The assessment of the measurement model was made for item reliability, internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Using SmartPLS, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted on items of instruments used for data collection. To this end, items were loaded onto each of the latent variables and the loading values were reviewed. Items that did not meet the cut-off criteria of being at least greater than 0.707, were deemed as unacceptable. Through several stages of elimination, measurement scales were modified. First, items with loadings values less than 0.6 were discarded and new loadings were calculated. The same steps were repeated several times until only items with loading values greater than 0.707 remained in the pool. To set the cut-off point at 0.707 means that the construct explains at least 50% of the variance in each item. The items used in the measurement model and their corresponding loadings have been included in Table 5.1.

To evaluate internal consistency, Fornell and Larcker's (1981) measure for composite reliability (ρ_η) was used. The measure is defined as:

$$\rho_\eta = \frac{(\sum_{i=1}^p \lambda_{y_i})^2}{(\sum_{i=1}^p \lambda_{y_i})^2 + \sum_{i=1}^p VAR(\varepsilon_i)}$$

The composite reliability and Cronbach's α for each of the constructs was screened to ensure they meet the criterion of being greater than 0.7. The screening revealed that this condition was met for all constructs. The results of the tests for internal consistency have been presented in Table 5.1.

To assess convergent validity, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) which shows the variance shared between a construct and its measures is used:

$$\rho_{vc(\eta)} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^p \lambda^2_{y_i}}{\sum_{i=1}^p \lambda^2_{y_i} + \sum_{i=1}^p VAR(\varepsilon_i)}$$

Table 5.1: Factor Analysis

Construct	Item	Loading	AVE	Composite reliability	R2	Cronbach's α
Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence	CSIIN2	0.731	0.81	0.77	0.72	0.81
	CSIIN3	0.715				
	CSIIN6	0.799				
	CSIIN7	0.861				
Self-Esteem	SE3	0.783	0.78	0.87	0.65	0.75
	SE7	0.884				
	SE8	0.896				
	SE10	0.746				
Skill	SKL1	0.758	0.88	0.75	0.79	0.79
	SKL2	0.725				
	SKL4	0.818				
Mavenism	MAV1	0.791	0.85	0.86	0.73	0.86
	MAV2	0.815				
	MAV3	0.886				
	MAV4	0.894				
	MAV5	0.705				
Model Fit Statistics						
Chi Square	942.28					
RMSEA	0.077					
CFI	0.88					
NNFI	0.8					
IFI	0.91					

The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each of them should be at least 0.5 for conditions for convergent validity to be met. A screening of the AVE values provided by the SmartPLS software reveals that this condition has been met.

