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Fashion Involvement of Affluent Female Consumers

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Key Words: Involvement, Consumer, Fashion

Since products have different meanings to individuals, consumers form different attachments to them. These attachments evolve into unique consumer-product relationships specific to individuals and situations. However, the nature of the product is also highly relevant. The meaning of products may ultimately depend more on the nature of consumers rather than the nature of products (Martin, 1998). Understanding how involved consumers become in their apparel (attachments to apparel) provides a deeper understanding of the dynamics of consumer behavior and the nature and role of fashion within product categories (Martin, 1998). Involvement theory served as the theoretical framework for this study.

Contemporary fashion research indicates that consumers are often distributed across a wide range of fashion consciousness and behaviors. The highly fashion involved consumer has historically been important to fashion researchers and marketers because fashion involved consumers are seen as the drivers, influentials, and legitimists of the fashion adoption process (O’Cass, 2000).

In the United States, women control most of the annual household expenditures (McGuinn, 2000). The number of affluent women increased 68 percent from 1997 to 1999, compared with a 36 percent growth of affluent men. Due, in part, to increased educational levels, women have increased their earning power in the workforce and are now responsible for more than $2 trillion of annual expenditures in the U.S. It is predicted that women will control two-thirds of all private wealth in the United States by 2020 (McGuinn, 2000).

The purpose of the study was to determine if media usage, personality traits, price perceptions, and selected demographic characteristics of affluent female consumers would predict their fashion involvement. The random sample consisted of 239 female consumers over the age of 21 with an annual household income of at least $75,000, selected from eight metropolitan areas across the United States. The survey instrument was developed by the researchers using validated scales that measured each variable. The survey was conducted following Salant and Dillman’s (1994) total survey design strategy. The response rate for the mailed survey was 36 percent.

A hierarchical regression analysis was conducted to determine if any of the variables would predict fashion involvement. The first step involved selected demographic characteristics. The regression
equation was significant with an $R^2$ of .051. Although low, the model indicated that about 5 percent of the variance in fashion involvement was explained by demographics. The second step added media usage, personality traits, and price perceptions. The regression equation was significant with an $R^2$ of .012, indicating that about 12 percent of the variance in fashion involvement could be attributed to the selected variables. Media usage was the best predictor of fashion involvement. Correlation results indicated that media usage, a component of price perceptions (called prestige sensitivity), and a component of personality (called public self-consciousness) were significantly related to fashion involvement. Although statistically significant, the relationships were weak.

Respondents indicated that media such as magazines, TV shows, movies, catalogs, celebrities and the internet helped to predict fashion involvement. If product involvement is high, research has shown that the consumer may be more interested in purchasing the product. Since the fashion involvement scale measured dimensions such as fashion innovativeness and time of purchase, fashion interpersonal communication, fashion interest, fashion knowledge, fashion awareness, and reaction to changing fashion trends; consumers who are highly fashion involved may also promote products with which they are involved to others.

Involvement theory helps to explain how consumers behave in the marketplace. If consumers are highly involved with a product, such as a fashion product, they are more likely to relate to the product and purchase it. Many researchers who study the process of purchasing apparel products have used involvement theory. Consumers who are highly involved with a fashion product may purchase it sooner than others and also may encourage others to purchase it as well. Therefore, understanding the fashion involvement of consumers is of primary importance to those who design, produce, and sell products to consumers.

References


Multicultural Consumerism: US Home Furnishings Expenditures

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Key Words: Home Furnishings, Consumer Expenditures, Ethnicity, Profile Analysis

This study examined multicultural consumerism by investigating the relationship between ethnicity and household home furnishings expenditures through the use of statistical analysis, by breaking household home furnishings expenditures into quarterly as well as annual results, analyzing thirteen sub-categories of home furnishings, and including four ethnic groups (Caucasians, African Americans, Asian/Pacific Islanders, and Native Americans, Aleuts, and Eskimos) in the analyses. Past research on the home furnishings industry has tended to focus on the overall US population, broad categories of home furnishings, and socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of consumers; however, little emphasis has been placed on the relationship between home furnishings expenditures and ethnicity.

Studies dealing specifically with ethnicity and home furnishings expenditures have been extremely limited. Furthermore, these studies have been hampered by methodological concerns, aggregate analysis (use of only very broad expenditure categories), and/or very limited ethnic classifications. For example, early studies of ethnicity and household expenditures used only descriptive statistics and later studies often failed to control for socio-economic and demographic variables (Friend & Kravis, 1957; Peters, 1960). Relative to the aggregate data problem, no studies have looked at quarterly expenditures or at home furnishings sub-categories (Lippett, 1960; Wagner, 1986; Norum, Lee, & Sharpe, 2002). Additionally, Wagner’s (1986) and Norum, Lee, and Sharpe’s (2002) studies restricted ethnic classification to African American and non-African American households due to data limitations.

Data for this study were based on detailed expenditure data and drawn from the 2001 Consumer Expenditure Survey (CEX), which provides the best available US household expenditure data (Attanasio, 1994; Dynan, Skinner, & Zeldes, 2004). The 13 sub-categories used in the analyses were: (1) living or family room furniture; (2) bedroom furniture; (3) dining and kitchen furniture; (4) kitchenware; (5) recreation room furniture; (6) outdoor furniture and equipment; (7) accessories; (8) window treatments; (9) infant’s furniture and equipment; (10) linens; (11) home office; (12) floor coverings; and (13) miscellaneous. The study’s 13 home furnishings categories were then classified according to type of good, durable or nondurable, for profile analysis. The ethnic groups analyzed in the study were those designated by the household head in the 2001 CEX: (1) Caucasian; (2) African American; (3) Asian/Pacific Islander; and (4) Native American, Aleut, or Eskimo. The study’s objectives included: (1) analysis of home furnishings expenditures through profile analysis to confirm empirically the assumed relationship of ethnicity and household expenditures (durable and nondurable); (2) exploration of
consumption patterns for home furnishings via pattern analysis; and (3) explication of the differences or similarities among ethnic groups’ expenditures on different sub-categories of home furnishings.

Profile analysis indicated an ethnicity effect; therefore, the profiles of the four ethnicities differed across categories (durable and nondurable). Slight parallelism was detected between Caucasians and Asian/Pacific Islanders; however, Native American, Aleuts, and Eskimos and African Americans did not appear to have any parallelism with any group. Pattern analysis revealed that the most purchased home furnishings classification was accessories, where 51.35% of the sample population devoted their expenditures. Following accessories, the most notable classifications were: linens (50.73%), living and family room furniture (42.86%), kitchenware (35.53%), and bedroom furniture (29.05%). Finally, differences and similarities among ethnic groups’ mean expenditures on the 13 sub-categories of home furnishings were estimated. Caucasians differed dramatically from the other ethnic groups by spending more in the recreation room category. Similarities of all ethnic groups included the following categories: linens, kitchenware, home office, window treatments, and miscellaneous.

While industry experts have become aware of the significant changes in the US population, they have not substantially addressed the issue of how these shifts affect demand and consumer expenditures (“Tailoring the Message,” 2004; “Frequent Shoppers,” 2003; Anderson, 2002a; Sloan, 2001). Industry leaders have encouraged manufacturers and retailers to embrace changes within the design, production, marketing, and promotion of home furnishings, but they have done little thus far to “tailor the message” to different ethnic groups (Anderson, 2002b; Sloan, 2001). This study has strong implications for consumer research, suggesting that researchers dealing with US subjects cannot assume that their subjects’ consumer tastes and buying habits are homogeneous and “American.” It should be expected that ethnic groups will hold on to aspects of their heritage and express their unique cultural/lifestyle characteristics in their purchase decisions. These ethnicity-influenced choices will in turn be captured in their expenditure patterns, including home furnishings.

References:


Adolescents’ clothing motives and store attribute criteria: A cross-national comparison study

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Key words: adolescents, motives, criteria, culture

In recent years, researchers have recognized that many consumers have shifted their shopping motivation from acquiring necessities to satisfying various needs such as hedonic needs, social needs, and self-esteem enhancement (Dittmar, Beattie, & Friese, 1996; Hausman, 2000). Different individuals may choose different motive paths to fulfill their needs, and motives often influence the number and importance of the criteria by which products, brands, and stores are evaluated (Mahatoo, 1989). Mahatoo suggests that the greater correspondence between the consumer’s motives and his/her perceptions of the store attributes, the greater likelihood that the consumer prefers the store. For apparel retailers, it is important to identify the relationship between customers’ clothing motives and store attributes in each target segment.

Adolescents have been identified as an important consumption group in various countries, emphasizing their lavish purchases and expenses on a great variety of goods, in particular branded products (Wee, 1999). Shawn (1994) reported that from Los Angeles to Tokyo, adolescents appear to share amazing similarities in product reference. Adolescents in many countries buy a common gallery of products such as Reebok sports shoes and Cover Girl make-up. Although consumers in different countries may purchase similar products, their values, attitudes, and behaviors often vary greatly (Kotler & Armstrong, 1999). Retail preference is, in many cases, a culturally tied selection. The national cultural background of the consumer influences the market or demand condition, which is based on consumer preference, attitudes, and behavior in a country. Overcoming cultural barriers in consumer characteristics is one of key issues for companies that intend to expand to the global market.

The purpose of the study was to examine if high school adolescents’ store attribute criteria significantly differ by their country of residence and by their clothing motives. The consumer decision processes model suggests that culture as a variable of environmental influences and motivation as a variable of individual differences have effects on consumers’ alternative evaluation process (Blackwell, Engel, & Miniard, 2001). According to this model, a conceptual framework was developed to examine the influences of national culture and clothing motives on store attribute criteria. Three hypotheses were generated to be tested: H1. Store attribute criteria will significantly differ by respondents’ country of residence. H2. Store attribute criteria will significantly differ by respondents’ clothing motives. H3. There will be a
significant interaction between respondents’ country of residence and their clothing motives in store attribute criteria.

A questionnaire was first developed in American English and then translated to Korean. To ensure the correctness of translation, the Korean questionnaire was translated back to English to examine whether the meaning of each question was kept the same as the original English questionnaire. After revisions and a pilot test in each country, the teachers who volunteered to help with this study administered the survey. Respondents in the United States (US) were high school students in 9th to 12th grades. In South Korea (SK), high school starts from 10th grade, and therefore, students in 10th to 12th grades were included in the study. A total of 604 high school students, 307 in the US and 297 in SK, were recruited in the study. In both countries, there were similar numbers of male and female respondents.

The principal component factor analyses with the varimax rotation were used to group the 21 clothing motives items and 17 store attribute criteria items. For clothing motives, four factors were identified and labeled as Social Approval, Recreation, Image Expression and Recognition. The average score of the items for each factor (i.e., factor score) was calculated for each respondent. According to respondents’ primary clothing motive, which was the highest factor score, respondents were categorized into four clothing motive groups. If the respondent had more than one highest score, the respondent was removed from the data analysis because he/she did not have a major clothing motive. To examine the validity of the classification of clothing motive groups, in each motive group, respondents’ four factor scores were compared. The results of Multiple Repeated Measures Analysis of Variance confirmed the correctness of classification. For example, respondents who were classified in the Recreation group did have a significantly higher average score on Recreation factor ($F(3,154)=253.48, p<.001$). For store attribute criteria, five factors were identified and labeled as Store Environment/ Facility, Product Variety/Price, Store Display, Customer Service/Store Image, and Well-Known Brands Availability. Multivariate Analysis of Variance was used to examine the hypotheses. Fisher’s Least-Significant Difference Post Hoc tests were used to perform multiple comparisons between group means.

Results showed that store attribute criteria between the two countries were significantly different [$F(1,523)=10.03, p<.001$]. Product variety/price and customer service/store image were significantly more important to SK respondents while the availability of well-known brands was more important to US respondents. Hypothesis 1 was supported. Store attribute criteria were also found significantly different among the four clothing motive groups [$F(3, 523)=2.85, p<.001$], indicating that respondents in various clothing motive groups considered the importance of store attributes differently. For example, Social Approval and Recreation groups considered well-known brands availability and store environment/facility.
attributes significantly more important than Image Expression and Recognition groups. Recreation and Image Expression groups considered product variety/price attributes more important than Social Approval and Recognition groups. Social Approval group had the highest mean scores in customer service/store image and store environment/facility attributes. Recreation group had the highest mean scores in product variety/price, well-known brands availability, and store display attributes. The two most important criteria for Image Expression group were product variety/price and customer service/store image attributes. Recognition group considered product variety/price attributes as the only important criteria. Based on these results, hypothesis 2 was supported. No significant interaction was found between country of residence and clothing motives in store attribute criteria, indicating that between the two countries, respondents in the same clothing motive group had similar store attribute criteria. Hypothesis 3 was not supported.

The current study results increase the understanding of adolescents’ clothing behavior and provide suggestions to help apparel companies to adjust their marketing strategies to fulfill adolescent consumers’ specific needs in SK and US. For example, to be successful in the SK adolescent market, this study results suggest that US apparel companies should pay extra attention to product variety, price, customer service and store image because these attributes are significantly more important to SK adolescent consumers. Identifying adolescents’ various motives could offer additional opportunities for market segmentation and store differentiation. Basic product-related store benefits such as product quality, low prices, and credit can be easily duplicated by competitors (Tauber, 1972). One strategy to gain a distinct differential advantage is catering to consumers’ specific motives and their preferences for the alternative benefits they expect to obtain from shopping. This study identified store attribute criteria for respondents with different clothing motives. These results can provide a basis for apparel retailers to establish successful strategies to attract target customers and generate sales. For example, an apparel retailer can select high school adolescents whose main clothing motive is social approval as its target customers. The items included in the Social Approval factor suggest that to attract this segment, it is important to provide apparel with fashionable styles and well-known logos. Emphasizing peer approval and attention of the opposite sex are effective methods for promotions. In addition to product variety and price, the availability of well-known brands and store environment/facility attributes (e.g., music, lighting, number of fitting rooms, resting seats and restroom) are store attributes important to this segment.


Role of clothing symbolism in female adolescents’ clothing behavior

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For many adolescents, especially those who feel they lack social and athletic skills, clothing becomes the primary tool to help them feel more confident in their physical appearance, and thereby control their self-image in order to reach their ideal image (Schouten, 1991). Adolescents quickly learn that clothing can help them control their image, aiding in peer acceptance, recognition and approval, and self-confidence and self-esteem. Consequently, they often devote large amounts of time, energy, and money to clothing (Stossel, 2003). The symbolic self-completion theory proposed by Wicklund and Gollwitzer (1982) suggests that, to feel a sense of completion, an individual's ideal self-definition and actual self-definition must be congruent, and she/he needs others to acknowledge her/his particular self-definition. Individuals engage in self-symbolizing behavior, such as purchasing, wearing or displaying symbols, with the expectation that others will recognize the symbols and comprehend their self-definitions. Although researchers have recognized individuals' use of clothing as a tool to control their self-images, no prior studies have examined the relationship between adolescents' perceptions of clothing symbolism and their clothing behavior. The purpose of this study was to examine the role of clothing symbolism in female adolescents’ clothing wearing behavior and purchase intentions. Specifically, the study examined whether female adolescents are more likely to purchase and wear outfits whose images are congruent with their actual self-concepts or ideal self-concepts, or to purchase and wear outfits whose images are not congruent with their actual self-concepts or ideal self-concepts.

The conceptual model developed to serve as the framework for this study is based on the self-image/product-image congruity theory proposed by Sirgy (1982). This theory holds that, depending on a product’s relationship to an individual’s actual or ideal self-concept, the individual may view the product as portraying different symbols. Sirgy used four types of comparisons between the image of a product and a person’s actual self-concept and ideal self-concept to evaluate the product’s symbolism. The four types of comparisons are (a) positive self-congruity (PSC), (b) positive self-incongruity (PSI), (c) negative self-congruity (NSC), and (d) negative self-incongruity (NSI). PSC refers to consistency between an individual’s perception of product image and that person’s actual self and ideal self. PSI occurs when an individual’s perception of product image is consistent with her/his ideal self, but not with her/his actual self. NSC occurs when the product image perception is consistent with a person’s actual self, but not with her/his ideal self. NSI refers to inconsistency between an individual’s product image perception and that person’s actual and ideal selves. We expected the four types of clothing symbolism to play a significant role in adolescents’ clothing wearing behavior and purchase intentions.

Ninth-grade high school girls were selected to be the research subjects because many high schools in the United States start from the ninth grade. As students transition from eighth grade to the first year of
high school, they often face pressures from developing new friendships and fitting into a new social environment. This is a critical time for adolescents in the development of their self-concept identities (Richman, Clark, & Brown, 1985). Furthermore, this study focused on female adolescents because the clothing behavior of male and female adolescents may differ. Data collection was conducted at four high schools located in the U.S. Mid-Atlantic region using a questionnaire designed to measure the research variables. A total of 384 respondents were recruited. In developing the questionnaire, a focus group and two pilot tests were conducted to select four outfit images and outfit adjectives (i.e., springy, sexy, conservative, sporty). The four selected outfits were ones that ninth-grade girls commonly purchase and wear for hanging out with friends. The questionnaire included questions on intentions to purchase each of the four outfits. Other questions were included to measure each respondent’s actual self as well as ideal self with respect to the four outfit images and adjectives. From the responses to these questions, each respondent was categorized in the PSC, PSI, NSC, or NSI group.

Based on the purpose of the study, two hypotheses were formulated. Hypothesis 1 (H1) predicted that clothing wearing behavior would be significantly different among the respondents in the four groups according to type of perception of clothing symbolism (PSC, PSI, NSC, and NSI). Hypothesis 2 (H2) predicted that purchase intention would be significantly different among the respondents in the PSC, PSI, NSC, and NSI groups. Because four outfits were included in this study, H1 and H2 each included four sub-hypotheses. Analysis of variance was used to test each sub-hypothesis. Results indicated support for H1: For each of the four outfits, respondents whose ideal and actual selves were consistent with the outfit image (i.e., PSC) were significantly more likely to wear the outfit than were the respondents whose ideal and actual selves were not consistent with the outfit image (i.e., NSI). H2 was also supported: For all four outfits, respondents in the PSC group were more likely to purchase the outfit than were the respondents in the NSI group. Overall, these results suggest that clothing symbolism plays a significant role in female adolescents’ clothing wearing behavior and purchase intentions.

Interesting results were also found for each outfit. For example, the sporty and sexy outfits were styles that respondents were likely to purchase and wear when hanging out with friends. Regarding the sporty outfit, respondents in the PSC group were more likely to purchase this outfit than were the respondents in the NSI group. The purchase intentions of the PSI group (i.e., whose ideal self, but not actual self, was consistent with the sporty image) and the NSC group (i.e., whose actual self, but not ideal self, was consistent with the sporty image) were similar to those of the PSC group. These results accord with Sirgy’s (1982) proposition that self-esteem enhances an individual’s need to act in a manner that will increase her/his ideal self-concept. Self-consistency influences a person to act in ways that are consistent with her/his actual self-image. Thus, respondents in the PSC, PSI, and NSC groups would likely purchase the sexy outfit to reach ideal self and/or express actual self; however, respondents in the PSI and NSC groups would be significantly less likely to wear the sexy outfit than would the respondents in the PSC group. The different results for purchase intentions and wearing behavior may suggest that, although using sexy outfits to reach the ideal self or express the actual self is an important purchase motivation.
for female adolescents, only adolescents for whom both the ideal and actual selves are consistent with the sexy image would have the confidence to wear sexy outfits. The results on purchase intentions and wearing behavior regarding the sporty outfit also showed differences between the NCI group and the PSC, PSI and NSC groups. Respondents in the PSC, PSI, and NSC groups were significantly more likely to wear and purchase the sporty outfit than were the respondents in the NCI group, suggesting that some respondents would not only would purchase sporty outfits, but also wear such outfits to reach ideal self and/or express actual self.

This study shows that clothing symbolism plays a significant role in female adolescents’ clothing wearing behavior and purchase intentions. Educators and parents’ guidance is essential as adolescents experiment with and learn the impact of their clothing in affirming expectations of others for anticipated behavior in social roles. Through knowledge of the role of clothing symbolism in clothing purchase intentions and wearing behavior, educators and parents can better understand adolescents’ clothing behavior and thus be able to provide guidance to help adolescents achieve positive self-concepts. The results of this study also enhance apparel marketers’ knowledge of the adolescent consumer segment by providing better understanding of how adolescents use clothing to develop their self-concepts, so that the marketers can offer products that fulfill adolescents’ desires. For example, this study identified sporty and sexy outfits as styles that respondents would likely wear when hanging out with friends and that they used these clothing images to reach their ideal self-images and express their actual self-images. Apparel marketers could pay more attention to developing these types of outfits to fulfill adolescent consumers’ needs. Apparel marketers can also use information from this research to develop promotional programs; for example, emphasizing in ads how a product or brand can help individuals reach and express their self-images may be an effective way to attract adolescents’ attention toward the product or brand.


Market Research: Targeting Ages 15-25 for Apparel Product Development

Using Non-Traditional Fabrics

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Key words: Consumer, lifestyle, apparel, development

Introduction

New product development strategies can limit the amount of risk involved in introducing a new product to market. Urban and Hauser suggest a five step decision process to assist in risk and product design assessment (1993). The steps include opportunity identification, design, testing, introduction, and life-cycle management. This pilot study focused on opportunity identification by researching and surveying the target consumer to determine if non-traditional fabric substrates would be accepted by these consumers.

Non-traditional fabrics include engineered fabrics that are neither woven nor knitted. Due to the nature of these fabrics, new possibilities in the apparel design and production processes have become available. Using the new product development process, risks can be controlled and product design can be tested and evaluated before committing to a final development stage.

Opportunity exists for the introduction of new apparel products to the 15-25 year old consumer. These target consumers are typically innovators and early adopters of fashion styles. However, these consumers are creating marketing challenges. What is it that they want, at what price do they want the product and where and from whom do they want to buy? These seem to be questions that stump retailers today; therefore, “understanding how to reach [the 15-25 year old consumer] and sell to them is crucial for retail survival” (Arlen, 2004, p. 66).

This pilot study was the first step in collecting data to determine important characteristics of the 15-25 year old consumers and their willingness to accept and adopt new products created from non-traditional fabric substrates.

Purpose
The purpose of this pilot study was to begin the process of understanding the lifestyle of the U.S. consumer born between 1979 and 1989. The target audience was defined as males and females ranging in age from 15-25.

Research Questions

The following questions were addressed in this study:

What demographics define the consumer including age, gender, race, education, location, employment, and disposable income?

What psychographics define the consumer including activities, interests and opinions?

Are these consumers a fashion conscious market that will be open to non-traditional fashion fabrics?

Hypotheses

Based on the literature review and the identification of the research questions, it was expected that consumers age 15-25 would provide a viable target market for fashion apparel made from non-traditional fabrics. Females were expected to be more accepting to the introduction of fashion garments made out of non-traditional fabrics, as well as urban consumers. It was not expected that age, race, education, employment or disposable income levels would have an effect on the adoption of this product line. Socially active consumers were also expected to accept this product line more readily than non-socially active consumers.

Review of Literature

Consumers between the ages of 15-25 spend approximately $200 billion in annual retail spending (Arlen, 2004). This particular generation of consumers has matured earlier than all other generations. Some feel that this trait has made the 15-25 year old consumers “market-savvy” and since they know the marketing language, it is important for companies to speak to them in that language (Ratcliffe, 2004). Due to the fact that these consumers have grown up in a time of technological advancements, they are more informed consumers who are comfortable making decisions about products and purchases (Goff, 1999). When asking these consumers how they describe themselves they say that “their most valued traits are individuality and uniqueness” (Goff, p. 52). More important is to understand the consumers’ definition of these terms? “They don’t [define] individuality as being loud or crazy or wildly different, they think of it as being truly, uniquely themselves” (Goff, p. 52).

“Retailers and market analysts repeatedly observe that success in selling to young customers is often a matter of luck [and] finding the right approach to this market remains an enigma” (Arlen, 2004, p. 66). In
a time when retail is suffering, “understanding the forces that guide [these 15-25 year old consumers] is key to effective marketing campaigns” (Ratcliffe, 2004, p. B.4A).

Procedure

A pilot survey was developed based on the review of literature and the research questions that were defined. The survey was created to help answer questions about the respondents’ demographics such as age, gender, race, education, location, employment, and disposable income and psychographics including activities, interests and opinions specifically their clothing and fashion choices. A secondary purpose of the pilot survey was to provide valuable feedback on survey design and aid in preparation of a more valuable survey for administration at a national level.

The survey was developed to be an online questionnaire, so that responses could be automatically entered into a data file and easily tabulated. Once the survey was activated online, the web address was emailed to approximately 30 people that included colleagues, friends, and acquaintances. The survey was deactivated after one week and data was analyzed. In addition to basic data analysis, respondents’ comments regarding questionnaire organization were evaluated.

Quantitative data analysis included frequencies of consumer demographic information with specific reference to age, gender, race, education, location, employment, and disposable income. Psychographic information with specific reference to consumer activities, opinions, and interests was also analyzed.

Findings

The pilot survey was not a representative sample of the entire consumer population, but did provide initial data to support secondary research and insight into the 15-25 year old consumer.

Demographics

Twenty-one subjects responded to the survey. Ninety-five percent ranged in age from 21-25, 76% were female and 85% were Caucasian. The highest level of education achieved by the respondents was a master’s degree and 61% of the respondents’ highest achievement was a bachelor’s degree. Over 75% currently reside in an urban city within the Carolina states. Forty-eight percent are employed full-time, 38% part-time (some respondents reported working both part-time and full-time) and 24% are unemployed. Of the 24% that are unemployed, all reported a disposable income from other sources. Most respondents reported the following income: 24% reported less than $833 a month of disposable income and another 24% reported a disposable income of $1250-$1665 per month. However, there was a population of 19% that reported a disposable income of greater than $4166 per month.

Psychographics
Interests were based on weekend entertainment. Both males and females enjoyed eating out and viewing movies as their most frequent weekend entertainment. Females were interested in socializing at bars and clubs and the males were interested in athletics. Sports related activities were based not only on those played but also included those viewed. Tennis, at 55%, was the most played sport by both males and females. However, both males and females chose football and basketball as the most popular sports to view.