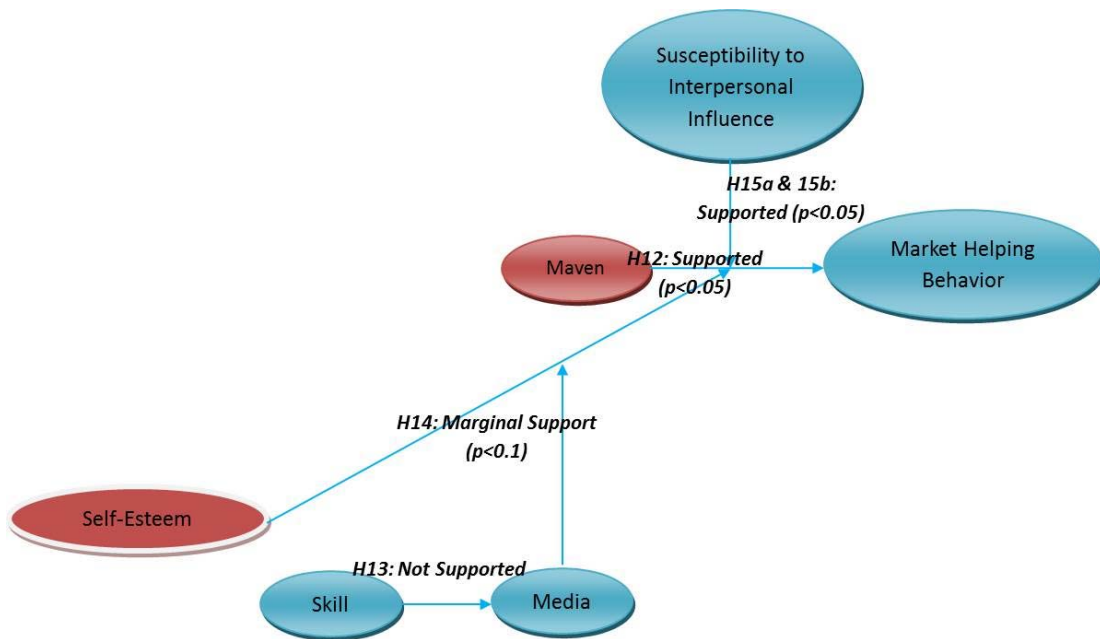


Figure 5.1: Model for Study 3

To assess discriminant validity, two tests are used. First, in the correlations' table (Table 5.2), the correlation between constructs is used to see whether it is smaller than the square root of the AVE of each construct (Chin, 1998). Since each item also loads higher on its respective construct than on any other construct, further support for discriminant and convergent validity is found (Gefen, Straub, and Bourdreau, 2000).

Table 5.3: Correlations Table

	Construct	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Skill	1					
2	Media	0.164	1				
3	Susceptibility	0.103	0.213	1			
4	Mavenism	0.221	0.166	0.3318*	1		
5	Self-Esteem	0.3551*	0.3217*	0.4550*	0.4139*	1	
6	Helping Behaviour	0.3887*	0.1226		0.3991*	0.2918*	1

5.5 Hypothesis Testing and Results

The tests of hypotheses were conducted using the SmartPLS 2.0 software. The graphic interface modeling tool of the software was used in the analysis and to interpret the results (Ringle, Wende, and Will, 2005). To test the significance of the path coefficient, a bootstrapping technique with 500 resamples was used. Therefore, PLS provides the estimates of the direct effects.

Figure 5.1 represents the estimate path loadings based on significance and R². Summary of the results for the tests of all hypotheses in this study can be found in Table 5.3. Model 1 represents the results from analyzing the direct effect of Mavenism on Helping Behaviour (recommendation) and corresponds to hypothesis 12. The results for Model 2 consist of values after the inclusion of the two moderating variables, Self-Esteem and Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence. Model 3 contains the results after the three-way interaction (Self-Esteem × Media × Mavenism) is included in the model.

Table 5.3: Results (DV: Helping Behaviour)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Independent Variables			
Mavenism	0.399*	0.421*	0.448*
Moderating Variables			
Susceptibility		0.2717*	0.3112*
Media × Self-Esteem		0.1824	0.4511*
Interaction Effects			
Mavenism × Susceptibility		0.4558*	0.5112*
Media × Self-Esteem × Mavenism			0.661 [†]

The results of the analysis show mixed support for the theoretical model in Study 3. Of the five hypotheses, the results show support for three hypotheses (H12, H15a, and H15b), lend marginal support to one hypothesis (H14), but fail to support one of the hypotheses (H13).

Table 5.4: Results (DV: Media)

Independent Variables	β Coefficient
Skill	0.1012

Model 1 in Table 5.3 includes the results for the direct effect of Mavenism on Helping Behaviour. The results show a significant direct effect ($p > 0.05$) to exist, which is consistent with the hypothesized relationship. Interpreting the results, we find that respondents who score higher on Mavensim scales tend to be more engaged in actively providing helpful information to others. The reported Helping Behaviour includes different channels in online and traditional contexts.

The findings from the data analysis fail to lend support to hypothesis 13, which predicted a direct relationship between the level of internet skills and the Media of choice for engaging in Helping Behaviour (Table 5.4). Hypothesis 13 predicted that individuals who self-reported higher level of skill in accessing various features of the internet are more likely to develop a taste for using the internet as a Media of choice, compared to those who

self-reported lower skill levels. While the direction of the results is consistent with the hypothesized relationship, the effect is found to be statistically insignificant.

Hypothesis 14 suggests that the interaction between Self-Esteem and Media of choice moderates the effect of Mavenism on Helping Behaviour. The results from the analysis provide marginal support ($p < 0.1$) for this three-way interaction. Although only marginally supported, the results show that adjustment in Media of choice can compensate for lower Self-Esteem in individuals with strong Mavenism traits, prompting them to engage more actively in Helping Behaviour through making recommendations.

The analysis of the moderating role of Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence (H15a and H15b) on the direct effect in Model 1 (Mavenism on Helping Behaviour) reveals that the corresponding hypotheses receive significant support ($p < 0.05$). The results, consistent with H15a and H15b, show that the likelihood of Mavenism characteristics' transformation into Helping Behaviour and recommendations is higher when individuals are less Susceptible to Interpersonal Influence and lower when individuals are more Susceptible to Interpersonal Influence.

5.6 Conclusion

The results in Study 3 provide mixed support for the hypothesized relationships. While the results show strong support for the roles hypothesized for Mavenism and Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence in the theoretical model, the effect of the three-way interaction between Mavenism, Media, and Self-Esteem on Helping Behaviour was only marginally supported. In

addition, the hypothesized relationship between internet Skill and the choice of Media was not statistically supported.

The findings in Study 3 showed that possession of Mavenism traits is a very significant predictor of Helping Behaviour in individuals. This finding further emphasizes the importance of the antecedents identified in Study 1, and the moderators studied in Study 2. Individuals who have stronger Mavenism traits are more likely to go out of their way to help others, even when no immediate personal gain is in foresight for them.

Study 3 predicted that individuals who have a stronger set of Skills to navigate the internet are more likely to develop a taste for online Media as the primary channel for communicating their information to help others. The analysis of results does not show any significant support for hypothesis 13. One explanation for this finding may be the use of self-report to measure internet Skills. Past research has shown that individuals may perceive their level of computer literacy higher than its actual level, when responding to self-report questions (Hargittai, 2005).

Although only marginal statistically significant support was found for the effect of the moderating role of the interaction between Self-Esteem and Media on the effect of Mavenism on Helping Behaviour, further examination of its direction shows consistency with the hypothesized effect. What the findings mean to hypothesis 14 is that while individuals with low Self-Esteem are less likely to engage in Helping Behaviour, even if they score high on the Mavenism scale, their behaviour may change if they use online communication channels which require less face to face interaction.

Finally, the findings in Study 3 provide full support to the hypothesized moderating role of Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence on the effect of Mavenism on Helping Behaviour. The results show that while Mavenism tends to predict Helping Behaviour, this effect will be stronger when individuals with Mavenism traits are less Susceptible to Interpersonal Influence. Conversely, even when strong Mavenism traits exist, greater Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence leads to less likelihood of engagement in Helping Behaviour.

Table 5.5: Summary of Hypothesis testing results

Hypothesis	Result
<i>Hypothesis 12: Individuals with stronger Mavenism characteristics are more likely to engage in helping behaviour relative to individuals with weaker Mavenism characteristics.</i>	Supported (p<0.05)
<i>Hypothesis 13: Individuals with higher web skills are more likely to choose online social networks as their preferred setting to make recommendations compared to those individuals with lower web skills.</i>	Not Supported
<i>Hypothesis 14: The interaction between Media and Self-Esteem moderates the relationship between Mavenism and Helping Behaviour. Individuals with lower Self-Esteem are more likely to engage in helping behaviour when the medium is virtual compared to when it is direct and face to face.</i>	Marginal Support (p<0.1)
<i>Hypothesis 15a: The relationship in Hypothesis 12 is stronger for individuals who are less susceptible to personal influence;; individuals with Mavenism characteristics who are less susceptible to interpersonal influence are more likely to engage in Market Helping Behaviour relative to individuals who are more susceptible to interpersonal influence.</i>	Supported (p<0.05)
<i>Hypothesis 15b: The relationship in Hypothesis 12 is weaker for individuals who are more susceptible to interpersonal influence; individuals with Mavenism characteristics who are more susceptible to interpersonal influence are less likely to engage in Market Helping Behaviour relative to individuals who are less susceptible to interpersonal influence.</i>	Supported (p<0.05)