Opinions and Attitudes

The survey looked at the respondents’ favorite color as well as their favorite color to wear. Males favored red at 40% as well as blue at 40%, while the females favored purple at 31%. When asked their favorite color to wear, 40% of males chose white and 31% of females chose pink. When asked their favorite garment to wear, 60% of males chose T-Shirts and 50% of females chose jeans. Overall, jeans, at 43%, were favored most by both genders. Respondents could choose to identify themselves in more than one fashion category. The highest responses were 57% classic/conservative and 52% trendy/fashion forward. The males classified their personal style as classic/conservative, at 80%, while the majority of females, 61%, classified themselves as trendy/fashion forward. The trendy/fashion forward respondents were also compared to their location; with 50% urban consumers and 60% non-urban consumers classifying themselves as trendy/fashion forward.

Discussion

Conclusion

While the data was obtained from a non-representative pilot survey, consumers age 15-25 will be accepting of the fashion apparel product line made from non-traditional fabrics. Females classified themselves as trendy/fashion forward 43% more than males; therefore, this shows that females are more willing to adapt to new fashion trends. However, the pilot survey did not show that urban consumers were more trendy/fashion forward but that non-urban consumers were more accepting of new fashion trends. Further analysis will have to be conducted to determine if the non-urban consumers had once lived in an urban city and are influenced by urban fashion trends as a result. While it is not expected that age, race, education, employment or disposable income levels will have an effect on the adoption of this product line, further analysis and research will have to be conducted. Furthermore, the data collection of age, race, education, employment and disposable income will be primarily used for product line development, pricing, and promotion. The pilot survey was flawed in that the questions asked did not lead to a clear understanding as to whether or not socially active consumers are expected to adopt the product line constructed of non-traditional fabrics.

Implications
This pilot study will help researchers create a better understanding of the 15-25 year old consumer; a consumer that currently spends $200 billion annually, yet is hard to understand. This data provided valuable insight to assist with marketing and promotional strategies toward these consumers. A survey will be constructed and available for future studies for the purpose of determining lifestyle characteristics of a target market.

Future Research

Analysis of responses to the pilot survey has provided valuable insight into basic survey development. Additional studies should be conducted in order to obtain a clearer understanding of this specific target consumer’s lifestyle. Further data analysis is needed to determine a relationship between demographic and psychographic data of the consumer. This data will be used to construct a survey that measures consumers’ thoughts and opinions based on a standardized definition of lifestyle classifications. Once the target market is defined and analyzed, future development of product lines, branding and marketing strategies for these consumers can be initiated.

References


Analysis of the Chinese B2C Online Market: Challenges and Opportunities

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Keywords: Internet, E-commerce, Consumer Behavior, China

It has been widely recognized that e-commerce represents a critical resource for most business organizations, whether in a role of supporting business operations and managerial decision-making or, increasingly, as a means of gaining a strategic competitive advantage (Stylianou et al., 2003). In addition, e-commerce, particularly etailing, provides a highly viable alternative retailing channel for consumers on a worldwide basis. The purpose of this study is to profile the status of the Chinese B2C online market and the characteristics of Chinese online purchasers. The study goals are to identify the key determinants and analyze their impact on Chinese consumers’ attitudes toward online shopping. Infrastructural, socio-economic, and cultural factors are comprehensively covered in the analyses. Selected comparisons of consumers’ attitudes toward online shopping are developed between the US and China.

E-commerce is growing at an extraordinary rate across the globe. Global online sales reached about US$6.8 trillion by 2004 (http://glreach.com/eng/ed/art/2004.ecommerce.php3), which includes both business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-consumer (B2C) online transactions. China had 79.5 million regular Internet users at the beginning of 2004 and ranked second in the number of users, just behind the US, which had 165.75 million Internet users (Wagner, 2004). While current Internet users in China have been significant in number, measured in tens of millions of persons, total users account for only about six percent of China’s total population of 1.3 billion. These numbers have been increasing at over a 20% average semiannual growth rate (www.cnnic.com.cn). The rapid growth of the national economy and personal income, the explosion of computer technology and Internet use, the government’s keen interest in developing E-commerce and other factors have made China an ideal environment in which to rapidly develop a B2C online market.

Multivariate statistical techniques are used to analyze published Internet survey data collected in China. The data are semiannual nation-wide survey data from the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) spanning 1997 to 2004. CNNIC is the most authoritative national organization which regularly publishes the semiannual survey (January and July) on its website (www.cnnic.com.cn).

The study findings show that while Chinese consumers have displayed great enthusiasm for online consumption, and the annual Chinese B2C online sales have been growing at an exponential rate, there are still a number of obstacles standing in the way of future development. These challenges ultimately will influence Chinese consumers’ attitudes toward a broader acceptance of online shopping and the rapid expansion of the Chinese B2C online market. From the perspective of consumers, concerns about...
online shopping include online security, inconvenient online payment modes, quality of online products, services after purchasing, reliability of the online sellers, late delivery, unattractive prices, and unreliable information.

The Internet has made it easier than ever to market products and services across the globe. Although most US companies today are still mainly focused on their domestic markets and pay less attention to overseas markets (Bin et al., 2003), the international market represents an immense potential in the future. China’s B2C online market is experiencing the dynamic transformation from infant stage to mature stage, and the development of the market has moved to shorten the period of time from initial growth to takeoff. An accurate and comprehensive understanding of the key determinants that will influence Chinese consumers’ attitudes toward online shopping is an area in need of further exploration as suggested by the findings of this study. Additionally, the findings are valuable for both academic researchers and business investors targeting Chinese e-consumers.

References:


Gen Y Consumer Perceived Value towards Sports Apparel

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Keywords: Consumer Behavior, Value, Generation Y, Apparel

Value creation is a much discussed topic among businesses, and its import is readily evidenced in both corporate mission statements and objectives (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). Woodruff (1997) suggests that creating customer value will be the new critical source of competitive advantage for companies, replacing the quality management paradigm dominant in previous decades. So, to understand consumer perceived value is a critical factor for company success. As a key market segment, Generation Y (Gen Y) has been paid more and more attention by companies and scholars. But to date, there is lack of clarity on the consumption habits and values of Gen Y, particularly their perceived value and satisfaction with sports apparel. This study explores Gen Y’s perceived value of a key type of sports apparel—socks—given their critical function for athletes’ active lifestyle.

Generation Y consumers, born between the year 1977 and 1994 (the children of baby boomers), form one of the largest consumer groups in the history of the U.S. (Marketing and Promotions, 2003). With a size of more than 71 million, it is 50 percent larger than Generation X. (Textile Consumer™, 1999). According to Meskauskas [2003], Gen Y consumers are the largest trend-setters since the Baby Boomers, and they were responsible for $40 billion in apparel sales in 1998. (Textile Consumer™, 1999). Because of the large population size and increasing spending power of Gen Y, understanding their needs and what they value becomes urgent for companies seeking new market and profit.

Qualitative research methodology was used in this study in order to explore desired sock attributes for Gen Y athletes and to gain insight into Gen Y’s perceived value for sports apparel, specifically socks. Depth interviews with a convenience sample of 20 student athletes from a state university in the Southeast were conducted. The participants were asked about sock attributes that they care about, those attributes they value most, as well as their sock purchase experience. The interviews lasted approximately thirty minutes each. This qualitative research method was chosen because it is useful at gaining insight into consumer attitudes and behavior and provides the depth and breadth of data needed for exploratory studies (Ruyter & Scholl, 1998).

Results revealed two areas of sock concern for the Gen Y athletes who participated in the study: (1) general casual sock wear; and (2) athletic sock wear. Three themes emerged from the interviews relative to casual sock wear. These Gen Y consumers clearly valued practicality, economy, and fashion.
For example, comments were made about socks that were “long lasting,” “easy to clean,” “cheap,” and “something sporty.” Themes that emerged on athletic sock wear, not surprisingly, indicated that the athletes highly valued functional properties that would affect performance: (1) comfort; (2) protection; and (3) durability. Comments were made about socks that should have “just enough cushion,” “not be hot,” “stay tight-fitting to avoid bunching or needing to pull up,” and “not forming holes during practice or play.”

This study broadens our understanding of Gen Y’s perceived values—particularly relative to key sports apparel, i.e., socks. This research contributes to the literature of consumer perceived value by see it through the eyes of an under-researched market segment, the Gen Y cohort group. The findings suggest that manufacturers and retailers will want to carefully consider the needs and wants unique to the Gen Y consumer group and incorporate these unique perceptions into their strategic plans for product development, as well as for product presentation in the retail environment. The results of this study have especially strong implications when lifetime customer value is considered. Manufacturers and retailers should think in terms of a long future for these consumers and make consumer loyalty a prime objective.

References:


Is standardization a viable strategy for international apparel specialty retailing?:
An examination of Spanish, Turkish and U.S. consumers’ behaviors and perceptions

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Key words: retailing, internationalization, culture, standardization

Introduction

Twenty years after Theodore Levitt argued that technology was driving the convergence of world markets, which he described as “irrevocably homogenized” (1983, p. 93), the question remains as to whether or not standardized marketing strategies can be successfully implemented across countries. Although standardization may provide marketers with cost savings, stronger brand images and the potential for higher profits (Levitt, 1983; Kustin, 2004; Schuh, 2000), there is some evidence that profits may be highest among firms implementing standardization strategies in homogeneous (i.e., culturally and economically similar) markets (Schuh, 2000). De Mooij and Hofstede (2002) contend that converging technology and income levels have not created homogenized consumer markets worldwide, as Levitt predicted, because cultural differences remain that serve to naturally differentiate country markets. They argue that these cultural differences are exhibited through consumer behavior that supports the need for product and service adaptation in heterogeneous markets. They also imply, however, that cultural clusters, wherein consumers from different countries may behave similarly, may be identified. Along this line, Kustin (2004) suggests that standardization may be possible in culturally diverse markets if consumers have equal perceptions of products and services.

The purpose of this study was to examine the viability of implementing a standardized apparel specialty retailing strategy across national markets. The primary objective was to gain understanding of market similarities and dissimilarities across countries by examining: (1) the product and retailer attributes/characteristics that influence consumers’ purchase and store patronage decisions as well as (2) consumer acceptance of U.S. apparel brands and their perceptions of U.S. apparel specialty retailers.

Much of the research on market standardization has focused on product design and promotion rather than retailing. In light of de Mooij and Hofstede’s (2002) argument that retailing strategies must be adapted for different country markets worldwide, as Levitt predicted, because cultural differences remain that serve to naturally differentiate country markets. They argue that these cultural differences are exhibited through consumer behavior that supports the need for product and service adaptation in heterogeneous markets. They also imply, however, that cultural clusters, wherein consumers from different countries may behave similarly, may be identified. Along this line, Kustin (2004) suggests that standardization may be possible in culturally diverse markets if consumers have equal perceptions of products and services.

The need for more research into the viability of standardized retailing strategies may be particularly important in emerging markets where the most striking cultural differences may exist.

Alexander and Myers (2000) describe retailers’ entry into foreign markets as the natural extension of operations beyond domestic markets. They contend that retailers expand first to “primary” markets where levels of socio-economic development are similar to that of one’s domestic market. Next, upon success in primary markets, they expand into “secondary” and “tertiary” markets that are less culturally, economically and geographically proximate to domestic markets. U.S. retailers frequently initiate international operations in primary markets, such as Canada and the U.K., owing to similarities in culture and language between the U.S.
those markets (Hyllegard & Eckman 2002; Vida 2000). Although this strategy may enable efficient implementation of international operations, it rarely provides retailers the opportunity to take advantage of the growing market potential that exists in newly industrialized or emerging markets. Arnold and Quelch (1998) identified a number of unique advantages associated with early entry into emerging markets, including the opportunity to establish relations with local governments, service unmet consumer demand, reap lower marketing costs, hire the best candidates from a potentially small group of qualified/experienced local managers, and engage in reverse learning that often occurs through the need for innovative business practices.

These advantages cited by Arnold and Quelch (1998) provide reasons as to why retailers should enter emerging markets. The question that remains is whether retailers should implement standardized or localized retailing strategies when entering culturally different markets, and in particular, when entering emerging markets where income continues to be an important influence on consumer behavior. For this reason, the countries of interest for this study were Spain, Turkey, and the United States. Spain represents a newer European Union (EU) country, which may impact its tendency toward convergence (or divergence) in consumer tastes and preferences (de Mooij & Hofstede, 2002). Turkey represents an emerging market, with lower consumer incomes, and EU candidate status. The U.S. represents a developed country that contributes to changes in global business and consumer environments, as is the case with the international expansion of apparel specialty retailing. For the purpose of this study, Hofstede’s (2001) framework for national culture was applied to examine consumers’ perceptions of products and services and to assess differences in consumer behavior across these country markets.

**Method**

An intercept survey was conducted to investigate similarities and dissimilarities in Spanish, Turkish, and U.S. consumers’ behaviors and perceptions in the context of apparel specialty retailing. The survey examined product attributes and retailer characteristics that are likely to influence consumers’ purchase and store patronage decisions as well as their acceptance of U.S. apparel brands, their perceptions of U.S. apparel specialty retailers, and their perceptions of the impact of foreign retailers on economic and social development. Some measures were adopted from previous research (e.g., Eckman, Kotsiopulos, & Bickle, 1997; Tokatli & Boyaci, 1998; Yucelt, 2000), whereas other measures were designed specifically for this study. Product attributes, retailer characteristics, perceptions of the impact of foreign retailers on local social and economic development, and U.S. brand acceptance were measured on a 7-point Likert type scales. Perceptions of U.S. apparel specialty retailers’ characteristics were measured using 7-point semantic differential scales. The questionnaire was translated and edited for cultural relevance for data collection in Spain and Turkey.

Multivariate (MANOVA) and univariate analyses of variance were conducted to examine influence of apparel attributes on purchase decisions, the influence of retailer characteristics on store patronage, perceptions of the impact of foreign retailers on economic and social development acceptance of U.S. brands, and perceptions of U.S. retailers. When differences were found among Spanish, Turkish, and U.S. respondents, post hoc Scheffé tests were used to identify which groups differed. Significance levels for both the MANOVA and univariate analyses were set at \( p \leq .001 \). Principal component factor analysis was used for data reduction.

Data were collected from 1233 shoppers in Spain, Turkey, and the United States using an intercept sampling approach. The cities in which the data were collected (i.e., Ankara, Barcelona, Denver, Istanbul, Izmir, Madrid, and Valencia) are characterized as primary retail districts. Fifty-three percent of respondents were female and 47% were male. Approximately 82% of respondents had 11 or more years of education. Individuals age 21 to 30 comprised the largest
group of respondents (36%), followed by those 31 to 40 years of age (18.7%), 41 to 50 years (15.9%), and 51 to 60 years (11.8%). The largest percentage of respondents reported shopping frequency for apparel items was less than six times a year (26% of sample), followed by 6 to 10 times a year (23%), once a month (21%) and 2 to 3 times per month (18%). An approximately equal percentage of respondents reported paying by credit card (40%) and paying by cash or check (38%) when purchasing apparel. The retail outlets at which the largest number of respondents shopped 6 or more times in the past year were department stores (n = 274), chain specialty stores (n = 234), local family-owned stores (n = 143), and discount stores (n = 133).

Results and Conclusions

The degree to which product attributes influenced Spanish, Turkish, and U.S. consumers’ apparel purchases differed \( F = 20.86 \) (see Table 1). Univariate analysis revealed that country impacted the influence of nine apparel attributes; there was no difference by country in the impact of quality. Differences in the influence of size ranges, uniqueness, and fashionability were found among respondents from all three countries. U.S. respondents were most influenced by uniqueness and fashionability followed by those from Turkey and then Spain; size ranges impacted Turkish respondents most followed by those from the U.S. and Spain.

Respondent from the three countries had different perceptions of all seven items concerning the acceptance of U.S. apparel brands \( F = 40.82 \). Respondents from all three countries differed in their familiarity with and ownership of U.S. apparel brand names, enjoyment wearing U.S. brands, and the degree to which the believed U.S. brands are prestigious. In all cases except one, perceptions of U.S. respondents were highest followed by those of Turkish respondents and then Spanish respondents. U.S. respondents’ perceptions of the prestige of U.S. brands were also the most positive, however, Spanish respondent’s perceptions were higher than those of Turkish respondents. While U.S. respondents perceived that U.S. brands fit well and project desirable lifestyles to a greater degree than did both Spanish and Turkish respondents, perceptions of Spanish and Turkish respondents did not differ on these two variables. Respondents from both Turkey and the U.S. believe that U.S. brands are better made than did Spanish respondents.

Spanish, Turkish, and U.S. respondents differed in their perceptions of U.S. retailers \( F = 29.70 \). Country influenced respondents’ perceptions of 12 aspects of U.S. retail businesses; there was no difference by country in respondents’ perceptions of the persuasiveness of U.S. retailers’ advertising. Respondents from all three countries differed in their perceptions of product quality and popularity of U.S. brand names; in both cases Turkish respondents’ perceptions were most positive, followed by U.S. respondents’ perceptions and then those from Spanish consumers. Turkish respondents rated fashionability, expense of products, assortment, amount and quality of customer service, convenience of locations, assortment of private label versus national brands, and organization of store layout of U.S. retailers higher when compared to Spanish and U.S. respondents. U.S. respondents perceived that U.S. retailers provided more frequent discounts and a greater number of payment options than did Spanish respondents.

Principal component factor analysis revealed six factors concerning the influence of retailer characteristics on store patronage and three factors concerning respondents’ perceptions on the social and economic impact of retail development on the local community. MANOVA revealed overall differences by country \( F = 62.63; p \leq .001 \) in the influence of retailer characteristics (see Table 2). A post hoc Scheffé test indicated that Spanish, Turkish, and U.S. respondents differed in the degree to which services, convenience, price, brand image, crowded
interior, and merchandise quality and selection influenced where they shopped. Overall differences by country \([F = 53.12; p \leq .001]\) also were found in perceptions of the impact of retail development. Spanish, Turkish, and U.S. respondents differed in their perceptions of U.S. and other international apparel retailers’ impact on local employment/business opportunities and urban growth. Spanish respondents perceived the least impact on these factors, whereas U.S. respondents perceived a greater impact on employment/business opportunities and Turkish respondents had the strongest beliefs concerning urban growth. Turkish and U.S. respondents perceived a stronger impact on socio-cultural well being than did Spanish respondents.

Findings indicate that consumers from culturally different markets are more dissimilar than similar in their perceptions of the influence of apparel attributes on purchase decisions and the influence of retailer characteristics on store patronage. These findings suggest that apparel specialty retailers should give careful attention to adapting product attributes and retail services when entering foreign markets. Findings also indicate that acceptance of U.S. apparel brands and perceptions of U.S. apparel specialty retailers differ by country. The most notable finding is that Turkish consumers differed from both Spanish and U.S. consumers and were more favorable in their assessment of U.S. apparel specialty retailers. This suggests that more positive attitudes toward U.S. retailers may exist in Turkey, compared to Spain, which might allow U.S. apparel specialty retailers to extend current offerings to Turkey with little or no adaptation. It may also be the case, however, that these positive attitudes are the result of less competition in Turkey’s retail environment; Spanish consumers may be more critical of U.S. retailers’ offerings owing to the greater presence of national specialty retailers in that country (e.g., Zara, Mango).

References
Table 1. Multivariate and univariate analysis of variance: Influence of apparel attributes on purchases, perceptions of U.S. retailers, and acceptance of U.S. brands by country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apparel Attributes</th>
<th>Means (S.D.)</th>
<th>Univariate F</th>
<th>Multivariate F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Styling&lt;sup&gt;ab&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>4.75 (1.81)</td>
<td>5.27 (2.01)</td>
<td>5.69 (1.43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>5.18 (1.42)</td>
<td>5.46 (1.66)</td>
<td>5.75 (1.20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country of manufacture&lt;sup&gt;ac&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>2.46 (1.72)</td>
<td>3.40 (1.99)</td>
<td>2.62 (1.69)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand name&lt;sup&gt;ab&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>3.16 (1.83)</td>
<td>4.05 (2.02)</td>
<td>3.84 (1.66)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price&lt;sup&gt;ac&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>5.72 (1.45)</td>
<td>6.16 (1.33)</td>
<td>5.77 (1.38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size Ranges&lt;sup&gt;abc&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>4.26 (1.95)</td>
<td>5.53 (1.78)</td>
<td>5.02 (1.83)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fit&lt;sup&gt;bc&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>5.52 (1.56)</td>
<td>5.59 (1.71)</td>
<td>6.34 (.96)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uniqueness&lt;sup&gt;abc&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>3.29 (1.93)</td>
<td>3.84 (2.09)</td>
<td>4.98 (1.66)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashionability&lt;sup&gt;abc&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>3.81 (1.95)</td>
<td>4.25 (2.00)</td>
<td>5.02 (1.64)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perceptions of U.S. retailers</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product quality&lt;sup&gt;abc&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>4.10 (1.50)</td>
<td>5.62 (1.50)</td>
<td>4.68 (1.14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashionability&lt;sup&gt;ac&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>4.25 (1.50)</td>
<td>5.54 (1.46)</td>
<td>4.53 (1.24)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Price of products&lt;sup&gt;ac&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>4.46 (1.56)</td>
<td>5.78 (1.52)</td>
<td>4.41 (1.30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product assortment&lt;sup&gt;ac&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>4.28 (1.45)</td>
<td>5.54 (1.47)</td>
<td>4.39 (1.23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of customer service&lt;sup&gt;ac&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>4.03 (1.35)</td>
<td>5.36 (1.49)</td>
<td>4.32 (1.30)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality of customer service&lt;sup&gt;ac&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>4.11 (1.31)</td>
<td>5.58 (1.41)</td>
<td>4.16 (1.34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of discounts&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>3.87 (1.27)</td>
<td>4.18 (1.75)</td>
<td>4.44 (1.17)</td>
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<td>Number of payment options&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>4.50 (1.73)</td>
<td>4.71 (1.57)</td>
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<td>Convenience of locations&lt;sup&gt;ac&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>4.25 (1.45)</td>
<td>5.17 (1.63)</td>
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<td>Assortment of private label versus national brands&lt;sup&gt;ac&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>4.14 (1.41)</td>
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<td>4.47 (1.30)</td>
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<td>Popularity of brand names&lt;sup&gt;abc&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>3.95 (1.57)</td>
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<td>4.43 (1.35)</td>
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<td>Organization of store layout&lt;sup&gt;ac&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>Persuasiveness of advertisements</td>
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Using the Theory of Reasoned Action to Explore Peer Self-Esteem, Peer Normative Influence, and Peer Fashion Influence as Predictors of Adolescent Fashion Intention and Fashion Behavior

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Key words: fashion, peers, influence, self-esteem

Introduction. Adolescence is a critical period in the development of self-identity that is associated with the non-evaluative physical, social, emotional and cognitive attributes that comprise one’s self. Self-esteem is the evaluative description of the self (M. Rosenberg, 1985; M. Rosenberg, Schooler, Schoenbach, & F. Rosenberg, 1995) that has both positive and negative direction and intensity (Eggen & Kauchak, 1999; Juhasz, 1989). Positive self-esteem is important in generating self-respect, self-acceptance, and self-liking (Robertson & Simons, 1989).

The evaluative description of the self in a specific domain (i.e. peers) is considered specific self-esteem (Harter, 1990; Neumann & Harter, 1986). During adolescence, peers assume an increasing influence on behavior and are important influences on social, emotional, and cognitive competencies (Henggeler, 1989). Self-esteem is influenced by the meaningful opinions of peers and peers play a role in the individual’s emotional reaction to the self that forms self-esteem (Kaplan, 1975). Moreover, peer normative influence is stronger than that of parents in influencing specific adolescent behaviors such as preferences for clothing (Lewis, Dyer, & Moran, 1995). Clothing takes on added importance during adolescence (Kaiser, 1997) with branded apparel being particularly important (Lachance, Beaudoin, & Robitaille, 2003).

Purpose and Theoretical Framework. The purpose of this study was to explore self-esteem derived from peer social interaction, peer normative influences on clothing, and peer fashion influence as predictors of fashion intention and fashion behavior. Ajzen and Fishbein’s (1980) theory of reasoned action provides a model to predict and explain human behavior in a wide range of applied settings. The theory posits that individuals generally consider the implications of their actions prior to engaging in specific behaviors. They identified two contributing constructs to behavioral intention: (1) the personal factor (i.e. “attitude toward the behavior”), and (2) the social factor (i.e. “subjective norm”). The “attitude toward the behavior” is the positive or negative belief that an individual directs toward a specific behavior. The “subjective norm” is the positive or negative belief that society directs toward a specific behavior. In sum, an individual’s behavioral intention is derived from the positive personal and social beliefs (i.e. attitudes) that the behavior is appropriate to perform. The behavioral intention subsequently directs the individual’s actual behavior. Another consideration of the Theory of Reasoned Action is the assumption that external variables may have an indirect effect on an individual’s behavioral intention and actual behavior. External variables include demographic attributes, personality traits, and attitudes.
In this study, the external variable was the self-esteem associated with peer social acceptance. The personal factor “attitude toward the behavior” was peer fashion influence. The social factor “subjective norm” was peer normative influence on clothing. Behavioral intention was fashion intention. Actual behavior was fashion behavior. Four hypotheses were explored.

H1  Peer self-esteem has no effect on adolescents’ peer normative influence on clothing.

H2  Peer self-esteem has no effect on adolescents’ peer fashion influence.

H3  Peer self-esteem, peer normative influence on clothing, and peer fashion influence have no effect on adolescent fashion intention.

H4  Peer self-esteem, peer normative influence on clothing, peer fashion influence, and adolescent fashion intention do not predict fashion behavior.

Method. Caucasian students (N = 157) enrolled in one high school in a southwest state participated in the study. The sample included more females (n = 102, 64.9%) than males (n = 52, 33.2%) ranging from 14 to 18 years of age. Percentages do not equal 100 due to missing data. Data were gathered on a self-administered questionnaire during a regularly scheduled study period on two consecutive class days. An institutional review board on the use of human subjects in research approved participant selection, measurement, and data collection.

Peer self-esteem was a 4-item measure (Neemann & Harter, 1986) with a Cronbach’s alpha reliability of .70. Participants responded on a positive-negative split question format where each item was stated positively and negatively. They made a peer social comparison by deciding if their reference group was most like the student in the positive statement or the student in the negative statement. They indicated the fit of that description by checking if it was “sort of true for me” or “really true for me.” Negative statements were scored 1 or 2 and positive statements were scored 3 or 4 respectively.