CHAPTER 6

CONTRIBUTION AND CONCLUSION

This thesis set out to provide a deeper understanding of the origins of Mavenism. Each of the three studies in this thesis focus on the topic of Mavenism from a different angle. When the three studies are brought together, they provide a clearer picture of the factors that precede Mavenism, and how Mavenism works to lead to a consequential pattern of information diffusion in the marketplace. Although there is vast literature on different modes, methods, and mechanisms of information diffusion, the role of Mavens has been overlooked in much of previous studies. This in part has to do with the difficulty of measurement and, more importantly, an insufficient understanding of the significance of the role Mavens play in the more interconnected social landscapes. With prevalence of online social networks, human interactions have found new meaning and individuals' access to means of providing others with valuable marketplace information have become easier than ever. These developments have provided further urgency for marketers and marketing researchers to conduct research that sheds light onto the different dimensions of Mavenism and its consequences.

6.1 Overall conclusion

Through the three studies in this research, an attempt was made to raise the level of our understanding about Mavens and their conduct. The findings of the three studies generally supported the theorization of the relationships that explain the formation of Mavenism and the subsequent Helping Behaviour of Mavens.

In Study 1, the aim was to clarify the role of Personal Empowerment, Belongingness, and Self-Esteem as antecedents of Mavenism. Past research had suggested a theoretical link between these three constructs and Altruism. Building on the Actively Caring Model, arguments were developed to suggest the role of Personal Empowerment, Belongingness and Self-Esteem as antecedents of Mavenism. Using SmartPLS 2.0, Personal Empowerment was modeled as a second-order formative latent variable. The statistical examination of the data for this study provided strong support for the role of these three factors as antecedents of Mavenism, further confirming the altruistic nature of Mavenism.

Building on the base model from Study 1, in Study 2, the factors that influence the effects of Personal Empowerment, Self-Esteem, and Belongingness on Mavenism have been investigated. To this end, the moderating effects for Gender, Religiosity, and Culture were created and included in theoretical model. For Gender, the findings showed that female respondents found Belongingness a stronger motivator for developing Mavenism traits than male respondents. Differences in Self-Esteem as a motivator for developing Mavenism traits only received marginal support. The direction, however, showed that men find Self-Esteem a marginally stronger motivator for developing Mavenism traits than women.

For the moderating role of Culture, attention was put on the differences that arise when people come from individualist versus collectivist cultural mindsets. Analysis of the data showed that people from collectivist cultural backgrounds tend to find Belongingness a stronger motivator than individuals from individualist cultural backgrounds. On the other hand, the findings showed that for people from individualist cultures, Personal Empowerment and Self-Esteem are stronger motivators for development of Mavenism traits.

Study 2 also investigated the role of Religiosity on the development of Mavenism traits. The findings showed that although religious and non-religious individuals can similarly act altruistically and develop Mavenism traits, their motives are somewhat different. Findings of this study show that while Belongingness tends to be the stronger motivator for highly religious individuals in development of Mavenism traits, less religious/non-religious individuals find Self-Esteem as the greater motivator. Other findings showed that less religious/non-religious individuals may find Personal Empowerment as a marginally stronger motivator than it is the case for more religious people.

While Study 1 and Study 2 focus on the formation of Mavenism traits, Study 3 focuses on the outcomes of Mavenism, and more specifically, Helping Behaviour through recommendations. The findings showed that while people with stronger Mavenism traits are more likely to engage in making recommendations, this likelihood decreases for people when they are more susceptible to interpersonal influence from others. The results also revealed that for people with lower Self-Esteem, a change in Media (e.g., the use of internet

instead of face-to-face methods) only has a marginal effect on increasing the number or recommendations made.

6.2 Contributions

The findings of this thesis contribute to both theory and practice. The process of this research and its results help refining the theoretical understanding of the nature and conduct of Mavens. The findings also contain lessons that can be useful to practicing marketers. In what comes next, several theoretical contributions and some managerial implications of the findings are explained.

6.2.1 Theoretical Contributions

This thesis contributes to theory and extant literature in several ways. The first contribution of this thesis is to establish the role of Personal Empowerment, Self-Esteem, and Belongingness as antecedents of Mavenism. Although the notion of Mavenism is not new to the Marketing literature, empirical studies that investigate its antecedents are limited in number. Moreover, the role of Personal Empowerment as an antecedent to Mavenism has not gone beyond theoretical work. This research empirically investigates such factors and shed light onto antecedents of Mavenism. The findings confirm Self-Esteem, Belongingness, and Personal Empowerment as antecedents Mavenism.

A second important contribution of this research is to investigate the moderating role of Gender, Religiosity, and Culture on the effect of the three identified antecedents on Mavenism. A

strong voice in existing literature emphasizes the irrelevance of demographics in development of Mavenism traits. While this thesis is in agreement with the existing consensus, the findings show that different demographics of people hold different motives for adoption of Mavenism traits. This is particularly important since while it acknowledges Mavenism as a trait that can be found among various demographics, it provides a means for classification of the existing antecedents based on demographics.

The findings of this research also contribute to theory through clarifying the conditions that lead to higher or lower recommendations by Mavens. While most studies have focused on the traits of Mavens, very little has been done to investigate the antecedents of Mavens' conduct and the factors that influence actions and outcomes. To this end, this thesis establishes the role of personal traits such as Self-Esteem and Susceptibility in transformation of Mavenism traits into observable actions.

Finally, the three studies in this thesis, together, provide a comprehensive theoretical model for understanding how certain antecedents lead to recommendation outcomes. While several studies in the past have investigated dimensions of Mavens and/or Mavenism, a comprehensive theoretical model to connect various factors and clarify linkages did not exist. The overall model in this thesis makes an attempt to fill in this gap and to provide such understanding.

6.2.2 Managerial Implications

Besides theoretical contributions, this thesis aimed to provide insights that would be valuable to practitioner audiences. A main contribution of this thesis is to shed more light onto the

traits of Mavens and providing means to identify them in the marketplace. The role of marketing communication has been well established among marketers and there is fierce competition among companies to ensure that the positive features of their products and services are communicated to potential customers in the most effective way. Market Mavens are crusaders who take it upon themselves to provide helpful information about products and services to others. Due to their persistence and higher perceived reliability by other customers, they can play a significant role in success or failure of products of companies in the marketplace.

Another main objective of this research was to emphasize the role of Mavens as information communicators. The findings of this research showed that individuals with stronger Mavenism traits are more actively engaged in making product recommendations to others. Therefore, these findings should further raise the level of awareness among marketers regarding the significance of Mavens as part of their marketing initiatives.

An interesting contribution of this thesis is that it shows that while people from different paths of life may equally develop Mavenism traits, their processes for development of those traits are not similar. Consequently, the motivators for development of Mavenism traits may differ based on various personal and demographic traits. This revelation provides marketers with important and powerful knowledge toolkits which can help them target Mavens more effectively. As an example, emphasis of group belongingness for products targeted at women or Self-Esteem for those product that are specific to men may be more effective in triggering the actions of Mavens from each gender.

Finally, the market environment in North America is shifting more and more towards becoming a multicultural setting. Individuals with different backgrounds from vast areas in the

world are increasingly becoming an integral part of the society. Under such conditions, understanding the role of culture is becoming more and more important. This research takes a step toward that direction by investigating the role of culture in the process of information diffusion in the marketplace. Marketers may learn from these findings when they design advertisements and commercials for different geographic locations and for audiences with diverse cultural backgrounds.

CHAPTER 7

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Like all studies, this research is not without limitations. However, these very limitations provide opportunities for further refinement of these studies and shows avenues for future research. In what follows, first, several limitations of the studies are pointed out, then several recommendations for future research are made.

7.1 Limitations

A main limitation in this research arises from the fact that the sample almost entirely consisted of undergraduate students. While the fact that the sample homogeneity removes many concerns from overlooked endogeneity effects, it limits the external validity of the findings to populations with specific characteristics.