Peer normative influence on clothing was an 8-item measure (Mascarenhas & Higby, 1993) using a 6-point Likert-type scale (6 = strongly agree, 1 = strongly disagree). Cronbach’s alpha reliability was .86. Peer fashion influence and fashion behavior were derived from a 6-item fashionability measure (Goldsmith & Flynn, 1992) plus a seventh item “having status clothing is important to me.” They were measured on a 6-point Likert-type scale (6 = strongly agree to 1 = strongly disagree). A factor analysis with varimax rotation confirmed two underlying dimensions with eigen values greater than 1.0 that explained 64.9 % of the variance. Reliability testing reduced the factors to a 2-item peer fashion influence and a 3-item fashion behavior measure with respective Cronbach alpha reliabilities of .71 and .79. Fashion intention was a one-item measure. Participants responded to “Do you consider yourself to be fashionable?” (yes = 1, no = 0).
Findings. A three-step multiple regression revealed direct paths for peer self-esteem, peer fashion influence, and peer normative influence on clothing as predictors of fashion intention and fashion behavior. In the first regression, peer self-esteem was not a significant predictor of peer fashion influence \((\beta = -.10)\) \([F (1, 155) = 1.53, p = .22; R^2 = .00]\) or peer normative influence on clothing \((\beta = -.04)\) \([F (1, 154) = .20, p = .65; R^2 = .00]\). H1 was not rejected. In the second regression, peer self-esteem \((\beta = .22, p < .01)\) and peer normative influence on clothing \((\beta = .24, p < .01)\) were significant positive predictors while peer fashion influence \((\beta = -.37, p < .01)\) was a significant negative predictor of fashion intention \([F (3, 150) = 16.19, p < .001; R^2 = .25]\). H2 and H3 were rejected. In the third regression, peer normative influence \((\beta = .22, p < .01)\) and fashion intention \((\beta = .38, p < .001)\) were strong predictors of fashion behavior \([F (4, 147) = 13.98, p < .001; R^2 = .28]\). H4 was rejected. See Figure 1.

Figure 1. Significant regression paths.

Conclusions and Implications. Direct paths were revealed for peer self-esteem, peer fashion influence, and peer normative influence on clothing as predictors of fashion intention and fashion behavior. These findings support the multidimensional and pervasive importance of peers on adolescent behavioral intent and actual behavior. The positive contribution of positive self-esteem derived from peers on fashion intention suggests peer influence and how one feels about one’s self in relationship to peers impacts behaviors that have social context, such as fashion. Likewise, the positive contribution of peer normative influence on clothing to fashion intention indicates that during adolescence peers impact decisions to be fashionable. However, peer fashion influence was a negative predictor of fashion intention. Adolescents with low agreement that peers influenced their fashion considered themselves fashionable. This finding suggests there may be other personal factors such as individuality or social aspects such as situational context that might be involved in adolescent fashion intention. Fashion intention was a strong predictor of fashion behavior. Adolescents who considered themselves fashionable also made decisions that reflected fashion behavior.

The theory of reasoned action offers a viable framework for exploring peer influences on fashion intention and behavior. This model needs to be tested with other social factors that act as subjective norms for adolescent behavior such as the influence of parent and media personalities on clothing. Further studies might investigate other personal factors such as attitudes toward specific aspects of
clothing including status clothing, deviant clothing, and aesthetic preferences in clothing. Self-esteem is a personality trait that was investigated as one type of external variable. Additional personality traits and demographic characteristics might be explored for their contribution to predicting fashion intention and behavior.

This study offers product mix and promotional insights to retailers. Retailers can make fashion appeals to adolescents by emphasizing fashion as a way to be a leader among peers. In this study, adolescents who strongly disagreed with the statements “In general I am among the last in my circle of friends to buy a new fashion item when it appears” and “In general, I am the last in my circle of friends to know the names of the latest fashions and styles” indicated they considered themselves fashionable. Creating clothing that offer expanded options for mixing items and creating unique fashion statements might appeal to adolescents who consider themselves fashionable.

The findings also offer important insights to high schools. The dichotomy of the positive effect of peer self-esteem and peer normative influence on clothing and the negative effect of peer influence on fashion might be leveraged into creative school programs that help students understand appearance and fashion behavior from individual and peer group influences. By emphasizing fashion as an individual behavior there is an opportunity to reduce the pressure that adolescents often feel from peers to dress in a certain way and wear a certain brand. Further research might examine explore the importance of boosting individuality in dress and feelings of positive self-esteem which may have extended effects on adolescent behaviors including school success.

References


Impact of Bobos Men’s Lifestyle on Their Knitwear Preference

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Key words: consumer behavior, Bobos, knitwear, lifestyle

A new elite group has appeared in Korea call the digitalized society. In Korea, this elite group is called Bobos. Brooks (2001) found Bobos are highly educated, bohemian-like, creative Bourgeois. Bobos are people who are likely to work in a professional creative area, especially venture companies. The purchase behavior of this group is different from the old wealthy consumer group (Lim, 2000). Bobos want to purchase products that can express themselves. In addition, the Korean Bobos have the sense of fashion and the income to have a significant power of purchase (Shin, 2001). Because of their purchase power, there is a need to understand their fashion preferences so that the fashion industry can meet their clothing preferences and expectation (Shin, 2001).

Other influences on fashion trends include the reduction of the workweek from six days to five days, thus, making the two-day weekend the norm. The increased leisure time has provided a growing market for casual wear. Growth in casual wear market also comes from the option of business casual in the work place (Chang, 2004). Today, the male consumer group in Korea has become more fashionable, and their spending on fashion items has increased (Korea Federation of Textile Industries, 2003). Along with the growth in fashionable casual wear, there has been an increasing preference for knitwear products (Kim, 2003). Because little is known about the preferences of Korean Bobos regarding fashionable casual wear or knitwear, designers seeking to capture this lucrative market would benefit from knowing more about these consumers. Therefore, the purposes of this study are to identify the fashion lifestyle and knitwear preferences of the Korean Bobos and to develop knitwear designs and product planning strategies.

Based on the target market (the Bobos professional male), a survey was distributed to professional men. The survey contained four parts: part 1 focused on demographic information; part 2 focused on the fashionability; and, part 3 focused on Bobos lifestyle, and Part 4 focused knitwear preferences. Part 2 questions were based on the previous research used to determine Korean fashion marketing strategy (Shim, 1997).

A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed to young professionals in the following occupational categories: IT, science technology, Internet game, financial, and fashion related companies. A total of 229 usable questionnaires were returned. All respondents were males who lived in Seoul or suburbs of Seoul. The age range of this sample was from 25 to 44 years.
Income, education and fashionability (parts 1 and 2) were the indicators used to identify Bobos from non Bobos. The average scores from parts 1 and 2 were used to identify the Bobos respondents from the non Bobos. Reliability test yielded an alpha coefficient of \( \alpha = .86 \). Of the 229 respondents, 125 participants were determined to be Bobos.

The statistical differences between Bobos and non-Bobos in lifestyles include: (1) Bobos invest time and money for self-development, enjoy their leisure and have a hobby. (2) Bobos enjoy shopping and have interest digital gadget like digital camera and laptop. (3) Bobos try to buy the best quality products. (4) Bobos have an attachment to collectables that might be considered small and trifling goods. (5) Bobos have an attachment to items from their past, especially their childhood. Finally, Bobos prefer wearing knits more than the non-Bobos.

The majority of Bobos prefer knitwear (88.8%). Comfort (48.8%) and coordination with other apparel items (24%) were the major reasons identified for preferring knitwear. Solid color knitwear (84%) was preferred. In addition, Bobos prefer a simple design (79.2%) and a lose silhouette (65.6%). Bobos preferred natural fibers, especially 100% wool (43.2%) and 100% cotton (34.4%). Preferred colors were black (14%), brown (13.6%) and beige (13.6%). Bobos want to express their image as classical and neat image (39.2%), or refined and intellectual (36.8%) through knitwear. Bobos reasons for purchasing knitwear include casual wear (58.4%) and as a coordinating item for suits (29.6%). The item they most wanted to purchase was either a pullover (48.8%) or a cardigan (38.4%).

Based on foregoing study outcome, the knitwear design of Bobos men should be designed for casual wear and for coordinating with suits. This implies that manufactures and retailers need to understand specific new markets as they develop. Additionally, they need to use research as a means of determining clothing preferences. As a result of this study, one designer developed 12 men’s knitwear designs targeted to the young professional identified as Bobos.

Knitwear 1 was designed for casual wear.
Knitwear 2 was designed for coordinating with suits.
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Hedonic Shopping Experiences of the Older Consumer

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Keywords: Consumer Behavior, Hedonics, Older Consumers, Shopping

This study explored the “shopping experiences” encountered by older consumers in pursuing their ordinary shopping duties for groceries, clothes, and other consumer goods. Understanding such consumer experiences is a critical scholarly concern for several reasons: (1) one of the fastest growing segments of the US population is the older segment (i.e., consumers 65 and older); (2) the “experience,” or hedonic, side of consumption is becoming more important in US society; and (3) little academic research has looked at these two combined issues—the consumption experience and the older consumer.

One of the three most important demographic trends predicted for the next 25 years will be dealing with the mature market (Fayanti, McManamon, & Whipple, 2004). With increased longevity and general population growth, the United States faces a historical first—the largest, longest-living population cohort (Baby Boomers) ever, with approximately one in five US citizens 65 or older by the year 2030 (Day 1996). Unlike previous older generations, these “new” old people will have the highest resource levels for the older population segment in history (Fayanti, McManamon, & Whipple, 2004; Oates, Shufeldt, & Vaught, 1996), making them a powerful consumer block, both on the basis of numbers and raw spending power.

Pine and Gilmore (1999) in The Experience Economy articulate how America is rapidly moving away from a service economy to one dominated by “experience.” They propose that “Experiences are as distinct from services as services are from goods” (p. 3) and businesses must draw clients into a form of commercial theatre. Yet, consumer behavior research has overwhelmingly focused on the information processing side of consumption—not the experiential or “hedonic” side (Babin, Darden, and Griffin 1994; Holbrook and Hirschman 1982). What little research has been done on experiential consumption has addressed a narrow range of topics, and, most importantly to today’s aging cohort, has been limited to the “master” market segment, ages 18-44. Research is sorely needed on the experiential or hedonic consumption of older consumers.

Data for this study were collected through a series of depth interviews with older consumers participating in community programs for the aging in the Southeast. A total of twelve 30-minute depth interviews were conducted that included one male and eleven females. These interviews were transcribed and then content analyzed to establish the existence of certain words or concepts and then coded into controllable categories. The codes were used to analyze and to quantify the presence, meanings, and relationships of these words and concepts (Introduction to Content Analysis, 2005).
Based on the content analysis of the transcribed interviews, four central themes emerged from the data. These themes include: (1) self-efficacy, i.e., the importance to older consumers of keeping high self-esteem and self-worth while dealing with the physical and emotional effects of aging; (2) the need for a safe and manageable physical environment, for example, strategically placed seating and more accessible shelving units in stores; (3) support for health concerns faced by older consumers, for example, the shelving of salt-free and other special foods in a single location within grocery stores and opportunities for walking and getting exercise; and (4) shopping as a social event, for example, shopping with family and friends.

The results of this study have several important implications. The results clearly indicate that we as a society have a long way to go to create what older consumers perceive as older consumer-friendly environments for shopping. Based on the study’s data, this problem involves at least two key groups—the retailers that older consumers patronize and the people who interface with older consumers when shopping (friends, family, caretakers, church groups, etc.). This means that retailers, if trends in demographics and experiential consumption continue as expected, cannot afford to neglect the issues faced by older consumers and must proactively address these issues. Finally, those interfacing with older consumers during their shopping experiences need to fully understand and respond to both the physical and emotional changes that affect consumers as they age.

References:


Brand Perceptions and Facial Image Related To Cosmetics Usage

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Keywords: Brand personality, brand attitude, facial image, cosmetics usage

Aaker (1997) defines brand personality as “the set of human characteristics associated with a brand” (p. 347). Brand personality can be used to convey one’s ideal self or different versions of the self, as well as, one’s perceptions and evaluations of the brand. Previous research (Malhotra, 1988 and Sirgy, 1982) has suggested consumers prefer certain brands when the brand personality parallels the consumer’s own personality or the personality they hope to achieve (ideal personality).

Research which exclusively examines facial image is scarce, but rather views facial image as part of body image. Body image is the feelings and attitudes one has toward their physical appearance. Cash & Cash (1982) determined many effects body-image had on cosmetics usage. Women with poorer body images had recently increased the number of cosmetics products they applied and the number of situations in which they wore makeup. They also found the women who wore cosmetics in a larger number of situations were more aware of how their behaviors and appearance would be judged by society. Cash, Dawson, Davis, Bowen, et al. (1989) also determined women wearing their routine amount of makeup believed others would view their appearance more positively, as compared to when they were not wearing makeup. Also, these same women stated they were more satisfied with the appearance of their faces, as well as, their overall appearance when they were wearing their regular amount of makeup, versus when they were not wearing makeup.

This research examines women’s perceptions of cosmetics brands in relation to women’s facial image and cosmetics usage. Based on prior research, three research questions were developed: (1) How does facial image influence cosmetic usage factors (quantity and pattern of use)? (2) How does facial image influence perceptions of brand personality and brand attitude? And (3) How do cosmetic usage factors (quantity and pattern of use) influence perceptions of brand personality and brand attitude?

Methods

Data Collection An electronic survey was administered to a randomly drawn list of female students enrolled at a mid-Atlantic university at the time of data collection. One-hundred thirty-six female students participated in the survey, ages 18 to 49 years, with ages 18 through 22 representing 80 percent of the entire sample. The women were enrolled in all academic years and academic colleges at the university.
Measures  The electronic survey included items measuring brand personality, brand attitude, facial image and cosmetics usage. The brand personality scale was modified from Aaker’s (1997) Brand Personality Scale. The brand attitude scales include two items: negative/positive and dislike/like. All items were measured on a five-point scale (1=strongly agree, 5=strongly disagree). Mean scores were derived using items measuring each of the five brand personality measures and brand attitudes. Brand personality dimensions were considered global indices and conceptually not appropriate to measure reliability statistics. Reliability statistics for the brand attitude measure ranged from .90 to .92 for each of the cosmetics brands.

The facial image scale was partially adopted from Cash’s Body Parts Satisfaction Scale (BPSS) (Cash et al., 1989). Participants were asked to rate six areas of their face on two scales: unsatisfied/satisfied and unimportant/important (1=unsatisfied/unimportant, 5=satisfied/important). For each facial area, a score was calculated by weighting the satisfaction level of each facial area by its importance. Next, all items were summed to derive a composite score representing facial image.

The cosmetics usage section was modified from the Cash Cosmetics Use Inventory (CCUI) (Cash & Cash, 1982; Cash et al., 1989) and asked participants to indicate their usage of various cosmetic products in certain settings. More specifically, they rated how often (1=never, 2=occasionally, 3=usually, and 4=always) they use eleven cosmetic products in ten situations. Quantity of cosmetic usage and pattern of usage was calculated by Cash’s methods.

Data Analysis and Results

Multiple regression analysis determined quantity and pattern of use were not influenced by facial image. Additionally, facial image influenced Sincerity (p<.01), Excitement (p<.001), Competence (p<.01), and Ruggedness (p<.01) for MAC. Quantity of cosmetic usage was not a significant predictor of the five dimensions for the three brands. Pattern of use was a significant predictor for Ruggedness of MAC (p<.01), and Sincerity (p<.01), Excitement (p<.05), and Competence (p<.05) for Clinique. For MAC, quantity of cosmetic usage was a significant predictor (p<.01) of positive brand attitudes. Additionally, Sincerity (p<.05), Excitement (p<.001), and Competence (p<.05) all influenced the brand attitudes of MAC (R²=.48). The brand attitudes of Clinique were significantly related to Sincerity (p<.001) and Competence (p<.01) (R²=.44)). Finally, for CoverGirl, quantity of cosmetic usage (p<.05) and Competence (p<.001) were predictors of brand attitude (R²=.42).

Discussion and Implications

This study found how one perceives their own facial image, does not influence the amount of products used across various situations (quantity) or cosmetic situational variance (pattern of use). This finding is supported by prior findings which show cosmetic usage is affected by one’s overall body-image, but not specifically facial image (Cash & Cash, 1982). This result may be due to an individual’s use of cosmetics
to attract their peers away from areas of the body they perceive as less attractive (e.g. body weight, height, etc.).

Results also indicate those who possess a positive facial image, perceive MAC as sincere, exciting, competent, sophisticated, and rugged, while they view Clinique as only sincere and competent. This result shows MAC may be better able to imitate a consumer’s actual or desired facial image by conveying the above brand personalities. Pattern of use is highly correlated with four of the Big Five dimensions for Clinique. Therefore, Clinique caters to those with situational variance, while MAC connects more with consumers who are satisfied with their facial image. Finally, excitement, sincerity, and competence are the most important brand personalities in relation to positive brand attitudes, for MAC, Clinique, and CoverGirl, respectively. Therefore, these brands should focus on each of the above to improve the image of their brand. Furthermore, MAC should strive to show consumers the “excitement” they can derive by using a large number of cosmetics products in all situations. Clinique should portray how honesty and sincerity can be achieved by varying cosmetics usage throughout different situations.

References


The Feminization of Male Shopping Habits and their Impact on the Fashion

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“In the past five years, there’s been a radical change with how men approach fashion,” according to Gabriella Forte, Dolce & Gabbana. Moving from the traditional 20th century perspective that produced a lack of interest in fashion for the majority of men in the United States to an active, independent and considered by many, a more feminine approach to shopping for their own apparel. Traditional family roles such as the breadwinner and climbing the corporate ladder kept fashion, for most men, a low priority during the 1900’s. However, today younger men haven’t “grown up with the stigma that only gay men went shopping by themselves or with other men,” according to Michael Macko, head buyer for menswear for Saks Fifth Avenue. This paper discusses the results of research of the male shopper and the influences that have changed him from content male of the 1950’s with a wardrobe consisting of 4 or 5 corporate suits and polished shoes, to a more fashion conscious, informed and independent shopper for everything from socks to furniture.

There is a common catchphrase for this new man. “We call him the metrosexual”. According to a 2003 article in the Washington post entitled “Vanity”. Thy Name is Metrosexual”, he can be defined as “a straight man that styles his hair using three different products (and actually calls them “products”), loves clothes and the very act of shopping for them, and describes himself as sensitive and romantic”. Usually, we think of this man as living in an urban city like New York, Los Angeles, or Washington D.C., but nationwide success of such phenomena as the television show “Queer Eye for the Straight Guy” and its offspring has made all American men (and their influential women) aware of this trend. Young men (and some not so young) all over the country are starting to shop more, decorate their homes, entertain with or without the help of a woman, enlarge their collections of wines and gourmet foods, and even keep lit candles strategically placed.

The important question to be addressed throughout this paper is: what impact will this trend have on the world of fashion? According to an article from www.just-style.com, January 2005, titled “The New Male Shopper”, “men are getting out to stores more often than in the past, 4 in 10 say they are heavy shoppers, meaning they make four or more trips per week. Nearly 27 percent make five or more trips during that time frame…. men, particularly those under 35, are moving from a traditionally hunter mode to a more female-style gatherer mode when shopping for everything from home products to fashion”.

The focus of this research is to explore how the changes in young men’s shopping habits will affect 1) the luxury market 2) the apparel and accessories market and 3) cosmetic market. Advertising and promotion trends aimed at the male shopper are explored, as well as the potential impact on the retail environment. Information has been gathered using primary resources such as interviews with male shoppers and industry professionals. Secondary demographic data was gathered using VALS (Values,
Attitudes, Lifestyle Survey from DRI Consulting, a psychographics research organization and The United States Census).

References


The Effect of Satisfaction with Local Shopping Condition on Internet Apparel Shopping Behavior among Rural Consumers

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Keywords: Internet, apparel, shopping, rural

In rural areas, consumers are dissatisfied with local retail facilities in terms of the lack of product assortments, high prices, and poor quality products. Due to unavailability of and dissatisfaction with local markets in rural areas, rural consumers often shop out of town, especially for apparel and apparel-related products (Dalal, Al-Khatib, DaCosta, & Decker, 1994). In rural areas, from 1998 to 2001, the Internet usage growth rate in the U. S. has averaged 24% and the percentage of Internet users in rural areas was almost same as the national average in 2001 (A nation online, 2002). Wayland, Simpson, and Kemmerer (2003) redefined out-shopping as store-based out-shopping and in-home shopping (e.g., catalog and Internet shopping). Thus, it is possible that rural consumers who are dissatisfied with local markets and have access to the Internet may shop online for apparel products as a kind of out-shopping behavior.

According to the decision-making process (DMP) described in diffusion of innovations theory (Rogers, 1995), consumer’ prior conditions (e.g., satisfaction with local shopping conditions) may influence their beliefs about the Internet and Internet shopping. Rogers also suggests that the DMP occurs in stages so that prior conditions affect beliefs, which in turn affect adoption of the innovation. This rationale suggests that consumer’ satisfaction with local shopping conditions will have an indirect effect on apparel online shopping adoption through beliefs. Therefore, based on the innovation decision-making process, the present study examined: 1) the effect of satisfaction with local shopping conditions on beliefs about the Internet and Internet shopping, 2) the effect of beliefs about the Internet and Internet shopping on Internet apparel shopping behaviors in terms of information search and purchasing, and 3) the mediating effect of beliefs between satisfaction with local shopping conditions and Internet apparel shopping behaviors in terms of information search and purchasing.

A mailed questionnaire was used to assess Internet shopping behavior of rural consumers in a midwest state. A random sample of households in rural non-metropolitan statistical areas was purchased from a sampling firm. Of the 735 questionnaires that were distributed, a total of 225 questionnaires were returned. One hundred seventy two questionnaires were usable for data analysis.

An exploratory factor analysis was conducted to identify the common factors and explain their relationship to the observed data (Lattin, Carroll, & Green, 2003). Results indicated a three-factor solution and labeled 1) general beliefs about the Internet, 2) compatibility of Internet shopping, and 3) advantages of services and values of Internet shopping.

Structural equation modeling using Lisrel 8.7 was used for analysis. The proposed model consisted of one exogenous—satisfaction with local shopping condition—and two endogenous—beliefs, Internet apparel shopping behaviors—latent variables. The fit indices indicated an acceptable fit of the proposed model to the data (chi-square=14.27, p = .08, df=8, NNFI=.97, CFI=.98, AGFI=.92, GFI=.97,
RMSEA=.068). All path coefficients of the measurement model were significant (p < .001) and all path coefficients of the structural model were significant (p< .01). The results show that rural consumers satisfied with local shopping conditions tend to have more negative beliefs about the Internet and Internet shopping (path coefficient = -.23). Rural consumers who have positive beliefs about the Internet and Internet shopping are more likely to use the Internet for apparel information search as well as to purchase apparel products online (path coefficient = 1.11). Another finding showed an indirect effect of satisfaction with local shopping conditions on Internet apparel shopping behaviors mediated by beliefs about the Internet and Internet shopping (path coefficient = -.26). This result strongly supports the decision-making process (Rogers, 1995) in that prior conditions (e.g., satisfaction with local shopping conditions) affect beliefs which in turn influence adoption of Internet apparel shopping.

References


American Generation Y Females:

A Comparison of the Anglo/Hispanic Fashion/Style Selection Process

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Keywords: Consumer Behavior, Ethnicity, Generation Y, Fashion

This study explores the process that Anglo and Hispanic American Generation Y females use to select specific fashions and styles for personal use. Exploring the fashion/style selection process of Generation Y consumers, specifically those aged 18 to 24, is important given Gen Y’s potential annual purchasing power of $105 billion (Martin and Turley, 2004). It is important also because academic research on this consumer group is scarce (Martin and Turley, 2004).

Several key factors likely play a part in the perception and adoption of specific fashions or styles, among them are visual representation and socialization. Hollander (1978, p. 311) states that “Dress is a form of visual art.” Representation of dress strongly influences perception. Consequently, all consumers are influenced by advertising, television, movies, and “all the vehicles of the human image” (Hollander, 1978, p. 314). Furthermore, consumer socialization plays an important role, because it represents “the processes by which young people acquire the skills, knowledge, and attitudes relevant to their functioning as consumers in the marketplace” (Ward, 1974). This study will seek to clarify which factors, including visual representation and socialization, most influence Anglo and Hispanic Gen Y consumers’ fashion/style selections.

Qualitative research methodology was used in this study to explore the fashion/style selection process for Anglo and Hispanic Gen Y consumers. Depth interviews with a convenience sample of 15 students from a major state university in the Southeast were conducted. Interviews lasted an average of 30 minutes. This qualitative research method was chosen because it is useful at gaining insight into consumer attitudes and behavior and provides the depth and breadth of data needed for exploratory studies (Ruyter & Scholl, 1998). The interviews were first transcribed and then content analyzed for key issues that surfaced across participant responses.

One of the interesting themes that emerged from the survey was the similarity between Anglo and Hispanic consumers within this age group. Previous research has implied the importance of family and culture in helping to shape consumer roles (Deshpande, Hoyer, and Donthu, 1986). This study showed that consumers within this age group, regardless of ethnic identification, feel peer influence to be the most important socialization agent. There are some differences in the definitions of fashion and style
between these two ethnic identifications, but as far as socialization agents, there appear to be more similarities than differences.

This study has important implications for both academia and marketing. For one thing, research has been done on Hispanic consumers and on Generation Y, but little so far on the combination of Hispanic Generation Y consumers, providing a rich new research area. With a growing Hispanic population, and the aging of Generation Y, current research will help us to understand the fashion/style selections and, consequently, the buying behavior of these consumers. This research is important for marketers so that they avoid the pitfall of stereotypic advertising that may do more harm than good. Future research is needed with this segment, for example including more males and using a larger and more diverse sample of Hispanic students. It should be noted that this study used a convenience sample, i.e., all of the participants were enrolled in higher education, therefore, certain socio-demographic variables may have influenced the results.

References


American Generation Y Females: A Comparison of the Anglo/Hispanic Fashion/Style Selection Process

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Keywords: Consumer Behavior, Ethnicity, Generation Y, Fashion

This study explores the process that Anglo and Hispanic American Generation Y females use to select specific fashions and styles for personal use. Exploring the fashion/style selection process of Generation Y consumers, specifically those aged 18 to 24, is important given Gen Y’s potential annual purchasing power of $105 billion (Martin and Turley, 2004). It is important also because academic research on this consumer group is scarce (Martin and Turley, 2004).