The second limitation of this study resulted from the method of data collection which entirely relied on self-report. While survey data is a considered a valid method for most of the constructs in this study, assessment of some relationships may have been affected as a result. For instance, self-report is not considered an appropriate approach for assessment of computer skills,

which relates to one of the hypotheses in Study 3. It has been suggested that individuals overestimate their computer skills and capabilities when they make personal assessments. The non-significant result found for hypothesis 13 may have resulted from this limitation.

Another limitation of this thesis also relates to the self-report approach. While the survey contained questions making the specific request from respondents to report the frequency and channel of the recommendations they had made, the results may be subject to personal bias, memory shortcomings, and insufficient information about the quality and type of recommendations.

In Study 1 and Study 2, three antecedents of Mavenism and the factors that influence them have been investigated. While these three antecedents were extracted from the Actively Caring Model, they should not be limited to them. The limitation in identifying other factors contributing to formation of Mavenism characteristics is one that has been passed on to this study from the theoretical foundations it builds on.

Finally, while the surveys in this thesis have been selected from previously validated and used instruments, they are not without their own limitations. Therefore, the limitations of these instruments have inherently found their way into this research

7.2 Future Research

As explained earlier, the limitations of this thesis lay down the ground work for future research. One possible avenue for research would be to look for other antecedents for Mavenism. As mentioned before, this thesis builds on Geller's (1995) Actively Caring Model. One suggestion

would be to identify other theoretical models and to investigate other possible antecedents for Mavenism. Such findings will benefit both researchers and marketers, alike.

Since a main limitation of this study was the result of the instruments used and the self-report approach, one possible path for research would be to redesign the study and use methods of observation and/or experiment to better understand the quality of actions by Mavens. One possible alternative would be to conduct ethnography or netnography and to assess the quality and frequency of recommendations. Further down this path, interviews with identified Mavens could be conducted to get more in-depth data about their motives and thought processes.

The hypothesis in Study 13 which aimed to explain the selection of Media by Mavens did not find support, perhaps due to methodological issues. One path for future research would be to use methods of observation to understand who Mavens develop preferences for one Media channel over the others.

One main limitation in this research stems from the method employed to measure cultural background. While past research has suggested that individuals from collectivist cultures maintain characteristics from their cultural background, we concede that they will adopt different attributes from their peers in their home countries. However, our findings still stress the fact that cultural difference do matter when it comes to taking a role in diffusion of market information.

Another limitation of this study arises from the sample which mainly consists of undergraduate students. While this is a practice widely adopted in past research, it poses a challenge to external validity of the findings. However, this also opens avenues for future research to extend this study to include broader social groups.

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APPENDIX

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN PRODUCT RECOMMENDATION

I understand that I have been asked to participate in a program of research being conducted by Isar Kiani of Marketing of Concordia University (514-814-3464 or i_kiani@jmsb.concordia.ca).

A. PURPOSE

I have been informed that the purpose of the research is to investigate the behavior of consumers, their product recommendation manner and some psychological variables. This study is part of the main investigator's PhD dissertation

B. PROCEDURES

I understand that this research will require me to fill out a questioner with honesty and sincerity. This shall take approximately 15 minutes to complete. I am aware that my identity will be kept confidential, and only the researchers will have access to the responses. I am assured that at any point in time I may withdraw from this study by contacting the researchers, at which point any information that may have been collected will be discarded.

C. RISKS AND BENEFITS

I understand that there are no potential risks of participation in this study. Participants' responses will be analyzed and may be published in a thesis; however participants' identities will be kept confidential safeguarded accordingly. By contributing their ideas to this research, participants will be contributing to an ongoing study of product recommendation.

D. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

- I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at any time without negative consequences.
- I understand that my participation in this study is CONFIDENTIAL
- I understand that the data from this study may be published.

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

NAME (please print) _____

SIGNATURE _____

If at any time you have questions about the proposed research, please contact the study's Principal Investigator

Name: Isar Kiani

Contacts: 514-814-3464 or i_kiani@jmsb.concordia.ca

Supervisor: Dr. Michel Laroche - Marketing Department

Contacts: laroche@jmsb.concordia.ca or (514) 848-2424 ext. 2942

If at any time you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Research Ethics and Compliance Advisor, Concordia University, 514.848.2424 ex. 7481 ethics@alcor.concordia.ca

A. On a scale from 1 to 7 please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements by circling the number that best reflects your view.