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References


Political Opinion Leadership and Attitude toward Fashion Advertisements with Political Content

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Key words: fashion, advertisement, political, opinion-leadership

United Colors of Benetton brought advocacy advertising to fashion in 1984 with its “Campaign for Racial Equality” (Tinic, 1997). The campaign “All the Colors of the World” featured young adults from different racial groups in the advertisements. In 1985 Kenneth Cole was one of the first apparel markets to address AIDS awareness in his advertisements (Cardona, 2003). Since then, Members Only, Diesel, Kenneth Cole, and Express have also issued advertisements with political messages (Kim, Park, & Kim, 2001).

The political content of advertisements was quickly noticed and highly discussed by the American public. For example, United Colors of Benetton’s campaign entitled “We, on Death Row” caused Sears, Roebuck and Company to pull Benetton USA products from their selves. More recently, Kenneth Cole advertisements caused controversy as well. The fall 2001 campaign contained an advertisement that negatively portrayed the Bush-Cheney administration (Murphy, 2001). After the terrorism of September 11, the designer ended the campaign due to complaints that the advertisements were anti-patriotic.

Fashion advertisements with political content are unique because they go against the accepted strategy of advertising. Conventional advertising shows the positive characteristics of a product or the company itself, with the intent of selling the product to the viewer. Many advertisements even go a step further and try to sell not only the product but also a pleasant situation or a desirable quality that could result from the product’s purchase. Fashion advertisements with political content differ because they do not mention the product’s qualities. Often the product is not even pictured in the advertisements. These advertisements may show or describe the harsh reality of the world instead of the pleasantries of a fantasy land. The advertisements, thus, spark interest because they are different from what society is accustomed to experiencing.

As fashion advertisements with political content become more prominent, their effects on consumers become more important to study. For example, marketers know that these advertisements will attract consumers’ attention, but they also need to know how the consumers’ attitudes toward these advertisements will affect their attitudes toward the products. It would also be of interest to examine whether political opinion leaders will have significantly different attitudes toward these advertisement and products. Opinion leaders are the people in society...
most affected by formal media and they communicate their views most frequently and most influentially than anyone in society; therefore, their attitudes toward the advertisements with a political message bear potential significance for marketers.

Method

Webpage Development

Four web pages were designed to collect data for the study. Each webpage included one of four jean advertisements created by the researchers as well as a link to a five-part online survey. The advertisements, labeled A through D, contained: a pair of male jeans and a political message (A), a pair of male jeans and a non-political message (B), a pair of female jeans and a political message (C), and a pair of female jeans and a non-political message (D).

Jeans were chosen as the fashion product in the advertisement because they are commonly worn by both male and female students and thus familiar to all students in the sample. A contemporary style of jeans was chosen but the jeans did not have trendy features that might distract the respondents. The male and female jeans looked very similar in style and color.

The topics that were used in the message for the advertisements were also familiar to the sample. The political message was “While the President was busy creating a reason for war, we were busy creating the perfect pair of jeans.” The message was referring to the controversy surrounding the President’s decision to go to war with Iraq. This topic was chosen because it was widely being discussed among college students, particularly since it emerged as an important issue in the 2004 presidential election. This same political message was viewed by males in advertisement A and by females in advertisement C. The non-political message was “We have a fit for everybody in America.” This message simply advertises the jeans. It states that the company makes various styles of jeans that fit the body in different ways. This same non-political message was viewed by males in advertisement B and females in advertisement D.

Aside from the differences in gender of jeans and message, the advertisements were made to look identical. The same background was used for all four advertisements and the jeans and the message were placed in the exact same position in the advertisement.

Description of the Survey

Eleven questions used to measure political opinion leadership were either adapted from Hellevik and Bjorklund (1991) or created by the researchers. Most of the questions in the first three sections used a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). The questions asking how
frequently the respondent engaged in various activities were coded on a rating scale from 1 = never to 7 = weekly (or daily).

The respondents were then asked to review the assigned advertisement and asked questions regarding their a) recognition of the message in the advertisement, 2) understanding of the message, 3) strength of agreement with the message, and 4) strength of feelings about the message. The respondents then proceeded to answer four questions regarding attitude toward the advertisement (interesting, effective, good, likable). Three questions adapted from studies by DeLong et al. (2002) and Kim et al. (2002) were also asked to measure product attitude (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

Survey Participants

In order to provide a broad sampling of college students, respondents were recruited from diverse classes (biology, advertising, political science, psychology, leisure studies, housing). The survey website address was given to a total of 1,185 students, of whom 121 responded. The relatively low response rate of 10.2% was not surprising given the method used to recruit participants. Each of the classes was visited only once and thus there was no repeat contact with any of the students. In addition, no incentive was offered for taking the survey.

Distribution of Advertisements

Since the survey was completed in a strictly volunteer manner, an even distribution of respondents for each advertisement could not be ensured. Twenty-two males (18%) viewed advertisement A (political message) and 15 males (12%) viewed advertisement B (no political message). Forty-four females (36%) viewed advertisement C (political message) and 38 females (31%) viewed advertisement D (no political message).

Results

Reliabilities

Using Cronbach’s alpha, internal reliability was examined for each of the three variables. The scale measuring political opinion leadership had an acceptable alpha of .80. The four questions measuring respondents’ attitudes toward the advertisement had an alpha of .86. The three questions measuring attitudes toward the product in the advertisement also had an acceptable alpha of .84.

Multiple Regression Analyses

Multiple-regression models were used to examine how strongly product attitude and advertisement attitude were predicted by the following variables: 1) demographic characteristics (age,
gender, income) 2) political opinion leadership, 3) recognition of the message, 4) understanding of the message, 5) agreement with the message, and 6) feelings about the message. In order to compare those who viewed the advertisements with a political message and those who viewed the advertisements with a non-political message, two separate sets of regression analyses were conducted. The enter method was employed to compare the influences of demographic characteristics and other perceptual variables.

For those who viewed the advertisements with a political message, none of the demographic variables significantly influenced attitude toward the advertisement. The $R^2$ was rather low (8%) with only three demographic variables. When five perceptual variables were added into the equation, $R^2$ increased to 44 percent. Agreement with the message, however, was the only variable that significantly influenced attitude toward the advertisement. Respondents who more strongly agreed with the message had a more favorable attitude toward the advertisement ($\beta = .62; p < .001$). Political opinion leadership was not significant in predicting advertisement attitude.

The same independent variables and advertisement attitude were then examined for their impacts on attitude toward the product in the advertisement. Age and gender were significant predictors of product attitude while income was not; older students ($\beta = .26; p < .05$) and females ($\beta = .29; p < .01$) responded to the product more favorably than younger students and males. Of the six perceptual variables, only attitude toward the advertisement was a significant predictor of product attitude ($\beta = .42; p < .05$). The $R^2$ was 26 percent.

For those who viewed the advertisements with a non-political message, older students seemed to have more favorable attitude toward the advertisement ($\beta = .33; p < .05$). When five perceptual variables were added into the equation, age still remained significant but none of the perceptual variables emerged as a significant predictor of advertisement attitude. The $R^2$ was 32 percent. When these same variables and advertisement attitude were examined for their impacts on product attitude, none appeared to be a significant predictor. The $R^2$ was 23 percent.

**Discussion**

Multiple regression analyses showed that political opinion leadership had no significant impact on advertisement attitude and product attitude for both groups (those who viewed the advertisements with a political message and those who viewed the advertisements with a non-political message). This finding should not be generalized to the general population without caution. Many of the questions used in this study to measure one’s political opinion leadership asked the respondents how often they used the media to gain information on current political affairs. These questions may not have been as appropriate for college students as they would be for the rest of the general population; many college students may not place as much importance on keeping up with current events in the world as older adults do.
For those who viewed the advertisements with a political message, one’s agreement with the message in the advertisement was a significant predictor of his/her attitude toward the advertisement, which in turn, affected his/her product attitude. It is interesting to note that whether or not the respondents recognized or understood the message in the advertisement did not affect their attitude toward the advertisement. Also, their emotional reactions to the message measured by their feelings toward the message did not affect their advertisement attitude. This finding suggests further investigation into the roles of emotional versus cognitive reactions to advertisement messages. One possible explanation from a methodological point of view is that the respondents might have found it easier to indicate their level of agreement with the message but were not sure of how to respond in terms of the strength of their feelings.

The fact that agreement with a message was significant only for those who viewed the advertisements with a political message but not for those who viewed the advertisements with a non-political message confirms the distinct influence of a political message in an advertisement. Therefore, marketers should be aware of the negative impact of their advocacy advertising for those who do not share the same political views.

References


Conference Differences in Student Football Game Day Attire

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Key Words: football, apparel, attire, students

Under NCAA guidelines, colleges and universities are placed into three divisions (I, II, III) according to school size and number and types of sports played. Each division is made up of many conference groups, which are determined primarily by history and location. Although rules and regulations are uniform throughout, rituals, practices, and fans differ according to the country region in which the school is located. Therefore, attending a college football game becomes a cultural experience depending on where the game is played. Because clothing is a major outlet for demonstrating school spirit, it would be expected that game day attire would also differ according to region and would depend on the rituals, practices, and fans of the college/university being represented. By identifying the game day clothing habits of female college students attending Division I-A schools throughout the US, this study attempts to determine whether significant game day attire differences exist between the BCS conferences. In addition, the current study examines how college students’ game day attire is influenced by their organizational identification, perceived organizational prestige, and game participation.

Division I-A schools are divided into the following six conferences: Southeastern Conference (SEC), Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC), Big East Conference, Big 12 Conference, Big 10 Conference, and the PAC-10 Conference. Data for the current study were gathered from one school in each of the six conferences. As much as possible, larger schools with historically strong football organizations were chosen. A total of 462 female college students participated in the study (83 from ACC, 51 from Big East, 68 from SEC, 101 from PAC 10, 68 from Big 10, and 91 students from Big 12).

Organizational identification was measured by a six-item organizational identification scale developed by Ashforth and Mael (1989) and perceived organizational prestige by six questions by Mael and Ashforth (1992). Organizational prestige questions focus on perceived rivalry and social comparisons. All of these questions were measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). Game participation was measured by two questions asking about how strongly respondents tried to attend away and home games during
the regular football season. All of the three variables demonstrated high internal consistency. The six questions measuring organizational identity had an alpha of .88. The six questions measuring respondents’ perceived organizational prestige had an alpha of .70. The two questions measuring one’s attendance in football games had an acceptable alpha of .74.

A series of ANOVA was then conducted to compare the six universities for their students’ level of organizational identification, perceived prestige, and game participation. The students of the SEC University demonstrated a significantly higher level of organizational identification than those of the Big 12 University ($F = 2.77; p < .05$). The students of the SEC University also showed a significantly higher level of perceived organizational prestige than those of every other school but the Big 10 University ($F = 7.87; p < .001$). In terms of game participation, the SEC students had a higher level of participation than those of every other school except for the ACC University ($F = 18.33; p < .001$).

Factor analysis with varimax rotation was employed to capture the underlying dimensions of game-day attire. Four factors with an eigenvalue greater than one emerged. Factor 1 was named Game Day Fashion Consciousness because it contained five items indicating the student’s desire to wear fashionable and new outfits to games as well as concern for others’ perceptions of how you look and how well you fit in with the crowd at games. Factor 2 was labeled Comfort Seeking because it included three items focusing on dressing comfortably at games. Factor 3 included five items concerning the student’s interest in wearing unique clothing to games and receiving compliments on it, and therefore was called Uniqueness Seeking. Factor 4 included three items relating to wearing tattoos and body paints and dying hairs to show school spirit, and was thus named School Spirit Seeking. These four factors accounted for 59 percent of the variance.

Using a series of ANOVA the six universities were then compared for their students’ scores on the four factors of game day attire. The students of the SEC University exhibited a significantly higher level of game day fashion consciousness than those of every other school. According to the present data, the time and care taken in choosing game day attire relates positively with football game attendance, with increased attendance indicating higher fashion consciousness and an increased desire to appear unique. According to St. John (2003), college football is a major part of the Big 10, the Big 12, and the SEC conference college experience, stating that at these conferences “football is king.” The ACC university and the SEC university had the highest levels of football game day participation, respectively. Therefore, it is no surprise that students attending the two southern universities, were more conscious of their football game day attire. The students of the Big East University showed the lowest score for this particular factor ($F = 16.59; p < .001$). Rhoden (2001) describes Big East football as being weak.
Wilbon (2003) also argues that college football will never be a “religious experience” to people who live in the Northeast, indicating a lack of participation/attendance. An identical pattern was revealed for Factor 3, Uniqueness Seeking, with SEC students earning the highest score (F = 17.86; p < .001). As for Factor 2, Comfort Seeking, the students of the SEC University were least interested in wearing comfortable clothing to games, and their score was significantly lower than those of every other school (F = 81.24; p < .001). Those students who sought comfortable game day clothing were less likely to attend their college game day, with higher participation levels indicating a decreased desire to wear comfortable clothing. In terms of Factor 4, School Spirit Seeking, the students of the Big East University indicated least interest in demonstrating school spirit in their appearance (F = 6.42; p < .001). Since game day participation was one of the strongest predictors of spirit seeking clothing choices, the results of the current study are supported. Implications and limitations are discussed.

References


A Socio-Cognitive Model for the Online Decision-Making of Consumers to Adopt the Internet for Purchasing Apparel

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Key words: consumer behaviour, decision-making, adoption, Internet/online

INTRODUCTION
Due to the fact that e-tailing in developing countries, such as South Africa is in an early stage of market penetration (Goldstuck, 2002), there is a strong need for online consumer decision-making models that may help retailers to understand consumers’ online purchasing behaviour and decision-making, and to develop new marketing strategies. For marketers as advocates of change it is essential to understand the underlying reasons regarding decision-making on the Internet, to develop strategies to entice consumers to adopt the Internet for apparel purchasing, and to solve problems that consumers might have.

Foxall and Goldsmith (1994, p. 27) states that consumers’ decisions are mainly determined by the way in which consumers think, process information and use such information to reach decisions, and furthermore that consumers’ decision-making is proceeded by a series of consecutive cognitive processes. The adoption of the Internet therefore predisposes a decision where the consumer uses his/her cognitive structures to make the best possible choice. Thus the apparel consumer evaluates and judges the adoption of the Internet as a suitable medium for the purchase of apparel within his/her existing cognitive framework so as to be able to reach a rational decision. However, various researchers to date have focused more on the adoption of the technology, the Internet itself, than on online consumer behaviour or online purchase decision-making (Bobbit & Dabholkar, 2001, p. 424). According to Goldsmith and McGregor (2000) there is a shortage of research regarding consumer decision-making over the Internet. This implies that there is little theory available regarding consumer behaviour and decision-making regarding apparel purchasing over the Internet especially in South Africa.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND CONCEPTUAL MODEL
Thus the purpose of the study was to develop a conceptual model that can be used to examine and describe consumers’ decision to adopt the Internet for online apparel purchasing. A social-cognitive perspective (group of theories, which point towards cognitive processes within the individual) was
chosen as an umbrella approach for the model and Rogers’ (1995) innovation decision-making process model was used as theoretical framework to initiate the conceptual model. Social-cognitive script theory as well as clothing-consumer behaviour theory was also incorporated with Rogers’ (1995) model in order to create the conceptual model. Thus consumers’ exiting apparel purchasing practices (scripts, perceptions and expectations), the dimensions of apparel (physical and performance properties), the characteristics of the innovation (perceived risks, advantages, and compatibility with exiting scripts) were all factors that were incorporated into the model. The diffusion of innovation theory also focuses on consumers’ existing knowledge, experience and practices as well as perceptions in terms of identified risks, relative advantages and compatibility with existing practices in the adoption process (Rogers, 1995, pp. 204-234). It could therefore be employed with a social-cognitive perspective that made it possible to obtain a better understanding from the consumer’s perspective of how the consumer’s decision-making process of adopting the Internet for online apparel purchases may take place. The diffusion of innovation theory supplied in other words a framework whereby the adoption of the Internet for apparel purchases could be described and interpreted while a social-cognitive approach provides valuable guidelines for the explanation of consumer behaviour and decision-making.

“Insert G1 about here”

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research objective was explorative-descriptive in nature. The aim was to understand, explore, and describe a specific decision-making situation namely the adoption of the Internet for online apparel purchasing, rather than to find representative or replicable information about the decision-making situation. With this approach the aim was to build upon and explore the participants’ experience, perceived ideas, expectations and use of cognitive structures in making a decision to adopt the Internet for apparel purchasing. Qualitative data-collection methods were used to explore the decision-making process from the consumer’s point of view. Three in-depth, individual interviews were held on separate occasions with 8 professional women to collect data. The participants, identified through the help of informants, were selected through a purposive sampling method. Unstructured interviews according to a schedule were used during the first and second interviews held with the participants. A semi-structured interview with pre-formulated questions according to the objectives of the study was held during the third interview. A stimulus technique was used during the second interview. It entailed the participants visiting between three and five apparel web sites. The participants were interviewed about their experiences, the presentation of the apparel items, the web sites, and the online purchasing process. During the third semi-structured interview the participants were interviewed about their evaluation and assessment of apparel products. The data-analysis process suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) was followed in the study. It contained of three phases, namely the data-reduction phase, the data–display phase and the drawing of conclusions and verification of data phase. The first step was to organize the verbatim rendering of the interviews into computer files. The reduction and
organisation of the data actually entailed that the scope of the data was reduced to fit the conceptual framework. The data-display phase involved the organization, summarization, and systematic presentation of the data in order to draw conclusions. This phase involved the synthesis of the coded and analyzed data and led to the development of a new conceptual model. The comparisons, contrast, patterns and themes occurring in the findings were used to reach conclusions about the data.

RESULTS

Based on the results the initial conceptual model developed for this study was not entirely relevant and had to be revised in order to describe consumers’ decision to adopt the Internet for apparel purchasing more accurately.

“Insert G2 about here “

From the results it seemed that different aspects, not previously taken into account in the initial model, from the participants’ scripts, dimensions of apparel and characteristics of the Internet played a role during different stages of the decision-making process. The participants explicitly mentioned that they currently value certain steps, actions and procedures such as touching and scrunching textiles as well as trying on the items before deciding to buy them. During the interviews it seemed that they compared and used their existing scripts’ steps, actions and procedures to evaluate how an apparel purchasing transaction would possibly take place over the Internet. In the initial model these steps, actions and procedures that also relate to the evaluation of the dimensions of apparel were not clearly shown. These steps, actions and procedures become evident from the way in which the participants described their current apparel purchasing practices and could therefore be better conceptualized in the revised model. Participants were also able to anticipate certain risks and relative advantages regarding online apparel purchasing in the different stages of the adoption process. They were able to make specific predictions about advantages and perceived risks, which means that they used information from their previous apparel purchasing experiences as well as from what they previously had heard or read about the Internet to evaluate it in terms of its suitability regarding apparel purchasing. Postponement of the adoption of the Internet and/or rejection occurred if the Internet was not compatible with their existing apparel purchasing scripts. Participants’ adoption of the Internet for online apparel purchasing seemed evident if they associated more relative advantages with this practice and were able to incorporate it with their existing apparel purchasing practices. A comprehensive cognitive assessment regarding the use of the Internet for apparel purchasing still preceded their decision to adopt or reject the Internet for apparel purchasing.

CONCLUSIONS

The schematic model developed for this study may in other words provide a visual presentation of the course the consumer’s decision-making process takes in adopting the Internet for apparel purchasing.
The model may assist traditional clothing retailers to gain insight into the decision-making and buying behaviour of their target markets and may assist with strategies to introduce the Internet as medium for apparel purchasing to them that may result into more apparel purchasing on the Internet. More specifically the model provides further insight into consumers’ cognitive structures that underlie their Internet behaviour as well as the role the dimensions of apparel and the characteristics of the Internet play in their decision-making process. It can also serve as an instrument for e-tailers and marketers, which they can use to study consumers’ adoption of the Internet for online-apparel purchasing from the consumers’ point of view and it will provide them with a model to direct their market research and provide them with a frame of reference that makes it possible for them to view the factors and aspects that need to be taken into account in the development of their Internet marketing strategies. They could for instance use the model to develop effective web sites, promotions, products, and services customized for their target markets.

REFERENCES


Apparel Shopping in a Post-Socialist Market: Experiences of Russian Consumers

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Since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the former socialist countries in Eastern Europe, as well as several countries located in Central Asia, have been undergoing a remarkable transition to become capitalist societies. To keep pace with the new economy, consumption patterns have changed dramatically in this region (Argenbright, 1999; Levinson, 1999). The combined size of the post-socialist market constitutes roughly 420 million, making this part of the world important for further study. Even though many international companies have been entering these new markets to take advantage of the booming capitalism, little is known about the people of these countries as consumers (Belton, 2002; Manrai, Lascu, Manrai, and Babb, 2001; Money and Colton, 2000).

The purpose of this study was to investigate the attitudes toward clothing consumption in a previously centrally-planned economy’s market by identifying apparel shoppers’ preferences and the challenges they face in acquiring clothing. Several existing studies and market reviews point to the importance of clothing for these ‘new’ consumers, and particularly with respect to the novelty of freedom in appearance creation, currently experienced within the “post-socialist” milieu (Argenbright, 1999; Leonidou, 1992; Karpova and Nelson, 2004; Singer, 2002). The present research investigates the issues that young female shoppers in the Russian market encounter with respect to clothing selection and acquisition, including the information sources they use, the clothing attributes they consider important when evaluating garments, the way they prefer to spend their discretionary income, and overall shopping patterns (expenditures, frequency, store type and location). The Russian Federation was the focus of this study for two reasons. First, in comparison to other former socialist republics, this country was under Communist regime for a longer period of time, and as a result, the centrally planned economy was more entrenched in society overall. Second, it currently ranks as the largest consumer market among the transitioning economies of Eastern Europe at approximately 144 million people.

This study employs both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to address the purpose. Methods used include a survey and in-depth interviews. All data was collected at three large public universities in a metropolitan area located in western Russia. A total of 148 respondents completed the survey, and 10% of the sample (fifteen participants) was asked to participate in the interviews. Interviews were conducted in order to discover the meanings consumers attach to the concepts important to understanding shopping behavior (McCracken, 1988). Open-ended questions about participants’ shopping experiences were used to allow the participants to express their opinions and perspectives on the subject in their own words rather than choosing from a list of categories pre-determined by the
researcher. For example, this methodological approach has already helped to discover that Russian consumers attach a somewhat different meaning to the clothing comfort, or why the quality of garments is so important for post-socialist shoppers (Huddleston, Good, and Stoel, 2000; Leonidou, 1992; Singer, 2002).

In present study, participants reported that they place more importance on media information sources than interpersonal communications when getting ideas about what clothing styles to buy. Among clothing attributes, style, color, and quality were perceived as crucial characteristics of the garment. On the other hand, brand and country of origin were found to be among the least important factors in making a purchase decision. Several major challenges faced by apparel shoppers in the Russian market were identified. Among them were poor selection of styles and limited range of sizes available in the market (particularly, categories like petite, tall, or plus sizes), lack of middle-priced apparel and overall low quality of the merchandise in the market.

The findings of this study shed light on the attitudes and needs of apparel shoppers in a post-socialist market, as well as the problems these consumers face when shopping for clothing. In addition, the results of this research fill a gap in knowledge about the ways that a transitioning social system impacts consumer behavior. This knowledge is important for international apparel marketers and retailers who want to succeed in this dynamic marketplace.

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Analysis of Internet Buyers’ Behavior by the Product Types; Experience and Search Goods.

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Key words: consumer, purchase, repurchase, product, theory,

The purpose of the study was to examine those individuals that completed an Internet purchase by the product type they have purchased. Nelson classified the goods into two types, search and experience goods, by the products' attribute in nature (1970). Search goods require less direct examination and are therefore perceived as less risky to buy online as opposed to experience goods where customers want some assurance of quality, color, and construction. The exploratory study examined the differences between the experience goods buyers and search goods buyers by demographical and sociological environment and Internet experience. Also Internet buyers’ attitude, intention and behavior on the Internet shopping were examined through items comprised to consumer and marketing factor. The comparison was made research framework based on Fishbein and Ajzen’s “Belief, attitude, intention and behavior theory” (1975), Nelson’s goods classification and a comprehensive literature review.

Profiles of both of the experience and search goods buyers were developed. Significant differences in gender, marital status, income, and number of credit cards hold were found. Experience goods buyers bought more products and spent longer time and had higher intention to continue while search goods buyers need straight forward process check out, clear store structure for easy finding the product and had an intention to repeat their most recent Internet purchase.

Results of the study suggest that successful e-tailers will respond to the individual needs of each group if they desire to make the existing purchaser to repeat their purchasing behavior. Internet retailers should provide detailed product description, such as feature description, 3D vision on model, enlarged view, alternative view and consumer’s post purchase comments to attract experience goods buyers as well as ample visual presentations of merchandise. Retailers should also provide an enjoyable atmosphere in order to make Internet shopping advantageous over other retail outlets.

Reference:


Information Components of Apparel Retail Websites: Task Relevance Approach

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Key Words: Apparel, Information, Internet, Retailing

As e-retailing grows, website information is a part of service that determines success or failure of e-business. Information on websites facilitates Internet shopping and enables Internet shoppers to achieve shopping goals. Prior research has shown that information availability and content are key aspects of website quality (Santos, 2003) and determinants of Internet service quality (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, & Malhotra, 2002). Despite growing interest in website quality, little is known about e-tailers’ actual performance in terms of providing relevant information that facilitates Internet shopping. According to risk theory, the act of searching for information is positively related to consumers’ perceived risk of buying from the Internet (Chen & He, 2003). Based on risk theory, our exploratory study was conducted to investigate how extant e-tailers perform in providing information components relevant to Internet shopping tasks.

Prior research (Eroglu, Machleit, & Davis, 2003; Childers, Carr, Peck, & Carson, 2001) conceptualizes website information components as high or low in task-relevance. High task-relevant information facilitates utilitarian shopping motives and enables consumers to achieve shopping goals, whereas low task-relevant information enhances the hedonic value of shopping, attracting consumers to the site. Although information with different task-relevance may accommodate different shopping motivations, task-relevant information components may be more essential than task-irrelevant information. Voss (2003) outlined a hierarchy of services in e-retailing: some services serve as a foundation for additional services. Thus, an understanding of task-relevance of website information components and e-tailers’ performance in providing them can provide useful knowledge for both researchers interested in website or e-service quality and retailers who can use this information to develop improved retail websites. In this study, three research questions were developed: (RQ1) How do customers evaluate task-relevance of information on retail websites?; (RQ2) How do e-tailers perform in providing relevant information on their websites?; and (RQ3) Do differences in performance in providing and high and low task-relevant information exist across different types of e-tailers?

Survey methodology was used to examine RQ1 and a content analysis of apparel retail websites was conducted to examine RQ2. Types of information available on websites were modified from previous work (Kim, Kim, & Lennon, 2005); 52 information components were identified. 107 undergraduates rated the task-relevance of each information component on scales ranging from (1) not relevant at all to (7) highly relevant. Based on a median split of mean ratings of the task relevance of information components, information components were coded as high (n=27) or low (n=25).
researchers analyzed information components from 108 apparel retail websites selected from 3 Internet apparel directories (24Hour mall.com, ApparelResources.com, and Yahoo! Directory). Information was coded as unavailable (0) or available (1), but for some components, the number of information pieces was counted (e.g., number of company contact information pieces). Inter-rater reliability was .92.

The 10 most task-relevant information components were price, product photo, return policy, payment options, large view, order status tracking, in-stock status, size chart, shipping options, and close-ups (all Ms > 6). The 10 least task-relevant information components were email to a friend, wish list, membership information, international shipping, email service, alternative item suggestion, Internet store credit card, FAQs, video presentation, and gift wrap (all Ms < 4). Content analysis of apparel retail websites found that the availability of high and low task-relevant information varied regardless of task-relevance. For example, while in-stock status information ranked 7th on task-relevance, it was only available on 61 websites (56.5%). However, email ranked 48th on task-relevance and was available on 95 websites analyzed (88%).

To examine RQ3, the 108 apparel retail websites used in the content analysis were categorized as follows: 44 were store e-tailers (e-tailers with physical stores), 32 were multi-channel retailers (e-tailers with stores and catalogs), 17 were catalog e-tailers (e-tailers with catalogs), and 15 were pure e-tailers. For each website, frequencies of all (1) high and (2) low task-relevant pieces of information were summed, respectively, and used as indicators of availability of (1) high and (2) low task-relevant information for that website. High numbers indicate that more information components were available on websites. One-way ANOVA revealed that significant differences exist among different types of e-tailers in terms of their provision of task-relevant information components. For both high and low task-relevant information components (both ps < .0001), catalog e-tailers provided the most information, followed in order by multi-channel retailers, store e-tailers, and pure e-tailers. Tukey tests showed that catalog e-tailers and multi-channel retailers did not differ in providing high or low task-relevant information components; all other pairs significantly differed in their performance in providing information.

Findings provide evidence of the success of catalog e-tailers and multichannel retailers (e.g., Retail Forward, 2003), who provide information that meets utilitarian (high task-relevant) and hedonic needs (low task-relevant). The poor performance of pure e-tailers in providing both types of information components may explain why many pure e-tailers struggle with their e-tailing business. Given the critical impact of information on success in e-tailing, e-tailers need to pay more attention to information on their websites. Our results are based on perceptions of task-relevance of information components. Therefore, this study provides information that e-tailers can use to develop websites that successfully attract shoppers to sites by providing low task-relevant information components and also enable shoppers to accomplish their shopping tasks by making high task-relevant information available.
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Chen, R., & He, F. (2003, August). Examination of brand knowledge, perceived risk and consumers’ intention to adopt an online retailer. *TQM & Business Excellence, 14*(6), 677-693.


Consumer Online Retailer Patronage Behavior Model:

Impact of Image Interactivity Technology on Consumer’s Perception of Store Environment

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Hyun-Hwa Lee, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH 43403

Keywords: Interactivity, virtual model, online retailer, patronage behavior

Online apparel retailers have adopted various ways to enhance consumers’ online shopping experience such as close-up pictures or zoom-in function, detailed product attribute information, size chart, and mix-and-match functions. One of the most innovative features to enhance the consumer shopping experience is an image interactivity technology (IIT) named, “the 3-D virtual model.” The purpose of this study was to examine the influences of this IIT feature on consumer’s perceptions of store environment, shopping enjoyment, shopping involvement, a desire to stay and patronage intention. We developed a conceptual model predicting positive relationships between the level of IIT, store environment perception, shopping enjoyment, shopping involvement, and approach response variables based on a mall patronage behavior model developed by Wakefield and Baker (1998) and the previous empirical findings in store image and atmospherics literature.

Two hundred and six college students provided usable responses in a between-subjects experimental study. Seventy-four percent were female and ninety-five percent were between the ages of 18-25 years. One stimulus treatment included the basic IIT features of an apparel online retailer (i.e., thumbnails to enlarge product images), whereas the other treatment also had a virtual model for trying on apparel products in various combinations. Participants were randomly assigned one of two treatments Web site and after viewing and interacting with the Web site they fill out the questionnaire. Pretest using ten undergraduate subject responses about ImaginariX.com products, confirmed the acceptability of the styles as stimuli for the sample. To measure the online store environment variable, we modified three design and two layout items used by Wakefield and Baker (1998). We used six items to measure shopping enjoyment and five items to measure shopping involvement, both adopted from Personal Involvement scale (Zaichowsky, 1985). To assess desire to stay and patronage intention to an online store, we modified items from Wakefield and Baker (1998) and Fiore and Jin (2003). We also created items to gather demographic information (e.g., age range, gender, major). Structural equation modeling was employed to test research hypotheses and a proposed theoretical model.

The analyses of causal models were conducted by a maximum-likelihood estimation procedure using Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) version 4.0. The results of causal model analysis obtained for the proposed conceptual model revealed a chi-square of 1.11 with 1 degree-of-freedom ($p = .29$).
The GFI was 0.99; AGFI of 0.96; and RMSR was 0.006. The fit indices indicated that the hypothesized model fit the data very well (Kline, 1998). Figure 1 displays the results of the causal analysis, including significant standardized path coefficients and t-values for each relationship as well as squared multiple correlations ($R^2$) for each endogenous construct.

*Insert Figure 1 about here*

All hypotheses except one were statistically supported. Hypotheses 1 through 5 examined the effects of experimental treatment, the level of image interactivity of merchandise presentation, on shopping enjoyment, store environment perception, shopping involvement, desire to stay, and patronage intention. We expected to see significant differences in all endogenous variables due to the difference between two treatment stimuli—high and low IIT provided by the retail Web site. Results showed that level of image interactivity had a significant positive effect on shopping enjoyment (H1), store environment (H2), shopping involvement (H3), desire to stay (H4), and patronage intention (H5). As we hypothesized, consumer’s perception of online store environment exhibited a positive impact on shopping enjoyment (H6) and shopping involvement (H7). In addition, the proposed positive influence of online store environment on the desire to stay at the site (H8) received support. Results revealed that the proposed positive relationships between enjoyment and the desire to stay (H9), shopping involvement and the desire to stay (H11), involvement and patronage intention (H12) received support, whereas a positive relationship between enjoyment and patronage intention did not receive support (H10: $\beta_{11} = .07$, $t = 1.13, p = .257$). Finally, Hypothesis 13, proposing a positive relationship between the desire to stay and patronage intention, received support.

*Insert Table 1 about here*

The decomposition of effects analysis (Table 1) showed that our proposed conceptual model explained a substantial amount of variance for both patronage intention ($R^2 = .76$) and desire to stay ($R^2 = .64$). For patronage intention, store environment had the strongest indirect effect (.56), followed by the level of image interactivity (.40), and desire to stay had the strongest direct and total effect (.84). All predictor variables had significant direct and/or indirect effects on patronage intention, except shopping enjoyment (.07). This result suggests that the impact of shopping enjoyment on patronage intention might be mediated by the desire to stay. The significant indirect effect of shopping enjoyment on patronage intention (.17) supported this possible explanation.

We contributed to the field by proposing and testing a conceptual model of consumer patronage behavior in the online retailing environment. In addition, no empirical study investigated the effects of a 3-D virtual model for apparel products selling over the Internet. The present study extends the scope of empirical studies of the IIT features from previous ones (Fiore & Jin, 2003; Li, Daugherty, & Biocca, 2003). The findings of this study yield important insights and implications for online retailers and marketers. Online apparel retailers may adopt this higher IIT, a 3-D virtual model, not only to enhance
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Figure 1. A final theoretical model of consumer online retailer patronage behavior.
Notes: Standardized path estimates are reported with t-values in parentheses.

An insignificant path is indicated by a broken line.

All hypotheses except one were statistically supported. Hypotheses 1 through 5 examined the effects of experimental treatment, the level of image interactivity of merchandise presentation, on shopping enjoyment, store environment perception, shopping involvement, desire to stay, and patronage intention. We expected to see significant differences in all endogenous variables due to the difference between two treatment stimuli—high and low IIT provided by the retail Web site. Results showed that level of image interactivity had a significant positive effect on shopping enjoyment (H1), store environment (H2), shopping involvement (H3), desire to stay (H4), and patronage intention (H5). As we hypothesized, consumer’s perception of online store environment exhibited a positive impact on shopping enjoyment (H6) and shopping involvement (H7). In addition, the proposed positive influence of online store environment on the desire to stay at the site (H8) received support. Results revealed that the proposed positive relationships between enjoyment and the desire to stay (H9), shopping involvement and the desire to stay (H11), involvement and patronage intention (H12) received support, whereas a positive relationship between enjoyment and patronage intention did not receive support (H10: beta 51 = .07, t = 1.13, p = .257). Finally, Hypothesis 13, proposing a positive relationship between the desire to stay and patronage intention, received support.

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Table 1. The results of decomposition of effects analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Total Effects</th>
<th>Indirect Effects</th>
<th>Direct Effects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shopping involvement</td>
<td>Level of IIT</td>
<td>.31*</td>
<td>.10*</td>
<td>.21**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Store environment perception</td>
<td>.44**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.44**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping enjoyment</td>
<td>Level of IIT</td>
<td>.47**</td>
<td>.09*</td>
<td>.38**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Store environment perception</td>
<td>.39*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.39*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to stay</td>
<td>Level of IIT</td>
<td>.45*</td>
<td>.26*</td>
<td>.19**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Store environment perception</td>
<td>.60*</td>
<td>.17**</td>
<td>.43*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shopping enjoyment</td>
<td>.20*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.20*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shopping involvement</td>
<td>.21*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.21*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patronage intention</td>
<td>Level of IIT</td>
<td>.29*</td>
<td>.18*</td>
<td>.11**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Store environment perception</td>
<td>.56*</td>
<td>.56*</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shopping enjoyment</td>
<td>.24*</td>
<td>.17*</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shopping involvement</td>
<td>.36*</td>
<td>.18*</td>
<td>.18*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Desire to stay</td>
<td>.84**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.84**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Standardized path estimates are reported. * p < .05; ** p < .01

might be mediated by the desire to stay. The significant indirect effect of shopping enjoyment on patronage intention (.17) supported this possible explanation.
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References


Effectiveness of Managerial Responses to Stockouts on Consumer Response

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Key words: stockouts, Internet, shopping

Stockouts, the temporary unavailability of products, are prevalent both online and offline (ACNielsen, 2000). Evidence suggests that the adverse impact of stockouts goes beyond the short-term losses of sales and extends to the more detrimental long-term impact such as lowered patronage intention (Zinn & Liu, 2001). Despite its prevalence and critical implications for retailers, many retailers lack an understanding of the damaging impact of stockouts on their business and also lack knowledge of how to strategically manage stockouts when they occur. In addition, while industry continues to report persistent retail stockouts, there has been little academic research investigating antecedents and consequences of stockouts, especially with theoretical insights. Most prior stockout research is primarily descriptive and lacks internal validity due to research methods. In order to fill a gap in the literature on stockouts, the study was designed to advance knowledge of the stockout phenomenon in both a theoretical and practice sense through a 2-part of study. As a theoretical piece, study 1 investigated consumer response to stockouts in online apparel shopping. Results of study 1 demonstrated the underlying process by which stockouts influence consumer response: (1) stockouts elicit negative emotions in consumers because of a discrepancy between consumer expectation of product availability and actuality of stockouts; (2) negative emotions aroused by stockouts depressed consumers’ perception of store image and also lowered decision satisfaction; (3) negative emotions reduced behavioral intent, and (4) perception of store image and decision satisfaction mediated the impact of negative emotions on behavioral intent. While study 1 focused on theoretical aspects of the stockout phenomenon, study 2 had more practical goals. The purpose of study 2 reported in this paper was to examine the effectiveness of managerial responses in mitigating the adverse impact of stockouts. Although the most ideal situation for both retailers and consumers is not to have stockouts, in reality, occasional stockouts are likely to occur. Therefore, how to manage stockout situations when they occur is a critical and realistic issue to address.

Based on Mandler’s discrepancy-evaluation theory of emotion (Mandler, 1984), one research question was developed for this study: How effective are different managerial responses to stockouts in mitigating the adverse impact of stockouts on consumer responses? The context of this study was online apparel shopping because stockouts are more likely to occur in online apparel shopping due to characteristics of apparel (i.e., unpredictable demand, short product life cycle) and of the online channel (i.e., less investment in inventory). Due to a lack of prior research to suggest potentially useful
managerial responses to stockouts, the pretest was conducted to guide the development of potential managerial responses. Forty-five female undergraduate students participated and reported what they would do under a hypothetical stockout situation. These responses were content analyzed using the unit of a “mention” (a phrase used to describe a participant’s behavioral reaction to stockouts). Mentions (N=99) were content analyzed and 4 potential managerial responses were developed: standard (The item is out of stock), substitute (This item is out of stock. Would you like to consider other items similar to this item?), backorder (This item is out of stock. Would you like to backorder this item?), and financial response (This item is out of stock. But we can offer you a 10% discount on any items you purchase from us).

To examine the effectiveness of the 4 managerial responses on reducing the negative impact of stockouts, a simulated online shopping web experiment was conducted using a mock apparel website. The design of study was a between-subjects experimental design with 1 factor (managerial response: standard, substitute, backorder, or financial). After browsing 10 pretested apparel items, all participants (1) selected 4 items they would consider buying, (2) evaluated the selected items on style, color, fabric, and fit, and (3) selected 2 final items to buy. After selecting the 2 final items, all participants experienced stockouts of both items they chose and received one of the 4 managerial responses. Participants then completed a questionnaire. To enhance the realism of the study, participants were told that some randomly selected participants would receive the item they choose during the experiment or a gift certificate.

College women (N=234) participated in the simulated online shopping web experiment (mean age=21). MANOVA was used to examine the effectiveness of managerial response on mitigating consumers’ negative responses to stockouts. The independent variable was managerial response and dependent variables were negative emotion, store image, decision satisfaction, and behavioral intent. For post-hoc comparisons, Tukey’s test was performed. Results of the study revealed that there was a significant multivariate main effect for managerial response on consumer responses to stockouts, $F (12,600) = 17.31, p < .001$. Subsequent ANOVA showed that managerial response had a significant effect on negative emotion, perception of store image, and behavioral intent (all $ps < .0001$). Tukey’s post hoc comparisons indicate that managerial response had a significant effect (1) on negative emotion because people who received any response other than a standard response experienced less negative emotion, (2) on store image because people who received a financial response perceived a more positive store image than others; and (3) on behavioral intent because people who received a financial response showed a greater behavioral intent than others. For both perceptions of store image and behavioral intent, people who received a financial response significantly differed from people who received any of the 3 other responses. No differences were observed among those receiving the 3 other responses.

Results indicate that the effect of managerial responses was significant in that regardless of what retailers offered, any evidence suggesting that retailers care about consumers in stockout situations was
effective in alleviating negative emotion aroused by stockouts. Results further indicate that provision of a financial response only alleviated the negative impact of stockouts on perceptions of store image and behavioral intent. However, substitute and backorder responses mitigated negative emotions, but had no effect on store image perceptions or behavioral intent. Results provide evidence to suggest that online retailers can reduce the adverse impact of stockouts on their business by strategically managing stockouts. Online retail environments make it relatively easy to implement frequent price changes without adding costs. Retailers may provide price discounts when an item is out of stock, and then change back to full price when it is in stock again. Although financial compensation for stockouts is effective in mitigating negative effects of stockouts, retailers should be cautious. Financial compensation may have a positive impact on demand, but reduce profits in the long run. Future research should strive for greater generalizability by including diverse consumers, product types, and shopping channels. Future research also needs to examine the long-term impact of stockouts beyond the short-term impact examined in this study.

References


Exploring Model of Information Search Behavior for Online Clothing Purchases: Cross-National Differences between American and Korean Consumers

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Judith C. Forney, Ph.D. (University of North Texas, Texas, USA)

Keywords: Clothing, Evaluative Criteria, Information Search, Online

Introduction

The Internet is a new communication tool that offers retailers opportunities for expanding in a global market or entering a completely new market area (Harrison-Walker, 2002; Tian & Emery, 2002). Apparel e-retailing continues to grow size and importance as increasing number of consumers buy online. For online shopping, consumers rely on numerous information sources to evaluate and search experiential products, such as clothing (Bei, Chen & Widdows, 2004). The Internet information search eventually leads to online apparel purchases (Watchravesringkan, 2003). Therefore, understanding how consumers’ approach information searches can help in developing integrated marketing communications for e-marketing management in domestic as well as international markets. The purpose of this study was to (1) investigate the importance of evaluative criteria and information search in online purchasing for clothing and (2) explore the path model of information search behavior among evaluative criteria, information search and online purchase intention for clothing for American and Korean consumers.

Methods

A self-administered questionnaire included measures of the importance of evaluative criteria, use of information sources, and online purchase intention when online shopping for clothing. A seven rating scale was used for the importance of evaluative criteria (1= very unimportant to 7 = very important) and information search and online purchase intention (1= very unlikely to 7 = very likely). Two countries (the United States, Korea) were selected. As a newly industrialized country, Korea is a potential market for international e-retailing due to advanced IT industries as well as increasing numbers of imported apparel brands.

Generation X and Y mainly including college students represents global online consumers across nations because they are Internet savvy and exposed to instantaneous communication via the Internet, (Aldenm Steenkamp, & Batra, 1999). Therefore, the sample of this study included a total of 253 Anglo American
and 211 Korean undergraduate students enrolled at major university in each country. The age of American sample ranged from 18 to 29 years of age (M=21.9). Korean sample ranged from 18 to 30 years of age (M = 23.6). The sample Both samples were slightly more female students (56.9% for the United States; 56.4% for South Korea).

Preliminary data analysis included factor analysis using varimax rotation to identify underlying dimensions of evaluative criteria and use of information sources. A t-test determined differences between the U.S. and Korean samples. Path analysis identified the causal relationships among evaluative criteria, use of information sources and online purchase intention for clothing by using LISREL 8.53. Overall model fit was assessed by statistic indexes, including Chi-square, goodness of fit index (GFI), adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI) and root mean square residual (RMR).

Results

Evaluative Criteria and Information Search: Consumer’s evaluative criteria with online shopping for clothing consisted of six factors: Aesthetics, Incentives, Transaction Services, Security, Brand and Price (Cronbach’s alpha = .75 to .93). The most important evaluative criterion was price (M=5.67), followed by security (M=5.31), aesthetics (M=5.31), transaction services (M=4.89), incentives (M = 4.29) and brand (M =4.21). Compared to American consumers, Korean consumers considered aesthetics, incentives, transaction and price as more important when purchasing clothing products via the Internet. For online shopping, information search consisted of three factors: Web-based search, other retail search including displays in stores and manufacturers’ catalogs and pamphlets, and mass media search, accounting 75 percent of total variance (Cronbach’s alpha = .82 to .86). Consumers were more likely to use store displays and catalogs (M = 3.98) than web-based sources (M=3.32) and mass media (M =3.08) when purchasing clothing products online. Also, cultural differences existed for mass media search between American and Korean consumers (t=2.11, p <.05). This finding suggested that Americans tended to rely more highly on mass media (e.g., magazine, radio, newspaper, TV) as an information source when purchasing clothing products than did Koreans.

Path Analysis Results: In a proposed path model, the three information searches and online purchase intention for clothing served as dependent variables (Y1 to Y4); six factors of evaluative criteria served as independent variables (X1 to X6). For online shopping in clothing products, it showed a recursive model among three information sources based on maximum modification indexes. Therefore, we added the path from retail search to web-based search (β12), mass media search to web-based search (β23), and mass media search to retail search (β3).

The U.S. Model: For the American sample, the path analysis revealed that the χ² value of 6.38 was not significant (df = 6, p=.38) and other model fit indexes were valid within an acceptable range (GFI = .99,
AFCI = .95, RMR = .013). As illustrated Figure 1, evaluative criteria significantly affected information search, and information search led to online purchase intention for clothing. Specifically, the aesthetics were related significantly to the web-based search ($\gamma_{11} = .23, p < .01$). The incentives also were significantly related to web-based search ($\gamma_{12} = .17, p < .01$) and mass media ($\gamma_{32} = .30, p < .001$). However, American consumers were more likely to rely on retail search for price information ($\gamma_{26} = .15, p < .05$), which encouraged online purchase intention for clothing.

The recursive model of information search indicated that mass media search significantly affected retail search ($\beta_{23} = .56, p < .001$); mass media search strongly affected web-based search ($\beta_{33} = .43, p < .01$); and other retail search affected web-based search ($\beta_{22} = .15, p < .05$). This implies that American consumers are likely to rely on multiple information sources when clothing shopping by the Internet. The retail search ($\beta_{22} = .18, p < .05$) and web-based search ($\beta_{41} = .24, p < .01$) also significantly led to online purchase intentions for clothing.

**Goodness of Fit Statistics:**

\[
\text{Chi-square } = 5.87 \text{ (df=5, } p = .32)\
\]

The Korean Model: For Korean sample, a path analysis model revealed that the $\chi^2$ value was 4.45 (df = 6, $p = .62$), and other indices suggested that the path model is valued to be accepted (GFI = 1.00; AGFI = .94; RMR = .016). As illustrated in Figure 2, four factors of evaluative criteria (i.e., aesthetics, incentives, transaction services, and brand) significantly affected information search. For Korean consumers, the importance of aesthetics positively related to other retail search ($\gamma_{12} = .18, p < .05$), which are not leading to online purchase behavior. This reflects a limitation of online shopping for experiential products. Incentives were related to mass media search ($\gamma_{32} = .18, p < .05$) and web-based search ($\gamma_{12} = .18, p < .05$). Brand positively affected mass media search ($\gamma_{35} = .29, p < .01$) for online purchases of clothing. In the evaluation processing for incentive and brand, mass media search also indirectly led to the online purchase intentions for clothing. However, Korean consumers were less likely to use mass media for searching the transaction service ($\gamma_{33} = -.24, p < .01$).

In addition, there were causal relationships between mass media and other retail search ($\beta_{23} = .53, p < .001$) and between mass media search and web-based search ($\beta_{41} = .17, p < .05$). For Korean online consumers, only web-based search directly affected intention to purchase clothing by the Internet ($\beta_{44} = .33, p < .001$).
Figure 1 Path Model of American Consumers’ Information Search for Online Clothing Purchases

Figure 2. Path Model of Korean Consumers’ Information Search for Online Clothing Purchases

Goodness of Fit Statistics:

\[ \chi^2 = 4.45 \text{ (df=6, p = .62)} \]
Discussions and Conclusions

This study explored the path model of information search behavior including evaluative criteria, use of information sources and purchase intentions in an online shopping context. The study provides insights to e-marketers for developing e-marketing strategies for clothing products. In the information search model for clothing, online consumers considered selected attributes including aesthetic, incentives, and price or brand when making a purchase by the Internet. This finding implies that consumers use simplified information processing when making a choice online. Especially, economic attributes, such as incentives or price are most critical to consumers to actively engage in information processing, which leads to making a purchase via the Internet. Therefore, e-retailers can create incentive programs to capture new customers or to retain existing customers on their shopping sites—especially given that online apparel consumers tend to bookmark their favorite sites and revisit them for information search as well as for multiple transactions.

Apparel retailers can develop global markets using Internet-specified advantages such as wide access to customers, high interactivity, small geographic distance barriers and lower marketing cost. From a cross-national perspective, brand and incentives are critical attributes to encourage consumers’ intentions to purchase clothing online. For Korean online consumers, apparel e-marketers should emphasize multi-channel concepts with a strong brand image for Korean online consumers. Also, for international e-marketing, incentives including first-time buyer discount and reward programs for frequent customers will not only sustain e-loyalty, but also convert a newcomer who visits the site only to seek information into becoming a regular customer. Compared with the U.S. market, mass media plays an important role as a commercial tool for establishing apparel brand perception. This may make it easier for retailers to distribute their products on websites in Korean market.

Further research should extend to global consumers with different geographic, ethnic or cultural attributes. Also, it is recommended that online consumers are segmented based on the benefits of online shopping offers when purchasing clothing, because it may be associated with different customer behavior, profiles, and therefore market strategies.

Reference


Hedonic Shopping Motivations and Evaluation of Store Attributes

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Keywords: Hedonic, shopping motivation, store attribute, consumer

Traditional research on shopping motivations examines shopping from a product acquisition, rational, or task-oriented approach (e.g., Batra and Ahtola, 1991; Babin, Dardin, and Griffin, 1994). However, through the years, researchers have directed attention to the emotional aspects of shopping (e.g., Bloch and Richins, 1983). The hedonic aspect of shopping has been documented and examined in many ways: excitement, arousal, joy, festive, escapism, fantasy, adventure, etc. (e.g., Babin et al., 1994; Bloch and Richins, 1983). Recent works clearly recognize the importance of both hedonic motivations in explaining shopping behavior (Babin et al, 1994; Childers, Carr, Peck, and Carson, 2001).

Evaluative criteria are part of the buyer decision process in which consumers apply criteria in evaluating purchase alternatives that influence their selection. The criteria is generally based on attributes consumers may seek from the products they buy or the stores they shop (Williams and Slama, 1995). Research has suggested that evaluative criteria may vary based on a variety of factors including purchase situation (Dickson, 1982), involvement level (Gensch and Javagli, 1987) and amount of purchase experience (Bettman and Sujan, 1987). Evaluative criteria can be used to better understand how specific purchasing situations influence brand choice and store selection.

The purpose of this study was to examine how hedonic shopping motivations influence consumer preference for store attributes. Preferred stores attributes when shopping for two different types of apparel categories: dress clothing and casual clothing are studied.