	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>			<i>Strongly Agree</i>			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.							
I never think I am not good at all.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am able to do things as well as most other people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel I have much to be proud of.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I never feel useless.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel that I'm a person of worth.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I have enough respect for myself.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I never think that I am a failure.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I take a positive attitude toward myself.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The groups (eg. friends, relatives, social communities, etc) that I am involved in are very close.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I trust the groups that I am involved in completely.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
In the groups that I am involved in members really understand each other.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I like the groups that I am involved in much more than other groups.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I really enjoy the groups that I am involved in.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I understand the people in the groups that I am involved in.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I like the groups that I am involved in.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I interact/communicate with the groups that I am involved in much more than with most groups I have not been in.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The members of the groups that I am involved in share a lot in common.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
In the groups that I am involved in members do a lot of helpful things for each other.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel very close to the groups that I am involved in.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
In the groups that I am involved in members feel very close to each other.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
In the groups that I am involved in members share some private ways of communicating with each other.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
In the groups that I am involved in our group relationship satisfies an important need for group affiliation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
There is no hostility and aggression between the group members in the groups that I am involved in.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel an interpersonal need for affiliation with the groups that I am involved in.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
If someone opposes me, I can find means and ways to get what I want.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
It can be easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
When confronted with a problem, I can usually find several solutions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
If I am in trouble, I can usually think of something to do.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
No matter what comes my way, I can handle it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I rarely purchase the latest fashion styles until I am sure my friends approve of them.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
It is important that others like the products and brands I buy.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
When buying products, I generally purchase those brands that I think others will approve of.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
If other people can see me using a product, I often purchase the brand they expect me to buy.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>			<i>Strongly Agree</i>			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I like to know what brands and products make good impressions on others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I achieve a sense of belonging by purchasing the same products and brands that others purchase.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
If I want to be like someone, I often try to buy the same brands that they buy.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I often identify with other people by purchasing the same products and brands they purchase.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
To make sure I buy the right product or brand, I often observe what others are buying and using.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
If I have little experience with a product, I often ask my friends about the product.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I often consult other people to help choose the best alternative available from a product class.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I frequently gather information from friends or family about a product before I buy.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
In uncertain times, I usually expect the best.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I always look on the bright side of things.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Nothing will ever go wrong for me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I always expect things to go my way.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Things always work out the way I want them to.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I'm a believer in the idea that "every cloud has a silver lining".	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I always count on good things happening to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I'm always optimistic about my future.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am not good at resisting temptation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I have a hard time breaking bad habits	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am lazy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I say inappropriate things	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I do certain things that are bad for me, if they are fun	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I wish I had more self-discipline	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
People would say that I don't have any self-discipline	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Pleasure and fun sometimes keep me from getting work done	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I have trouble concentrating	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am not able to work effectively toward long-term goals	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Sometimes I can't stop myself from doing something, even if I know it is wrong	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I often act without thinking through all the alternatives	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am extremely skilled at using the Web.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I consider myself knowledgeable about good search techniques on the Web.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I know more than most users about using the Web.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I know how to find what I am looking for on the Web.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am very skilled at using the Web, compared to other things I do on the computer.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am very skilled at using the Web, compared to the sport or game I am best at.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I like introducing new brands and products to my friends.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I like helping people by providing them with information about many kinds of products.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
People ask me for information about products, places to shop, or sales.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
If someone asked where to get the best buy on several types of products, I could tell him or her where to shop.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My friends think of me as a good source of information when it comes to new products or sales.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Think about a person who has information about a variety of products and likes to share this information with others. This person knows about new products, sales, stores, and so	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Group welfare is more important than individual rewards.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Group success is more important than individual success.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Individuals should only pursue their goals after considering the welfare of the group.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Group loyalty should be encouraged even if individual goals suffer.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7