Method

Sample. A questionnaire was administered to undergraduate students enrolled in courses at a university located in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. Two-hundred and ten (70 male and 140 female) students completed the questionnaire. Students were enrolled in fourteen various undergraduate courses. The students represented approximately 40 different majors at the university. No one student group from a particular major represented more than 15 percent of the sample. The sample ranged in age from 18 to 29 years (median = 20 years).

Study Measures. Hedonic shopping motivation was measured by adopting an 18 item six-factor scale developed by Arnold and Reynolds (2003). Items were measured on a 7-point scale (1 = “Strongly Disagree”, 7 = “Strongly Agree”). Principal component analysis with oblimin rotation suggested four factors consisting of a combined factor for motivations adventure, gratification, and idea...
(which was renamed “stimulation” to represent the character of the combined items) and individual factors for role, value, and social. The cumulative variance extracted was 78 percent. Reliability statistics (Cronbach’s alpha) for the variables ranged from .89 to .95.

Preferred store attributes when shopping for dress clothing and casual clothing were measured by partially adopting items developed by Van Kenhove and Waterschoot (1999) and Williams and Slama (1995). Sixteen items were measured on a 7-point scale (1 = “Not Important at All”, 7 = “Very Important”). Results from principal component analysis with oblimin rotation suggested four factors consisting of brand and store prestige, customer service, value prices and merchandise selection, and accessibility. The cumulative variance extracted for dress clothing was 69 percent and casual clothing was 71 percent. Cronbach’s alphas for store attribute variables ranged from .68 to .91.

Data Analysis and Results

Multivariate tests using GLM procedures showed no significant main or interaction effects for gender. Preference for brand and store prestige was explained by the hedonic shopping motivation of stimulation (p<.001) for dress clothing. For casual clothing, preference for brand and store prestige was explained by the hedonic shopping motivations of stimulation and value (p<.001). Also, price value and merchandise selection were explained by value (p<.001) for both dress and casual clothing. Results suggest that store attributes preferences may differ when shopping is motivated by a sense of adventure, self gratification, and discovery. Interestingly, value was also a shopping motivator that impacted preference for brand and store prestige when shopping for casual clothing. Also, results confirmed consumers who are searching for bargains or deals are more likely to prefer stores that offer wide product assortment and value prices.

Reference


Use of Fashion Discourses as a Mechanism to Understand Young Korean College Women’s Social Identity Construction

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Key words: fashion discourse, social identity, social network, cultural ideology

It has been a common belief that people from Eastern cultures are collectivist and people from Western cultures are individualist. However, because of the growing global market, it appears that members of the younger generation from a country with a traditional collectivist society, such as Korea, are changing their values slowly from a collectivist to an individualist view. Therefore, it is timely to carefully examine young Korean consumers in reference to a contemporary Korean social context. The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the contributions of cultural ideology and social networks to the formation of social identity using fashion discourse as the unit of analysis.

Using Thompson’s and Haytko’s (1997) seminal work on the use of fashion discourse as a means for identifying one’s social identity as its theoretical foundation, this paper focuses on how fashion discourse is generated among a group of young Korean women. According to Thompson and Hyatko (1997), studying shared consumption discourses such as those on fashion through consumers’ conversations in everyday life, can provide valuable information about the cultural meaning transfer processes, the social diffusion of cultural ideologies through consumption meanings, and the social structuring of consumer belief systems within social groups.

In-depth interviews were conducted with four Korean female exchange students studying at a Midwestern research university about their shopping behaviors and other shared life activities with their Korean peers. For purposes of this study, the following research questions were posed: How do fashion discourses reflect cultural ideology and social networks of Korean college women? How do cultural ideology and social network influence construction of social identity among a group of young Korean women? How do fashion discourses reflect formation of social identity among a group of young Korean women?

Analysis of the data is based on two interviews with two groups of Korean college women and one participant observation of two Korean college women’s shopping behavior. Using the protocol for verification of the content elicited from the in-depth interviews (Sayre, 2001), the researcher accompanied two of the four students on a shopping expedition in order to observe the behaviors and record the conversation, which were later transcribed for use in data analysis. In-depth Interviews were structured by a general set of predetermined questions asking participants about their shopping experiences and their perception of fashion.
A content analysis of the interview data revealed that Korean college women are particularly conscious about how they present themselves in public and are heavily influenced by their peers in terms of their fashion choices. The following themes were identified both through content analysis and participant observation.

1. **Group conformity and individuality.** Group conformity was the most common theme found throughout the interviews. Young Korean women are likely to follow the most recent trend styles even if those trends are followed by many others.

   *Jennifer:* Click’s formed during freshman orientations. Generally people who think alike become friends. However, sometimes people with similar class schedules become friends as well. Whatever reason a group is formed people inevitably change. In the beginning, they have their own unique style but the more they become involved in each others’ styles, their styles gradually merge.

2. **Friendship.** It was found that the four Korean college women often form friendships based upon appearance. The students tend to think that those who dress as they do share the interests. Gift giving seemed to be an important ritual among the Korean women as well. They often give gifts of fashion related products to their friends as a group on birthdays. It also appeared that there are different ties among friends. These Korean women seemed to have formed different groups of friends subject to their surroundings, frequency of contacts and shared activities. The more frequent the contact these women have with an individual, the greater the influence of the other person on dress. Group activities include eating together and going to movies but do not include shopping. Most of the girls like to shop either by themselves or with one of their friends who shares the same taste in clothing.

   *Interviewer:* Do you think those who are really concerned with fashion influence their friends?

   *Jennifer:* In high school when you meet your friends everyday in the same classes, we might be influenced by each other a lot. The friends I knew in high school, whom I don’t see very often these days because we go to the different universities. We see each other about once a month so even she dresses really nice I don’t get influenced by her.

   *Na-Young:* Even I get along with my college friends; I tend to hang out with friends from my neighborhood. If you live in the same neighborhood, you tend to have the same background. So we tend to dress similarly. I am influenced by those friends from my neighborhood rather than my college friends.

   *Interviewer:* So you have the same style as your neighborhood friends?

   *Na-Young:* Yeah, almost.
3. Clothing Styles: from informal to formal. The Korean college students thematically referred to three different kinds of clothing styles during the in-depth interviews; casual, semi formal, formal. The interviewees associated casual style with comfort, convenience and being practical. Semi-formal styles are combined styles of the casual and semi-formal look. The Korean women’s use of formal styles in the discourse related to skirts, “dress up” and suits are most often worn by seniors preparing for a job interview. It is interesting to note, as the college students advance to a higher level, their styles change from casual to more formal.

Jennifer: Freshman, sophomore, junior and senior they are all different in a certain way. For example, freshman when they first enter university they prefer to maintain a so called ‘campus look’ like cotton pants with knit shirts and wearing loose backpack. When they become sophomores, they start to wear tighter pants with high heels. When they become juniors and seniors people start to wear suits a lot. Seniors wear suits the most often

4. Social networks. Four different social networks (peers, senior hierarchy, and parents) were identified from this study. It appears that peer pressure is the prominent force among Korean college women influencing them to buy the most expensive luxurious brand products and contribute to group conformity. Sometimes more advanced college students put pressure on younger students to wear certain clothes.

Jung-Hwa: Many sciences major are male. Even females who are majoring in science end up dressing like boys. In majors comprised of mostly females, like education and nursing, they have their own style. For example, nursing students have their own t-shirt and jacket with their logo on it. They get lot of pressure from seniors to wear them.

Interviewer: You mean everyday?

Jung Hwa: No just on those special occasions like ‘game’ day. They design their t-shirts and jackets for those days. Failure to comply with the ‘dress code’ results in being isolated from the group.

Parental influence seemed to be divided. One of the Korean women is encouraged to go shopping or buy a certain brand by her parents. The three other woman hesitate to go shopping with their parents because they are unable to compromise with their parents about their different fashion opinions, especially design styles, quality and prices.

Interviewer: Do you go shopping with your mom?

Na-Young: Going shopping by myself is most convenient, but it depends on an individual’s mom. When one’s mother is really stylish and who knows popular trends well, she would pay for...
the outfit without hesitation. However, if one’s mother is not like that at first she is shocked by the price and says things like “I can’t believe this little thing cost this much.”

Jennifer: (laughing). Yeah that’s right. To be honest I have a certain style I like to wear but my mom doesn’t understand that. For example, while coat shopping with my mom, I wanted to get a coat with a slim waist and a more adult look. When I told my mom what I wanted to have, my mom said “Jennifer, I think this one looks too lady like. I prefer you get one with a more typical student look.” I consider myself a lady. I think college students are adults.

5. High end luxury goods. Another common theme was the significance of high end luxury goods. High end luxury goods seemed popular among the young Korean women and it seemed to be a symbol to fit into their peer group and public displays. Carrying a high end luxury handbag and accessories became a symbol for wealth, social status and fashion consciousness. Money as a topic of conversation focused on high end luxury goods. Young college women like to buy cheaper high end luxury goods and some work hard just to get the high end luxury goods. Display of high end luxury goods seemed more important than style. Some girls wouldn’t mind carrying an outdated handbag as long as it is a high end luxury good. They would choose brand name over their personal taste of style. Both money and high end luxury goods are one of the big motivations for shopping.

Interviewer: you mentioned about some girls working hard to afford luxurious brand name products; how much do they make usually from these part time jobs?

Jennifer: A common part time job is tutoring. They typically make about 300 -400 thousand won ($250-330) per month. Most of my friends work as tutors for junior high or high school students. Some have more than one part time job. Working three different jobs, you can earn about 900 thousand won ($750) per month.

Interviewer: How much does a luxurious name-brand hand bag cost in Korea?

Jennifer: Price varies a lot. If they buy a well- known brand within a student’s price range, it costs them about 300-400 thousand won ($250-330).

Na-Young: But those college girls don’t buy luxurious brands like wealthy housewives do. They buy older fashions or cheaper alternatives to the current fashion. For example, they will buy a tiny Gucci hand bag as opposed to larger versions that career women carry. College girls will buy the most luxurious brand in the lowest price range.

6. Stronger Peer influence among female students. Most of the interviewees explained that all the themes listed above are more extreme in surroundings where there are mainly women, such as women’s universities or majors where there are more female students than male students.
Jung Hwa: I went to a coed university while one of my neighbors went to a women’s university. Although she is the same age as me, she dresses differently than me. I wore t-shirts and jeans when I was a freshman along with the other freshman I knew. As Jennifer mentioned earlier our ‘campus look’ style was practical and comfortable. But this girl who went to a women’s university dressed differently than we did. One day I saw her wearing high heels, stockings a suit skirt and a French coat. She was also carrying a luxurious name-brand hand bag with no books in her hand. If she had books with her it was only for looks.

Discussion. From this analysis, talking about fashion among young Korean college women is reflective of Korean cultural values such as social hierarchies, Confucian ideals and gender expectations that are characteristic of Korean people. These young Korean college women’s fashion discourses provide some insight as to how Korean women situate themselves within Korean society. It is assumed that young Korean women use fashion to present themselves in a sophisticated way in public because they are highly conscious about how they look to others. The importance of social norms, which is one of the characteristics of Korean culture and peer group influence, might explain why the young Korean women expressed that that they were highly self consciousness in public. Awareness of fashion trends and fashion innovation conformity by these young Korean women can also be explained by media and peer group influence which are a part of the Korean social network. This group of young Korean women provided evidence that leads to further questions about social networks and cultural ideology influence on the young Korean women’s social identity construction process. It is also understood that existing within an extremely homogenous ethnic group can drive young Korean women to seek individualistic and unique styles in order to be distinguished from others. Therefore, the influence of social networks and cultural ideologies can explain the existences of both individual and collectivistic characteristics (group conformity) of young Korean women.

Reference:


Shopping for Apparel Products – Wait-Time and Mass Customization

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Key Words: Wait-time, shopping, customization

To streamline the product pipeline, to reduce waste in the industry, and to provide improved product marketing to consumers, mass customization is proposed as a new way of preparing and presenting products to consumers (e.g., Anderson-Connell, Ulrich, & Brannon, 2002; Loker, 1999). Although team sewing, modular production methods, UPS systems, and automation procedures have shortened time from product concept to product delivery, mass customization requires that the consumer be willing to wait for the product. Wait-time on product delivery for this new system is obviously much longer than the instant purchase that is possible with an in-store purchase.

Retailers and manufacturers need to understand better the shopping process of consumers who seek clothing purchases through mass customization. Research about mass customization has examined consumers’ preferences for and willingness to use mass customization (e.g., Anderson-Connell, Ulrich, & Brannon, 2002; Fiore, Lee, Kunz, & Campbell, 2001). These researchers conclude that additional work is needed to explore further the consumers’ experiential involvement with mass customization. Previous models of shopping behavior suggest that experiential involvement with shopping includes the variables of product classification, situational usage, and in-store activities, which potentially impact the purchase decision of consumers (e.g., Gehrt & Yan, 2004; Hooman & De Maeyer, 2004; Moye & Kincade, 2002; Shim & Kotsiopulos, 1992). This study investigated what influences the time that consumers are willing to wait for mass customized products.

The research employed the survey research method. A questionnaire was developed from the literature using variables shown significant in previous research: product classification, situational usage, and in-store activities. The measurements for the study were derived from the 44 close-ended questions with Likert–scale and multiple-choice questions in the questionnaire. The final sample including men and women, ages 18 to 65, resulted in 111 usable questionnaires. Data was collected through the cluster group selection method using a purposive selection of clusters. Data analysis was performed using analysis of variance (ANOVA).

Subjects were asked about their purchase of and their willingness to wait for various products including sneakers, panties, and suits. Time to wait for a desired product varied from 1-2 days (54.05%) to 5-7 days (0.90%). For example, when desiring to purchase new panties, the subjects reported wait-times of 1-2 days (46.85%), 3-4 days (15.32%) and 5-6 days (1.80%). Over one-third (36.04%) of the subjects
reported that they were unwilling to wait and wanted the product in store inventory immediately. Although time to wait varied, product classification showed no significant relationship to time to wait.

The situational variable or reason to go shopping included the following three reasons: to buy apparel, for entertainment, and to see what is new. No significant relationship was found between the situational variable (i.e., primary reason to go shopping for the product) and the time to wait variable. While shopping in-store, consumers perform a number of activities including handling the product, examining the variety of assortment, and trying on the product. Subjects reported their trying on activities for selected products. For example, the subjects reported trying on one to six pairs of sneakers, 78.18% to 2.73% respectively. The in-store variable was not significantly related to the wait-time reported by the subjects.

Although mass customization appears to be an answer to some of the domestic industry problems, the consumers’ shopping behaviors may not be compatible with this process. For example, among consumers who were willing to wait, the majority of consumers were willing to wait only 1-2 days. Except for rare instances, this time frame would not allow for cutting, sewing, and delivery for most products.

For some products, trying on the product seems to be an essential activity prior to purchase. For example, all subjects reported trying on at least one pair of sneakers. Mass customization has limited capacity within the system to allow for trying on products. Although body scanning and 3-D graphics allows for visualization of the product on the body, consumers may desire other factors for analysis when trying on the product. To continue to computerize and streamline the manufacturing and shopping process, future research should investigate why consumers try on products and what benefits they receive from this process.

References


Cosmetic Purchasing Behavior Differences Depending on Make-up Preference Image

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Key words: Make-up, Purchase behavior, On-line, Off-line

Clothing and make-up reflect females’ characters and the images they intend the most effectively. As the modern costume culture becomes more of “total-fashion,” most females select clothes and the matching make-up to unify their images. People are getting more interested in make-up because of its ease of change and more flexibility of coordination. With its various aesthetic elements, the make-up has been changing as a form of costume.

Although, there have been numerous researches on the cosmetics and the purchasing behavior, there have not been appreciable amount of research on females’ cosmetic purchasing behavior reflected by their make-up preference images. Therefore, this study investigates the followings.

Discrepancies in the selection of stores both on-line and off-line influenced by the make-up preference images.

Discrepancies among the selection of stores both on-line and off-line.

This study contains experimental work. For the experimental work, questionnaires prepared by the author and her advisor were used to collect data. The collected data were analyzed by using SPSS 10.0 software with various techniques such as ANOVA test, Duncan test, Paired t-test. Also, other techniques such as factor analysis and Cronbach’s α reliability analysis that use principal component analysis and Varimax orthogonal rotation were used.

The questionnaires were given to female residents in the ages between 20~45 in Seoul and Kyung-gi province during October 2004. 332 questionnaires were used for data analysis.

The results are summarized as follows:

The factors that influence the off-line selection of the cosmetic stores were determined to be promotional services, personal service, shopping convenience, price, product composition, and display. It was found that there were significant discrepancies in the personal service, shopping convenience, and product composition. The personal service was considered important by the graceful, chic, natural, modern, and youthful make-up preference image groups. The shopping convenience was considered important by the modern make-up preference image group and it was also considered important in the graceful and chic groups. The product composition was considered important in selecting the off-line stores by the modern make-up preference image group. It was also considered important by the
romantic and chic groups. However, it was considered less important by the natural make-up preference image group. The factors that influence the selection of the on-line cosmetic stores were determined to be buying process service, customer management service, product composition, price, and membership management. After investigating how the make-up preference image influences the selection of the on-line store, it was found that only the product composition had significant discrepancy. The product composition was considered important in selecting on-line cosmetic stores by the modern make-up preference image group but less important by the natural group.

It was found that the personal service is considered the most important. After studying the factors that influence the on-line store selection, it was found that the price was considered most important. Following the price, the customer management and the buying process service, which are unique factors to the on-line store selection, were considered important. Considering the even distribution of scores for the factors that influencing the selection of both on-line and off-line cosmetic stores, it can be concluded that people take into various factors when choosing cosmetic stores both on-line and off-line. In general, the scores on the on-line store selection are slightly higher than those of the off-line factors. It indicates that people are more considerate in choosing on-line cosmetic stores than off-line ones.

This study on influence of make-up preference images on cosmetic purchasing behavior will provide more insight to planning cosmetic advertisement and cosmetic marketing.
Effects of Ethical Philosophy on Perception of Unethical Clothing Shopping Behaviors: A Comparison between U.S. and Korean Consumers

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Key words: ethics, behavior, comparison

Purpose of the Study

In recent years, there has been increase awareness of unethical consumer practices. Shoplifting is an example of unethical consumer shopping behavior in the apparel market. It has been reported that there are more than 200 incidents of shoplifting each year in the U.S., and retailers spends billions of dollars to prevent shoplifting (Berman & Evans, 2000; Cox, Cox, & Moschis, 1990). How consumers perceive unethical shopping behaviors may affect their actual apparel shopping behaviors. Consumer’s perceptions of the morality of certain shopping behaviors likely influence their actual practices. We were particularly interested in whether perceptions of these shopping behaviors varied between two groups—Korean and the U.S. which represents different cultures as well as different retail setting.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine and compare the effects of consumer’ ethical philosophy toward unethical clothing shopping behavior in the U.S. and Korea.

Theoretical Framework

Moral viewpoints vary between individuals. As a result, the perception of the goodness or badness of a shopping behavior can differ depending on the ethical viewpoint held. To examine whether consumers’ ethical viewpoints effect perceptions of the morality of certain shopping behaviors, we utilized Forsyth’s (1980) Ethical Position Questionnaire (EPQ). It measured individual’s ethical judgment by two continuums: relativism and idealism. Relativism refers to “the extent to which individuals reject universal moral rules” (p. 175). Idealism refers to the extent to which individuals believe that “with the right action, desirable consequences can always be obtained” (p. 176).

Methods

Convenience samples of undergraduate students enrolled at large universities in a metropolitan area in the U.S. and Korea were recruited for this research. Questionnaires were distributed during class. Ten items of idealism and ten items of relativism were used to measure participants’ ethical philosophy. Twenty eight various shopping behavior adopted from Shen & Dickson (2001) were used to participants’ assessments of unethical clothing shopping behaviors.
The data were collected via survey. The questionnaire was developed based on previous research (Forsyth, 1980; Shen & Dickson, 2001). Questionnaire was first developed in English. In order to translate in Korean, double translation procedure was used. First, the questionnaire was translated in Korean by a professional translator. Then, the translated questionnaire was translated back to English by another professional translator. Finally, this double translated version was compared with the original English questionnaire.

For data analysis, frequencies, factor analyses and regression analyses were used.

Results

A total of 208 U.S. participants completed the questionnaire. Among these 208 participants, 193 responses were usable for data analysis (12 = male; 181 = female). A total of 242 Korean participants completed the questionnaire. Among these 242 participants, 230 responses were usable for data analysis (22=male, 208=Female).

Reliability analyses for Forsyth’s EPQ in this study obtained a coefficient alpha of .81 for relativism and .83 for idealism.

Factor analysis using principle component methods revealed five factors on consumers’ perceptions concerning unethical clothing shopping behaviors, and these were: aggressive unethical behaviors, passive unethical behaviors, return related unethical behaviors, try-on related unethical behaviors, and purchasing related unethical behaviors. Cronbach’s alpha coefficients for the five scales ranged from .82 to .60.

Regression analyses with five unethical behaviors as dependent variables and independent variables including idealism, relativism, nationality, age and sex. The major findings were:

Participants ethical philosophy (idealism, relativism) was a significant predictor for the perceptions of unethical clothing shopping behaviors: 1) For aggressive unethical behaviors, idealism, relativism and sex were significant predictors; 2) for passive unethical behaviors, nationality, idealism, relativism, and sex were significant predictors; 3) for return related unethical behaviors and try-on related unethical behaviors, nationality and idealism were significant predictors.

In general, the idealism has more significant impacts on participants’ perceptions of unethical clothing shopping behaviors than the relativism.

The impact of ethical philosophy was more significant for the U.S. participants’ perception of unethical clothing shopping behaviors than Korean ones: While individualism was a significant predictor of return related unethical behaviors for the U.S. participants, no significant predictor was found for Korean sample.
References


Effects of Fashion Advertisements on Consumer Attitudes in Mobile Commerce

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With the recent spread of Internet and development of many kinds of digital technology, there is a rapid increase in the demand for mobile commerce (Duitel et al., 2001). Due to the special characteristics and constraints of mobile devices and the wireless network, the emerging mobile commerce operates in an environment very different from e-commerce conducted over the wired Internet. Mobile commerce may have many more alluring market chances than e-commerce because of its inherent characteristics such as ubiquity, personalization, flexibility, and transferability (Gosh & Swaminatha, 2001). Likewise, mobile commerce might emerge as a major focus of the business world in the future. Thus, consumers are expected to see more various mobile advertisements, with the great increase in m-commerce market; that is, new shopping culture. Although researchers (e.g., Vershney & Vetter, 2001) have asserted the critical importance of mobile commerce market, to date very little research has focused on the effect of mobile advertisements. Also, despite such rapid growth of mobile fashion market, there are few studies on mobile fashion advertisements. Therefore, the purposes of this study were to examine effects of (1) types of mobile fashion advertisements and (2) types of fashion products on consumers’ advertisement attitudes, brand attitudes, and purchasing intention.

For this purpose, a 2 by 2 factorial between-subjects experiment was conducted. The independent variables were type of mobile advertisements (text-based ‘push’ advertisement vs. image-based ‘pull’ advertisement) and type of fashion products (clothing vs. fashion accessory). Dependent measures were consumers’ evaluations of advertisement attitudes, brand attitudes, and purchasing intention (all Cronbach’s alpha >.90). Three hundreds college female students participated in the study. Ages of the subjects ranged from 18 years to 27 years with a mean age of 24 years. For instruments, advertisements attitudes and brand attitudes (Holbrook & Batra, 1987) were used for this study, with a 7-point Likert scale. For data analysis, descriptive statistics, Factor analysis, MANOVA, and ANOVA. As a result, there were significant multivariate main effects for ‘type of advertisement’(TAD) and ‘type of products (TPR) on the dependent variables. Univariate analyses of variance were used to determine which of the dependent variables were affected by TAD and TPR. Type of advertisement had significant main effects on both advertisement attitudes and purchasing intention, but not on brand attitudes. Pull advertisement was rated higher than push advertisement for those variables. Also, type of products affected advertisement attitudes, brand attitudes, and purchasing. That is, clothing advertisement was rated higher than accessories advertisement for three variables.

These results imply that image-based fashion advertisements are more effective than text-based ones in mobile commerce. Also, clothing advertisements are found to be more effective than accessory ones in m-commerce. Thus, mobile fashion marketers may need to provide image-based advertisements, and to
use apparel items such as casual wear for consumers. These findings would benefit mobile marketers in understanding consumers’ attitudes and purchasing intentions. In addition, it would contribute to the development of a more rigorous methodology for researching mobile advertisement in a variety of countries globally. Though there remain a great number of technical, regulatory, and social challenges to overcome for further development, it is possible that mobile devices will continue to develop and functionally in a global marketplace of mobile commerce.

Reference


Gendered Perception of Fragranced Textile Products

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Keywords: gender, scent quality, attitude, behavioral intention

Introduction

Use of scent has been tried by an increasing number of merchandisers and retailers as a crucial technique to differentiate products and retail environments (Strugnell & Jones, 1999). Although fragrances are being used to a wide range of consumer products including food, cosmetics and fashion items in the real market, little research examined the effect of scents on attitude toward and buying behaviors of the fragranced products.

Textile products such as apparel and fashion accessories tend to arouse mid- to high-involvement among consumers (Jensen, Carlson, & Tripp, 1989), which is known to be appropriate in examining the scent effect on purchase intention (Spangenberg, Crowley, & Henderson, 1996). Gender is often found to be very influential in involvement in apparel products (Browne & Kaldenberg, 1997). Women are generally more involved in fashion and textile products than men (Slama & Tashchian, 1985). Hedonic value is important in shopping for fashion items (Floch, 1988), as well as scent applied to products (Jain & Srinivasan, 1990) and thus men and women may exhibit different responses to fragranced textile products.

The present study explores effects of diverse scent qualities on attitude toward and buying intention of scented products. Especially, differences of scent quality perception and association with approach-avoidance responses by male and female gender groups will be investigated. Results may contribute to adding knowledge of which scent quality more significantly influence on consumers’ approach-avoidance responses by gender in the given condition.

Literature

Prior studies exploring the effects of ambient and product scents have focused on only a few scent qualities in scent perception judgment. Most of prior researchers concerned pleasure as a key quality of scent handling it as a single variable in scent perception judgment (Knasko, 1989; Teerling, Nixdorf, & Koster, 1992). Other researchers concerned an intensity nature (Spangenberg et al., 1996) and a congruency concept (Fiore, Yan, & Yoh, 2000) for scent quality judgment. There were more studies dealing with a congruency dimension of scent (e.g., Mitchell, Kahn, & Knasko, 1995). Familiarity was another scent quality that was concerned as a key driver of human responses in the psychology field (Ayabe-Kanamura et al., 1998).
Prior researchers examined the effect of each scent quality on consumers’ approach-avoidance responses toward scented products or products in ambient scents. Many researchers recognized relatively positive relationships between scent presence and approach responses since appropriately used scents are successful in stimulating smellers’ moods, resulting in positive evaluations on the scented object or object in the scented environment (Baron, 1990).

Gulas and Bloch (1995) recognized that demographic differences including sex and age could be existed in scent perception since demographic factors could affect smelling sensitivity, scent preference, etc. Generally, women are considered as superior in odor identification to men (Strugnell & Jones, 1999) and more involved in fashion and textiles (Gainer, 1993). Therefore, there may be a difference between male and female consumer groups on perception on scent qualities and in the kinds of scent qualities affecting attitude toward and buying intention of products.

Methods

In order to empirically test gender differences in scent qualities a web survey was conducted. Sampling and data collection were handled by a highly recognized company specialized in the web survey. Consumers who have experiences in use or purchase of scented textile products were invited to participate in the study. In results, a total of 530 responses were submitted to data analysis.

Four scent qualities generated (pleasantness, intensity, familiarity and congruency) from the existing literature were measured by three five-point semantic differential bipolar scales for each scent quality. Measures for each scent quality were adopted from previous research in part (Ayabe-Kanamura et al., 1995; Brauchli et al., 1995). Following Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), each scent quality score was multiplied by the importance weight of each quality measured for scented textile product shopping. One five-point highly agreeable/highly not agreeable bipolar scale was used for attitude toward and buying intention of fragranced textile products.

A structural equation modeling with four scent qualities as exogenous variables and attitude and buying intention as endogenous variable was used for empirical study. Each item measuring scent qualities were the indicators for the latent variables. For the gender difference, t-test and simultaneous group analysis using LISREL were conducted.

Results

Overall, the pleasantness dimension showed the highest level of scent quality scores across the two gender groups. The mean difference results showed that there were significant gender differences among levels of each scent quality. Men were significantly favorable to the intensity dimension of scent quality (t=−2.90, p< .01). Women, however, showed a significantly higher congruency scores (t=2.52, p< .05). There were no significant gender difference in pleasantness and familiarity. Although no gender
difference was found in attitude toward fragranced textile products, men showed a significantly higher level of buying intention than women ($t=-2.11, p<.05$).

According to the structural equation modeling, a direct path from pleasantness on buying intention was suggested. Simultaneous group analysis revealed gender differences of scent effects on attitude toward and buying intention of scented textile products. Chi-square comparison among nested models proved that the scale (measurement model) was invariant across the two gendered group. Overall, pleasantness was the strongest influencer in forming positive attitude toward ($\gamma_{women}=0.58, t=7.6$; $\gamma_{men}=0.39, t=4.9$) and buying intention of ($\gamma_{women}=0.16, t=3.2$; $\gamma_{men}=0.24, t=4.6$) the products for women and men. The major gender differences of scent dimension effect on attitude were found in intensity, familiarity and congruent dimensions. For female consumers, intensity ($\gamma_{women}=0.12, t=2.0$) and familiarity ($\gamma_{women}=0.13, t=2.3$) had significant positive effects on attitude whereas for male consumers, both quality dimensions were not significant factors. Interestingly, congruency showed a negative influence on attitude among female consumers ($\gamma_{women}=-0.16, t=-2.1$) but no significant effect on attitude among male consumers. The relationship between attitude and buying intention was stronger for female consumers and the direct relationship between pleasantness and behavioral intention was stronger for male consumers.

Conclusion

This study explored the effects of scent qualities on attitude toward and buying intention of scented products and the effect of gender in this process. Though pleasantness was considered as the most important scent quality dimension in evaluation of scented textile products by both gender groups, gender difference was found in evaluating intensity and familiarity. Women were more generous in scent congruency whereas men were more favorable to scent intensity while evaluating scented textile products. Based on results, practitioners may be able to meaningfully consider appropriate intensity for males and proper congruency for females when developing scented products in the given categories, taking into consideration of consequence of scent pleasantness for both genders. Also, males presented more buying intention than did females though two genders were not different in attitude toward scented textile products. It supports the notion that the willingness of new product adoption is depended upon the extent of the marketing effort, suggested by Mowen & Minor (1998).

In results of structural equation modeling, gender difference was found in effects of scent quality dimensions on attitude toward and buying intention of scented textile products. Pleasantness was the most important influencer on attitude and buying intention for both genders, confirming the significance of hedonic value of scented products (Engen, 1982). Other three dimensions of scent quality were significant influencers on attitude toward the scented textile products (congruency: significant negative influence) only for females. This results support previous findings that females tend to be more interested in shopping for fashion (Cox & Ditter, 1995) and consider more diverse factors in developing
perceptions of products than did males when reflecting on a large portion of textile products comprised of fashion items. Product developers and marketers may want to consider intensity, familiarity, congruency of scents when they select appropriate scents for textile products, in addition to pleasantness which should be dealt as a core quality.

References


The Differences of Hedonic and Utilitarian Consumers’ Intention to Purchase Organic Products: Examination of Behavioral Intentions Model

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Keywords: Hedonic, Utilitarian, Quality, Organic

Consumer demand for organic products increased rapidly during the 1990s. Between 1990 to 1999, production of organic products’ continually increased about 25 percent per year in the US and the EU. Retail sales in the US of organic foods is currently increasing at an annual rate of over 20 percent, amounting to $6.5 billion in sales (Janoff 1999). Even though the sales trend of organic products is increasing, the retail market share for organic products is relatively small, from one to two percent of grocery sales in USA, Europe, and Japan in 2000 (World Trade Organization 2002). According to ACNielsen’s research (Anonymous 2002), one-third of consumers have purchased organic products in the past six months and 85 percent of them plan to purchase organic products again. Compared to this group, only three percent of the rest of consumers who have not purchased organic products in the past six months plan to purchase organic products in the future. These results show that even though the organic market is growing, it is still niche and the main customers are highly loyal to organic products. Since organic purchasers are highly loyal consumers, organic retailers should focus more on this consumer group. In order to examine consumers’ buying intention of organic products it is necessary to look at how consumers collect information about the product quality prior to, during, and/or after shopping/consumption. The aggregated information and experiences relating to the product determine consumers’ perceptions about overall quality. These beliefs and evaluation of a product finally affect purchasing behavior.

Behavioral Intention Model

Ajzen and Fishbein explained the relationship between attitude and behavior in his behavioral intention model (1980). The authors emphasized that a person’s behavioral intention (i.e., intention to purchase an organic product) may explain his/her behavior and that there are two underlying factors. The first is an attitude toward a specific behavior, which is influenced by a person’s beliefs and the evaluation of the behavior. That is, this attitude is not towards the product but towards the contemplated behavior of a person’s salient beliefs in relation to the product. The other factor is the subjective norm, which is influenced by the beliefs from the expectations of an important reference group and one’s own motivation to comply with that reference group. In other words, a person attempts to follow the action that others who are important to him think he should follow. Therefore, the beliefs of a person’s reference group (concerning a specific action), have an important influence on behavior. This model consists of five constructs: behavioral intention (BI), attitudinal component (Aact), subjective norm (SN),...
interaction of beliefs and evaluation of a person’s perception of a behavior (B×E), and the interaction of normative beliefs and motivations to comply (NB×MC). A person’s attitudinal component (Aact) and the subjective norm (SN) affect behavioral intention (BI). The attitudinal component (Aact) consists of summation of the interaction of a person’s beliefs and evaluation of a perceptual behavior. The subjective norm (SN) consists of summation of the interaction of a person’s normative beliefs of a reference group and the person’s motivation to comply. A consumer’s beliefs and evaluation of organic products, the consumer’s normative beliefs of a reference group, and the person’s motivation to comply with such beliefs will be explained further (see Figure 1).

Determinants of Organic Buying Intention

Studies have investigated the factors relating to the growing interest in organic products in terms of consumers growing concerns about health, safety, nutritional values, and protection of the environment (i.e., Jolly and Norris 1991). These studies concluded that organic product purchasers consider health oriented criteria (i.e., pesticide and preservative use, overall nutritional quality, and non-genetically produced) as the most important reasons in their decision to purchase organic products. Concerns of potentially hazardous effects on their health and on their families’ health have influenced them to become aware of chemical- and pesticide-free grocery products. Some other studies have also indicated a high level of concern for the environment as another contributing factor in the willingness to purchase organically produced products (i.e., Wilkins and Hillers 1994). These studies indicated that consumers’ altruistic sense of protecting the environment and the welfare of animals could explain willingness to purchase organic grocery products. Also consumer perceptions that organically grown products have better taste and more nutritional value was found to increase consumer tendency to purchase organic products (i.e., Jolly and Norris 1991). These hedonistic oriented criteria, such as freshness and flavor, are considered as another important criterion when buying organic products. Since organic consumers’ beliefs of organic products are significantly different from non-purchasers’ main barriers, these differences will be investigated further with consumers’ hedonic/utilitarian shopping orientations.

Hedonic vs. Utilitarian Consumer Characteristics

Historically, consumers’ purchasing behavior has been explained based on economic rationality. In other words, consumers behave on the rational basis of maximizing cost and benefit evaluations. Such explanations, however, have left some questions, such as why some consumers display apparently irrational purchasing behavior. Consumers make purchasing decisions based not only on maximizing product utility, but also on other motivational reasons (Tauber 1972).

Many researchers have explained such motivational reasons of purchasing behavior in terms of intangible hedonic variables (i.e., Hirschman and Holbrook 1982). According to Hirschman and Holbrook (1982), hedonic consumption is defined as “the multisensory, fantasy, and emotive aspects of one’s experience with products” (p.92). A consumer’s sensory experiences with a product, such as its taste,
scent, feel, sound, and look are stored in the consumer’s mind, and those five senses construct the consumer’s fantasy image about the products. More recently, hedonic and utilitarian concepts have been studied in relation to their shopping behaviors. Babin, Darden, and Griffin (1994) conceptualized the difference between hedonic and utilitarian shopping variables. Similar to the concept of utilitarian and hedonic buying decisions, utilitarian shoppers try to maximize the utility of shopping, especially regarding time and effort, while hedonic shoppers enjoy the shopping activity for its own sake. Since utilitarian shoppers are conscious about keeping a balance between shopping time and selecting products, they feel the whole process of shopping should be done rationally and efficiently. To them, shopping is accomplished work, to improve utilitarian shopping value, consumers must save time and/or reduce effort by engaging in goal-directed behavior that is instrumental, purposive, and task-specific. In contrast, hedonic shoppers feel that shopping is a fun and enjoyable activity; shopping fulfills their hedonic motivations. Also hedonic consumers enjoy shopping to achieve social interaction with others (Deci and Ryan 1987) or to achieve smart ego-involvement feeling while shopping process (Feick and Price 1987) or self-enhancement motivation (Babin et al. 1994). Due to hedonic consumers spend more time for shopping, they are more involved with product information than utilitarian consumers and read newspapers or magazines than utilitarian shoppers do (Bellenger and Korgaonkar 1980).

Perceived Product Quality: Intrinsic/Extrinsic & Search/Experience/Credence

Consumer quality perceptions are defined as intrinsic and extrinsic cues (Olson and Jacoby 1972). Intrinsic cues are the product’s physical attributes which are inherent to the product such as flavor, taste, and color. Extrinsic cues are related to such elements as price, promotion, and packaging, and can be changed without changing of products. Consumer evaluation about products quality comes from the perceived quality and this is further divided into search, experience, and credence quality attributes (Darby and Karni 1973). To evaluate a product, consumers need to learn about the product attributes which are often obtained while shopping. However, there are some product attributes which cannot be obtained before use of the product and these are known as the experience attributes. Credence attributes are those which cannot be evaluated even after purchase.

Based on search, experience, and credence attributes, organic products’ intrinsic and extrinsic cues can be categorized as in Table 1. “Insert Table 1 about here.”

Consumers are able to evaluate organic products’ color and appearance without spending time or effort before shopping, thus, these are intrinsic search cues. As extrinsic search attributes, price and brand name are examples. Intrinsic experience attributes of organic products are taste, smell, and nutritional values. Generally, these intrinsic attributes can be obtained only after purchase. Health and safety attributes of organic products are referred to as intrinsic credence cues. No pesticides or not genetically modified organic products’ attributes cannot be evaluated by consumers, even though these are physically inherent to the organic products. Finally, as extrinsic experience and credence cues, we
consider all altruistic issues, which are involved with organic products. Usually, consumers may not be able to evaluate whether the products are environmental friendly produced even though they were marketed and purchased based on their classification as organic products. Several researchers mention that due to these organic products’ attributes, buyers depends on reputation of the retailer as confirmation that the product is genuinely organic (i.e., Bech-Larson 2000).

Conceptual Framework

Based on previous literature and Ajzen and Fishbein’s (1980) behavioral intention model, this current study develops propositions of purchaser/non-purchaser’s beliefs and attitudes toward organic product buying intention. “Insert Figure 1 about here.”

High-priced organic products may not be viewed as alternatives for the conventional grocery products and this is the biggest barrier for non-purchasers. However, previous surveys found that health/safety issues, environmental concerns, and hedonic attributes are strong determinants for buying organic products. Hence, we assume that these beliefs about organic products are stronger factors for organic buying intention than normative beliefs of reference.

P1: Consumers who have intentions to purchase organic products are more strongly affected by attitudinal beliefs rather than subjective norms.

Since hedonic shopping oriented consumers are those who enjoy the hedonistic features of products, have strong self-enhancement motivations, and are more involved with shopping and product information, organic products’ experience and credence attributes may attract this segment of consumers more than search attributes. Probably, hedonic shoppers enjoy acquiring the knowledge about issues involved in organic products and this leads them to be involved with ‘buying green’ products. Thus, among organic purchasers, hedonic shopping oriented consumers are more influenced from experience or credence attributes than search attributes.

P2a: Consumers hedonic shopping orientation positively influences their beliefs of experience and credence attributes.

Compared to hedonic shopping oriented consumers, utilitarian oriented consumers want to spend their time, effort, and monetary value efficiently. Their consideration on other activities rather than shopping leads them to evaluate products efficiently in their shopping. Evaluating products based on the search attributes are easy and efficiently accomplished in their shopping trip. Thus, we assume that among organic purchasers, utilitarian shopping oriented consumers are more influenced from search attributes than experience or credence attributes.

P2b: Consumers utilitarian shopping orientation positively influences beliefs about organic products’ search attributes.
Since hedonic shopping oriented consumers enjoy social interaction more than utilitarian consumers, they also rely more on what others think about organic products. Family, friends, sales people, or media information regarding organic are considered effective marketing foci for the hedonic shoppers. Thus, we assume that in the comparison of hedonic and utilitarian organic purchasers, hedonic consumers may be affected more strongly by normative beliefs of their reference group than are utilitarian consumers.

P3: The effect of normative beliefs on subjective norm are stronger for hedonic shopping oriented consumers compared to utilitarian shopping oriented consumers.

Based on the results of this study, retailers may understand what organic product attributes encourage/discourage consumers purchasing intention. Since organic purchasers are highly loyal consumers, organic retailers should focus more on this consumer group. For targeting hedonic oriented consumers, retailers try to promote products’ experience and credence attributes. Also, showing how family, friends, and other people are benefited from organic products may attract additional hedonic consumers. To attract utilitarian consumers, it is desirable to provide easily comparable and informative labels about organic products’ search attributes. Such information may help the utilitarian consumer to minimize shopping time and effort and this further leads them to have efficiently accomplished shopping job.

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Using the Dialogue Method to Cultivate a Global Perspective

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Keywords: Dialogue Method, Global Citizen

It is imperative that students in undergraduate textile and apparel programs be educated with a global mindset, or “an appreciation that the overlays of many perspectives enrich and expand human understanding” (McIntyre-Mills as cited in van Gigch, 2002 p. 384). These future industry leaders must be responsible global citizens, ones who consider issues from a cultural, social, political, environmental, and economic framework and build a holistic understanding of complex problems facing the textile and apparel industry.

Cultivating a global citizenship perspective in undergraduate students will require development of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that encourage critical evaluation and discussion of tough issues. Such ethical reasoning and intellectual ability is necessary “to live effectively in a world possessing limited natural resources and characterized by ethnic diversity, cultural pluralism, and increasing interdependence” (Gilliom, 1997, as cited in Taylor, 1998, p. 1, para. 3).

For the purposes of this presentation it is important to clarify the authors’ working definition of the global citizen concept as one who understands the multidimensionality of issues involving the interaction between humans and their environment and one who is responsible for ethical conduct and/or practice promoting the well-being of the world community. To aid student development in achieving global citizenship competency, a new method for discussion, a dialogue technique, was used in a graduate level course. This method could easily be used in undergraduate courses in a variety of content areas.

The dialogue technique was chosen over a more traditional debate format for several reasons. A debate encourages a competition where one side “wins” over the other. A dialogue technique, however, is useful when “debating” an issue with many perspectives, and not one right solution. This technique encourages an open-minded discussion of key points and sharing of personal viewpoints. It encourages listening, not persuading. Thus, it takes the learner from a narrow viewpoint into a more holistic discussion format where by listening and building on each other’s ideas, they arrive at a richer understanding of the issue. There are two ways to share ideas:

You can try to convince the others and win them over to your idea. That requires power and good negotiation strategies. In linguistic terms, this is called a ‘debate’ or a ‘discussion’. But you can also put your idea before others and stimulate them to bring in ideas, in the hope of improving on the first idea. This is the dialogue method. According
to writers on business management the first approach is more used, but the second give
better results (van Ruler, 1999, para. 11).

With this in mind, an assignment was developed in a graduate level fashion theory course to
foster a holistic understanding of the various impacts of a fashion culture. The assignment had
two student learning outcomes: (1) to deepen knowledge and understanding of fashion
theory/fashion change process and to prepare the student to participate in a dialogue discussing
the benefits and dangers of a fashion culture; (2) to participate as a team in a dialogue or round
table discussion regarding impacts (negative and positive) of fashion on individuals,
organizations, society, and culture.

The assignment had three phases. In Phase 1 students were required to complete a review
of literature related to the benefits (or dangers) of a fashion culture, from one fashion perspective
(i.e., psychological, sociological, cultural, economical, political, environmental). The review
was to provide a clear purpose statement and propositions supported by the literature reviewed.
Phase 1 was an individual assignment, whereas Phase 2 required a team effort. In Phase 2 each
team developed a dialogue plan based on a synthesis of the independent literature reviews
completed. The plan was to have a strong introduction in paragraph form with a clear and
relevant purpose statement that highlighted the plan of action for supporting the team’s
perspective (fashion’s positive or negative impact) as well as possible viewpoints of the other
side’s perspective. A strong conclusion statement was required that synthesized all key points.
Phase 3 was the implementation of the dialogue plan by each team. While one team was
presenting their perspective, the other team was asked to suspend judgment, identify and suspend
their own assumptions, listen to the other side’s point of view, pay attention to non-verbal
communication, follow discussion guidelines, and reflect on points raised by the other team (van
Ruler, 1999). Teams were encouraged to not only share their perspective, but also to respond to
and build on the other team ideas.

The outcome of the assignment was not to solve a problem, but to develop a better
understanding of a complex issue. Therefore, the student learning outcomes were process
oriented rather than knowledge oriented. By completing an in-depth review of literature and
creative dialogue plan students successfully achieved the first learning outcome. Rubrics were
developed to measure the quality of the review of literature and the dialogue plan. Likewise, the
second learning outcome was achieved through the successful implementation of the assignment,
and a rubric was developed to rate how well the various viewpoints were supported with facts, as
well as with personal experiences (rubrics will be shared during the presentation).
In conclusion, the dialogue technique was a successful method for engaging the student in an open-minded discussion that recognized differing perspectives - the backbone of being a responsible global citizen. An added benefit resulting from the structure of the assignment was that students were evaluated individually as well as part of a team. A weakness of the assignment was the inability to measure whether students left the dialogue table with a richer understanding of the complex issue. Therefore, a Phase 4 will be added in the future that will require students to complete a reflection report after the dialogue session. This will assess whether new knowledge and/or viewpoints were developed through the process.


Online Shopping For Apparel, Food, and Home Furnishings Products as a Form of Outshopping

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Shifting demographic trends document a decline in some rural populations and a parallel decline in the number of rural retail outlets (Vias, 2004). As a result, rural consumers have less access to goods in their communities and may be dissatisfied with local shopping options. Two types of products often purchased outside rural communities are food and fiber products (e.g., apparel, home furnishings products [HFP]). Outshopping, buying goods out of the local retail trade area, has become common as rural shopping options diminish (Hawes & Lumpkin, 1984). Outshopping is a function of (a) attitudes toward local shopping facilities and (b) local product selection, with greater dissatisfaction resulting in more outshopping (Miller & Kean, 1997; Papadopoulos, 1980; Samli, Riecken, & Yavas, 1983). Online shopping can also be construed as outshopping because goods are acquired out of the local trading area. Not only is the ability to connect and order products online potentially beneficial to rural consumers, researchers have found that distance to retail stores is positively related to likelihood of online shopping (Sinai & Waldfogel, 2004). Thus, online shopping may become increasingly viable for rural consumers.

In both diffusion of innovation theory: DIT (Rogers, 1995) and the technology acceptance model: TAM (Davis, 1989) beliefs are proposed as precursors to behavior (adoption of an innovation or new technology). Both DIT and TAM posit some external or contextual variables that influence beliefs. Based on research we hypothesize additional variables (satisfaction with local retailing and outshopping behavior) as precursors to online shopping adoption for apparel, food, and HFP. Accordingly, the following hypotheses were developed. H1: Satisfaction with rural retailing will be negatively associated with traditional outshopping. H2: Satisfaction with rural retailing will be negatively related to beliefs about the Internet and online shopping. H3: Traditional outshopping will be positively related to beliefs about the Internet and online shopping. H4: Beliefs about the Internet and online shopping will be positively associated with online purchasing of apparel, food, and HFP in 2000. H5: Online purchasing of apparel, food, and HFP in 2000 will be positively related to online purchasing in 2003.

This research was longitudinal. Rural consumers in 11 states completed surveys in 2000; 2,198 returns were usable (28% usable response rate). To assess change in adoption follow-up surveys were sent to respondents in 2003; 879 returns were usable. In 2000 11% (6%, 5%) had purchased apparel (food, HFP) online, while in 2003 22% (10%, 11%) had purchased apparel (food, HFP) online. LISREL 8.71 SEM software was used for the analysis (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 2004). The proposed model consisted of one exogenous (satisfaction) and 4 endogenous (outshopping, beliefs, behavior in 2000, and behavior in 2003) latent variables.
variables, each of which had 3 indicators. Variables measured in 2000 were used to predict online 
purchasing in 2003. The fit of the final model was satisfactory (chi-square=296.75, df=85, AGFi=.94, 
NNFl=.96, CFI=.96, NFI=.95, GFI=.96, RMSEA=.054). All path coefficients of the measurement model were 
significant (p < .001) and all hypotheses were supported (p< .01). Satisfaction was negatively related to 
outshopping (path coeff. = -.39) and to beliefs (path coeff. = -.21). Outshopping was positively related to 
beliefs (path coeff. = .12). Beliefs positively influenced online purchasing in 2000 (path coeff. = .88). Online 
purchasing in 2000 positively influenced online purchasing in 2003 (path coeff. = .77). In addition, several 
indirect effects were found. Satisfaction was indirectly related to beliefs (path coeff. = -.05), online 
purchasing in 2000 (path coeff. = -.22), and online purchasing in 2003 (path coeff. = -.17). Outshopping was 
indirectly related to online purchasing in 2000 (path coeff. = .10) and online purchasing in 2003 (path coeff. 
= .08). Beliefs were indirectly related to online purchasing in 2003 (path coeff. = .68). Thus, in addition to 
beliefs about the Internet and online shopping, both satisfaction with local retailing and outshopping 
behaviors are important predictors of online shopping adoption. To influence beliefs, rural retailers with an 
online presence might promote the convenience of online shopping using an in-store kiosk or computer so 
that consumers can try the ordering process. Catalog retailers with an online presence could affect rural 
consumers’ beliefs by using direct mail or catalog inserts to provide detailed information about how to shop 
online.

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Business casual clothing in China: Exploring consumer attitudes and perceptions

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During the last two decades, U.S. firms have increasingly adopted the concept of Casual Fridays in the workplace. This notion of dressing-down has recently spread to other parts of the world, including countries such as China, where there are large numbers of professionals who are the potential wearers of the new, more casual styles (Chen, 2001). The spread of Business Casual dress to China in particular creates many opportunities for foreign investors and marketers. Business Casual not only has the potential to alter business practices, but is also a marketing opportunity for firms selling apparel within the Chinese marketplace (Shen et. al, 2003; Tam and Tai, 1996; Wei, 1997; Xu, 1990). However, there is little research available that examines how Business Casual has been integrated in the workplace in China. Therefore, this research fills a gap in knowledge by exploring consumer perceptions of business casual clothing and attitudes towards this type of dress within the contemporary Chinese workplace.

This study focuses on one market segment in particular, labeled as “Yuppies” in Cui’s (1999) segmentation of the Chinese marketplace. According to Cui, members of this group are the primary consumers of foreign products within China, are the most inclined to experiment with new styles, and the most responsive to ideas and products from the West. This segment consists of approximately 60 million people between 25-45 years old with at least some college education or technical training. Many have careers as professionals in managerial and technical positions, and in some cases are small business owners residing in major metropolitan areas (Cui, 1999; Cui and Liu, 2001). The present study focuses on the Yppie consumer segment in China in order to examine attitudes toward Business Casual from the point of view of those who are most likely to purchase and wear this type of apparel.

Data for the study were collected through a web-based survey questionnaire of Chinese Yuppies in Beijing and Shanghai, two of the largest metropolitan areas within the country. A total of 141 respondents completed the questionnaire, which asked them to respond to examples of Business Casual, and to statements about their fashion-related lifestyle and shopping behaviors (Kahle and Chiagouris, 1996). Of the 141 participants, 54 were male (40.4 %) and 84 were female (59.6%). A total of 87 (61.7%) worked in Beijing and 54 (38.3%) worked in Shanghai.

Male and female responses were compared, as well as responses of those working in Shanghai vs. Beijing. Differences between male and female respondents’ perceptions of Business Casual were found, as well as attitudes toward the types of apparel considered to be appropriately defined as “Business Casual.” Overall, the female respondents had a more detailed and definite definition and understanding of Business Casual than the males. When Beijing and Shanghai respondents were compared, Shanghai respondents had a broader definition of Business Casual Clothing than did those in Beijing. For example,
Beijing respondents regarded any use of a tailored jacket to be too formal for Business Casual. Shanghai respondents, on the other hand, were more likely to consider a tailored jacket to be Business Casual.

The findings of this preliminary study point to discrepancies on the part of respondents in regards to a comprehensive definition of appropriate Business Casual for the workplace in China. Further study might address the need for company dress code policies that clearly state expectations for employee dress. At the time of this research, detailed policies were not yet available. Further investigation into this topic will also lead to a more comprehensive understanding of the different market segments in China and of the diverse perceptions, attitudes, and behavior of consumers in these segments that operate to define the Business Casual clothing market in China today.

References


Prediction of fair trade customers’ purchase intention

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Keywords: Fair trade organizations, consumers

With interest in socially responsible consumption on the increase, Fair Trade Organizations (FTOs) provide one retail venue for consumers to act on their values and beliefs. According to the 2003 report on Fair Trade Trends (Fair Trade Federation, 2003), total sales for the fair trade industry reached $180 million in 2002 with a growth rate of 44% from 2001. However, despite their growth, research on FTOs consumers’ behavior is sparse.

In the context of shopping from fair trade organizations (FTOs), what would motivate consumers’ future purchasing? Product-related characteristics such as quality and style may not be enough to explain consumers’ motivations for purchasing from FTOs. Their competitors in mainstream businesses provide similarly styled products with high quality and comparable prices. Likewise, simply emphasizing the FTO mission of supporting fair wages and safe working conditions for artisans in developing countries may not be adequate to enhance customers’ purchase intentions from FTOs in today’s competitive marketplace (Littrell & Dickson, 1999).

In this research, we closely examined variability in consumer shopping values and political attitudes, and linked this variability to the variability in consumers’ motives to purchase goods from FTOs. The value of this research was to help FTOs better understand the complexity of FTO consumers’ decision-making processes in their purchases.

Based on consumer behavior theories emphasizing the relationship among consumer values, attitudes, and behavioral intention, many researchers have suggested that attitudes play an important role in shaping consumer behavioral intentions an indicator of behaviors (e.g., Ajzen, 1991; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Dickson, 1999; Engel, Blackwell, & Miniard, 1995; Shim, Eastlick, Lotz, & Warrington, 2001; Vinson, Scott, & Lamont, 1977). In addition, attitudes toward a particular behavior or objects in a specific buying context were reported as better antecedents of that behavior when compared to general attitudes (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Dickson, 1999; Lee & Littrell, 2002). Thus, in this study, how consumers’ values and attitudes would shape purchase intentions in a specific context of shopping from FTOs was explored. In particular, attitudes toward the FTO mission to help the poorest artisans in developing
countries and attributes of products from FTOs were adopted as mediating variables to predict consumers’ behavioral intentions.

To achieve our purpose, we explored the relationships among various variables such as customer demographics, shopping values, socio-political behaviors, attitudes toward fair trade missions, and attributes of the products in order to predict customers’ purchase intentions from FTOs. A theoretical model integrating the above variables was proposed to predict customers’ purchase intentions (See Figure 1). The proposed model was empirically tested using a sample of fair trade organizations’ customers. “Insert F1 about here”

This research was conducted in collaboration with the Fair Trade Friends, five major fair trade organizations in the USA and Canada, including Equal Exchange, MarketPlace: Handwork of India, SERRV, Ten Thousand Villages (TTV)-Canada, and Ten Thousand Villages (TTV)-USA. Data were randomly collected via a self-administered questionnaire using mail survey and store-intercept approaches to a sample of FTO customers. In order to control the potential biases due to differences in merchandise categories offered by the various organizations, only data from SERRV, TTV-Canada, and TTV-USA were used to test the proposed theoretical model. Common product categories to the three FTOs included household textiles and decorative objects, clothing and accessories, holiday items, and toys. Of the 2,537 surveys distributed to the three fair trade organizations’ customers, usable questionnaires from 956 respondents were returned for an overall response rate of 37.7% (209 from SERRV, 422 from TTV-Canada, and 325 from TTV-USA). The respondents ranged in age from 18 to 89 years with an average age of 48.2 years. A majority of the respondents were female (n=803, 85.3%), employed (n=628, 67.2%), resided in a city of over 100,000 population (n=513, 55.1%), and had incomes of $50,000 or higher (n=589, 61.6%). Nearly half of the respondents completed some graduate work or a graduate degree (n=469, 49.1).

In analyzing the data, a series of factor analyses was first performed to reduce the number of items, identify factor structure, and establish variable reliability. Path analysis using AMOS 4.0 was employed to examine the relationships among the variables. The model in Figure 1 was operationalized and fit to the data. Preliminary results indicated that consumer characteristics, shopping values, political behavior, and attitudes about fair trade missions and product attributes were all important antecedents in predicting consumers’ purchase intentions from FTOs. Both age and education yielded significant negative effects on hedonic shopping value of FTO consumers. However, education was positively related to consumers’ local political activism. For FTO consumers with hedonic shopping values, the authentic and pragmatic attributes of fairly traded products appeared to be salient factors to shape their future purchasing. Utilitarian shopping values was positively related to pragmatic attributes of FTOs’ products. Locally-oriented political behavior spilt over to consumers’ ideology that placed importance on the fair trade mission to customers’ fair trade purchases, which, in turn, influenced their plans to purchase from FTOs. Hedonic shopping values and local activism also directly affected purchase
intentions from FTOs without considering attitudes toward fair trade missions and product attributes as mediating variables. The model in Figure 1 proposed that any effect of demographic variables on purchase intentions would be mediated through the other variables. However, the results indicated that age or/and education also are directly associated with consumers’ purchase intentions from FTOs ($\Delta \chi^2 (2) = 11.46$). “Insert T1 about here”

Findings from this research provided insight for understanding consumers’ purchase decisions in the context of shopping from FTOs. Along with consumers’ locally-oriented political behaviors and hedonic shopping values, positive attitudes toward fair trade missions and fair trade products’ authenticity and pragmatic aspects were important factors to influence consumers’ plan to purchase from FTOs. For example, customers who were active in local or state politics and enjoyed browsing and shopping at the store as fun and playful experiences were more likely to pursue hand-crafted, ethnic appearance products. They were also more apt to purchase from FTOs. In another example, customers who supported the fair trade mission and considered quality, value, and esthetic uniqueness in products were more inclined to purchase goods from FTOs. These findings contributed to FTOs’ knowledge of their customers, which can be valuable information for FTOs to build competitive marketing strategies.
References


Factors Affecting Compulsive Buying Behavior Among College Students

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Key words: compulsive buying, credit cards

College students represent a lucrative market for businesses selling a wide array of goods and services, as well as credit cards. “College students as a whole represent a multibillion dollar market: In 2002, 5.9 million full-time students in four-year institutions spent some $9.2 billion during the school year on discretionary items, up 27 percent from 1997” (Yin, 2003, p. 20). An integral part of purchasing behavior among college students is the use of credit to buy the goods and services they desire. In fact, promoting credit cards to the youth market is big business. Financial institutions, retailers, and other credit card providers believe that developing a relationship during early adulthood will result in loyalty over time (Weiss, 2003). Credit card usage has risen dramatically among college students, and it is estimated that between 70 and 80 percent of college students have at least one credit card while the average student has three (Hayhoe, et al., 2000). Researchers at Nellie Mae, a student loan company, examined credit reports of student applicants in 2002 (check the year), and found that 93 percent of 21-year-olds had credit cards, an increase of 60 percent from five years earlier. The average number of credit cards held was 4.9, and the average credit card debt was $2,984. Twenty three percent had a balance between $3,000 and $7,000, while 10 percent had a balance in excess of $7,000.

Among the greatest concerns regarding credit debt are its association with 1) excess consumer spending (Schor, 1998; Lee & Kwon, 2002), 2) compulsive buying behavior (Roberts & Jones, 2001), and 3) personal bankruptcy (Hayhoe, et al., 1999). Excessive debt accumulation may interfere with a students’ ability to finance their college education, and to remain in school. Schor (1998) has argued that easy access to credit contributes to overspending by the American public. The value placed on status, and the acceptance of consumer debt contribute to compulsive buying. Compulsive buying is defined as “chronic, repetitive purchasing that becomes a primary response to negative events or feelings,” (O’Guinn & Faber, 1989, p. 155). The purpose of this study was to examine compulsive buying behavior among a sample of college students. Specifically, the main objective was to identify various economic, behavioral and demographic factors that contribute to compulsive buying behavior.

College students have been found to have favorable attitudes toward credit (Xiao, et al., 1995). Credit card ownership is influenced by gender with females owning more cards than males (Armstrong & Craven, 1993). The number of credit cards owned by a college student (four or more versus three or less) is affected by gender, coursework in personal finance, and credit attitudes (Hayhoe, et al. 1999). Roberts (1998) found that six percent of a college student sample (n=300) could be classified as compulsive buyers. There was a positive relationship between the number of credit cards owned and...
compulsive buying. Irrational credit card use was also positively associated with compulsive buying. Credit card usage was also found to affect the money attitudes of students, which in turn, influenced compulsive buying behavior (Roberts & Jones, 2001).

Compulsive buying behavior has been analyzed from a variety of disciplinary perspectives: biological, psychological, sociological, familial, and demographic (Roberts, 1998). However, compulsive buying behavior has not been examined within an economic framework although both buying behavior and addictions have been examined from an economic perspective. Economic theory suggests that the demand for a good is a function of income, the price of the good, the price of other goods, and taste and preferences (Deaton and Muellbauer, 1980). Compulsive buying behavior could be viewed as occurring among consumers with excessive demand for goods as a result of various underlying factors. Based on economic theory and prior research, the variables to be included in this study include income, credit ownership, credit card usage behavior, internet purchasing, and selected demographic characteristics.

To collect the data for this study, a web based questionnaire was developed. Data were collected from students enrolled in a major university located in a medium-sized Midwestern town. To distribute the final questionnaire, both graduate (including professional students), and undergraduate students (population total=27,003) were contacted by e-mail through the university’s mass mailing capabilities. The e-mail invited the students to participate in the study. Interested students had to click on a web address to be able to complete the survey. The survey was posted on a specific computer server for 30 days. Two additional follow up e-mails were sent as reminders at both ten and twenty days. As an incentive to participate in the study, students were offered the opportunity to enter their name in a drawing for one of three $150 gift certificates. A total of 7,342 students completed the questionnaire for a response rate of 27.19%.

The average age of the college student sample was 21.95 years. Sixty eight percent of the students owned credit cards, and 86 percent owned debit cards. The average number of credit cards they possessed was 2.8. Of those who had credit cards, over half of the users (53.18%), used only one credit card on a regular basis followed by 26.03 percent who used two or more credit cards on a regular basis. Among the credit card holders, twelve percent of the sample did not have a credit card in their own name. However, almost 29 percent had one credit card in their own name, almost half (48.48%) had between two and five cards in their own name, and over ten percent (10.33%) had six or more cards in their own name. The average amount owed on all credit cards after paying bills during the month prior to the survey was $902.85. Seventy-seven percent made purchases on the internet. Approximately, seven and a half percent of the sample could be classified as compulsive buyers.

Ordinary least squares regression was used to estimate an empirical equation in which compulsive buying behavior was the dependent variable. The Compulsive Buying Scale (CBS), originally developed by Faber and O’Guinn (1992), and more recently used by Roberts and Jones (2001) with
college students, is a scoring equation used to classify individuals as compulsive buyers. A range of scores can be obtained, and a score less than or equal to or –1.34 indicates a compulsive buyer. Strong support for both the internal and external validity of the scale has been found (Faber and O’Guinn, 1992). For ease of interpretation, the scale was multiplied by negative one, thus, in this study, a score greater than or equal to 1.34 indicates a compulsive buyer. The independent variables included in the analysis were income, age, gender, whether or not a credit card was owned, whether or the respondent bought items on the internet, and the measure of credit card usage developed by Roberts and Jones (2001).

The results indicated that all of the variables had a statistically significant impact on compulsive buying behavior. Income was measured based on the parents’ income. Several dummy variables were created to measure different levels of parental income. The results indicated that students who came from higher income families had a lower compulsive buying score relative to students whose parents made $25,000 or less annually. Students who owned at least one credit card had a higher compulsive buying score compared to students who didn’t own any credit cards. Students that reported lesser problems with their credit card usage behavior had a lower compulsive buying behavior score. Students who made purchases on the internet had a higher compulsive buying behavior score compared to those did not make purchases on the internet. Age was positively correlated with compulsive buying. With respect to gender, females had a higher compulsive buying score relative to males, on average, and holding other factors constant. Identifying factors that influence compulsive buying behavior can help educators, credit counselors, and others, target counseling and educational programs to those college students who may be at greatest risk with respect to their buying behavior.


Consumer Choice Modeling; A Retail Level Tool for Determining Consumer Choice Probability and Process

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Keywords: choices, models, retail, furnishings

Recent efforts to redesign the apparel industry into a “pull chain” have hinged upon faster and more complete capturing of consumer needs and willingness to purchase. Developments in consumer choice models now make statistically significant predictions of consumer choices, while software platforms combined with modern computer speed have enlarged access to these tools. Even more important, a great deal of research on the psychological process has been combined with results-oriented research to create cohesive, unified models that tell us not only what the consumer is choosing, but also how. In order to build on this body of theoretical work concerning the importance and practical applications for consumer choice models, we developed a unique choice modeling tool for retailers. Using home furnishings as a market, a consumer interacts with the retailer through a virtual reality interface. In the process of choosing their product to buy, the interface collects critical indicators of choice process and probability.

Our research makes three new assumptions as regards the process of choice modeling and its use. The first is that psychometric and demographic data need not be captured through the sacrificing of customer time. We have developed a virtual reality interface that allows the consumer to transfer explicit, latent, and sticky information while shopping. We define latent information as preferences, class background, or market segment membership which may or may not be acknowledged by the consumer or the analyst. Sticky information, first developed by Von Hippel, refers to information about preferences which the consumer would find difficult to transfer to a competitor retailer and so increases loyalty. Because the virtual reality environment derives information from observing consumer processes in addition to direct responses, it has the advantages of being less intrusive and less prone to validating respondents’ misperceptions of their own preferences.

The second unique aspect of the tool is its ability to coalition unrelated consumer choice models in order to identify consumer choice patterns relevant to the retailer. The identifiable aspects of consumers’ choices include: the presence of and significance of latent segmentation, the presence of and stability of dynamic segmentation, the presence of indivisible alternatives, trade off patterns, and simultaneous segmentation among consumer’s and products. Each of these goals requires a complete and complex statistical process, from which the others are not derived. Through creating each activity (consumer interaction, data management, data use, goal selection) as modules we assure the integrity and flexibility of the tool-in-use. See diagram A below for a chart of the modulized tool. By separating...
the data collection, management, and statistical methods we allow the retailer to use the same interaction (as recorded by the virtual reality interface) to run divergent statistical processes. Finally, unity of the consumer choice predictions is achieved through collusion of the results, and is intuitive to any retailer.

Results

Customer segmentation that exists (even if they don’t know it), a clear understanding of the segment stability, segmentation of products by consumer choice, product indivisibility by consumers, and consumer trades off patterns.

Diagram A

The third unique feature of our choice model is its analysis interface, that is to say, how the retailer uses it. The virtual reality interface connects directly to the data management platform. From here, the retailer interacts in a user friendly and intuitive manner. The retailer chooses what goals to search for, and then may review the results. By simplifying the interaction we have significantly reduced the commitment necessary for a retailer to begin looking at how their customer’s make buying choices. Whereas in the past a retailer might have used either a one-time consultancy before starting a new line
(and then run relatively blind afterwards), or have paid full time statisticians to develop effective models, our platform requires significantly less resources.
Antecedents and Consequences of Parasocial Interaction in Television Apparel Shopping

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Key words: T-commerce, Parasocial Interaction, Enjoyment, Risk

Television shopping (T-commerce) is a powerful shopping mode for in-home shoppers. T-commerce takes a unique shopping approach via the most convenient medium. Because tactile inspection of products is limited in television shopping, the role of television shopping program hosts is considered as important as the product itself. Television shoppers report that they often rely on hosts to make purchase decisions and tend to perceive a greater degree of friendship or intimacy with a remote media personae in the form of a special and personal connection, so-called parasocial interaction (Stephens, Hills, & Bergman, 1996). Although parasocial interaction has been observed in the context of television shopping, research effort on investigating parasocial interaction in a comprehensive scope was minimal. Thus, the purpose of this study is to examine antecedents (enjoyment and viewing) and consequences (perceived risk and purchase intention) of parasocial interaction in television shopping programs.

Television shopping program enjoyment and viewing can predict parasocial interaction. Perse (1990) found that television enjoyment predicted parasocial interaction with the program host. Parasocial interaction also can occur when the viewers are exposed to the media (Park & Lennon, 2004). Those who watched more television shopping programs were more likely to develop an intimate pseudo-relationship with the show host than those who watched less. In addition, television shopping program viewing may be influenced by television shopping program enjoyment (Wright, 1960). Thus, it is reasonable to expect sequential relationships among enjoyment, viewing, and parasocial interaction. Based on the literature, the following hypotheses were developed in the conceptual model:

H1. Television shopping program enjoyment has a direct impact on parasocial interaction; H2. Television shopping program exposure has a direct impact on parasocial interaction; H3. TV shopping enjoyment has a direct impact on TV shopping program exposure; H4. There is a mediating effect of TV shopping program exposure on the relationship between TV shopping enjoyment and parasocial interaction;

The effects of parasocial interaction on purchase behavior have been found in several studies. Parasocial interaction can predict perceived risk and purchase intention in television apparel shopping. When parasocial relationships with hosts are developed, confidence in judging product quality increases and in turn, perceived risk decreases (e.g., Perse & Rubin, 1989). In addition, viewers who develop one-way interpersonal involvement with media personalities may attempt to confirm their loyalty by purchasing products recommended by those individuals (Horton & Wohl, 1956). Skumanich and Kintsfather (1998) developed the Individual Media Dependency Model and confirmed that parasocial interaction had a positive impact on purchase behavior. Those who had a stronger parasocial relationship with television
shopping show hosts tended to purchase more products and spend more money than those who had less. Similarly, Park and Lennon (2004) found that television apparel shoppers who perceived greater intimacy with the show host were more likely to purchase products, although the purchase was not initially planned. Based on the literature, additional hypotheses were developed: H5. Parasocial interaction has a direct impact on perceived risk; H6. Parasocial interaction has a direct impact on purchase intention; H7. Perceived risk has a direct impact on purchase intention; H8. Perceived risk mediates the relationship between parasocial interaction and purchase intention.

An 11-item enjoyment scale developed by McQuarrie and Munson (1986), a 7-item parasocial interaction scale developed by Levy (1979), and a 24-item perceived risk scale developed by Kim and Lennon (2000) were used. Television shopping program exposure was measured by the average number of hours the shopper watched television shopping programs per day. One purchase intent item developed by researchers was used. Questionnaires were sent to 1800 television shoppers who were randomly selected from a purchased national database. From the returned questionnaires (n=266), only purchasers via television shopping programs (n=231) were selected with a usable return rate of 13%. Due to the low response rate of purchasers from television shopping programs, a non-response bias test was conducted and revealed that late respondents are similar in demographic characteristics to early respondents. The average age of respondents was about 53 years, with a range of 23 to 84 years. Principle component factor analysis and reliability were used for construct validity of variables. Then, path analysis was conducted by a maximum-likelihood estimation procedure using AMOS 4.0. All hypotheses were statistically supported. The proposed positive relationship between television shopping program enjoyment and parasocial interaction (H 1) was supported ($\beta_{1*} = .39$, $t = 5.80$, $p < .001$). Hypotheses 2, predicting a positive effect of television shopping program enjoyment on television viewing time, was supported ($\beta_{1*} = .37$, $t = 5.61$, $p < .001$). Hypothesis 3, predicting a positive relationship between television viewing time and parasocial interaction, was supported ($\beta_{3*} = .17$, $t = 2.56$, $p < .05$). Hypothesis 5, predicting a negative relationship between parasocial interaction and perceived risk, was supported ($\beta_{5*} = -.24$, $t = -3.42$, $p < .001$). A positive effect of parasocial interaction on purchase intention (H6) was also found ($\beta_{5*} = .30$, $t = 5.30$, $p < .001$). Finally, a proposed negative relationship between perceived risk and purchase intention (H7) was supported ($\beta_{6*} = -.47$, $t = -8.29$, $p < .001$). Using mediating regression analyses, two mediating effects were found, supporting H4 and H8. These findings suggest important industrial and theoretical implications in television apparel shopping.

References


The Roles of Product and Customer Service Information in Determining Website Quality, Satisfaction, and Patronage Intentions

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Key words: Information, website quality, customer satisfaction, patronage intention

The U.S. Department of Commerce reported that U.S. online retail sales for the third quarter of 2004 were $17.6 billion, an increase of 21.2% over the third quarter of 2003 (Sharma, 2004). Because e-retailers exist in a highly competitive environment, they try to differentiate themselves from competitors. An increase in product and service information may reduce uncertainty in online shopping and could be a key differentiation tactic for retailers to increase website quality and customer satisfaction.

Apparel product information and customer service information are likely to affect judgments of website quality. Since apparel cannot be physically inspected when shopping online, extrinsic product attributes are likely to influence quality perceptions (Teas & Agarwal, 2000; Zeithaml, 1988). Product and service information is critical because product information (e.g., merchandise descriptions, price) is highly task relevant and directly related to shopping goals (Eroglu, Machleit, & Davis, 2001) and service information strongly affects customers’ evaluation of a merchant (Perrault & Russ, 1976; Sheth, 1973). Moreover, positive evaluation of website quality can increase customer satisfaction and future patronage-relevant behavioral intentions, such as word-of-mouth, willingness to pay more, willingness to switch, and willingness to complain (Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Janda, Trocchia, & Gwinner, 2002). This study focused on investigating the effects of information (product and customer service) on perceptions of website quality, customer satisfaction, and patronage intentions using the expectancy disconfirmation paradigm. According to the expectancy disconfirmation paradigm, consumers use past experiences or external information to form expectations (Oliver, 1980). Positive disconfirmation occurs when performance exceeds expectations, but if expectations exceed performance, customers will experience negative disconfirmation. Positive and negative disconfirmations are associated with satisfaction and dissatisfaction, respectively (Oliver, 1980; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988).

Based on the previous literature, the following hypotheses were developed. Amount of product information (H1) and amount of service information (H2) will affect confirmation/disconfirmation of perception of website quality (difference between expectation and perception of performance). The disconfirmation of perception of website quality will affect customer satisfaction (H3) and patronage intentions (H4). Finally, customer satisfaction will influence patronage intentions (H5).
Focus group interviews with eleven college students were conducted to identify website attributes (tapping both product and customer service information) and to operationalize the independent variables. Based on the results of focus group interviews, a mock website was developed and the manipulations were pretested with a different group of college students to assess their effectiveness in conveying differing levels of the independent variables.

In the main experiment, an online 2 (Product information amount: high vs low) by 2 (Customer service information amount: high vs low) between subjects design experiment using a mock website was conducted. Participants received an email including the URL for one experimental condition and an online questionnaire which contained items tapping demographics, expectations for website quality, perceptions of website quality, customer satisfaction, and patronage intentions. A total website quality perception scale was developed based on the literature. McKinney, Yoon and Zahedi’s (2003) Customer Satisfaction Scale was used to tap overall web-user satisfaction. Patronage intentions were measured using Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman’s (1996) Behavioral Intention Battery, Athanassopoulos, Gounaris and Stathakopoulos’s (2001) Behavioral Responses Battery, and Srinivasan, Anderson, and Ponnavaolu’s (2002) Behavioral Outcomes of Loyalty. All the variables in this study were reliable: expectation of website quality (α = .89), perception of performance of website quality (α = .88), customer satisfaction (α = .85), word-of-mouth (α = .81), willingness to pay more (α = .70), willingness to switch (α = .86), and willingness to complain (α = .62).

Female college students and staff (N=197) from a Midwestern university participated in the online shopping Web experiment. The 2 x 2 analysis of variance revealed that there was a significant main effect for amount of product information on the confirmation/disconfirmation of website quality supporting H1, F(1, 192) = 5.04, p<.05. People who were exposed to both a website with a high amount of information (M = -.30, SD = 1.09) and a website with a low amount of information (M = -.68, SD = 1.27) exhibited negative disconfirmation indicating that expectation of website quality exceeds performance of website quality. The main effect for amount of product information showed that a high amount of information played an important role in reducing the negative disconfirmation. However, H2 was not supported. Simple regression analyses revealed that positive disconfirmation of website quality was positively associated with customer satisfaction [F (1,194) = 69.19, β = .46, p <.01], word-of-mouth [F (1,193) = 79.53, β = .56, p <.01] and willingness to pay more [F (1,194) = 12.64, β = .22, p <.01], and negatively associated with willingness to switch [F (1,193) = 48.96, β = -.47, p <.01]. But, there was no significant relationship between disconfirmation of website quality and willingness to complain. Thus, H3 is supported and H4 is partially supported. There were positive relationships between customer satisfaction and word-of-mouth [F (1,194) = 219.97, β = .84, p <.01] and willingness to pay more [F (1,195) = 13.53, β = .25, p <.01], and a negative relationship between satisfaction and willingness to switch [F (1,194) = 58.72, β = -.55, p <.01]. However, since willingness to complain was not significant, H5 was partially supported. The results of the study help e-retailers understand how amount of information on websites ultimately influences satisfaction. This study contributes knowledge useful to
online retailers for developing strategies that increase customer satisfaction and patronage intentions, and thus improve their competitiveness.

References


Standardized Brand Image Strategy: A Cross-cultural Study

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Key Words: Brand Image, Cultural Value, Consumption Value

In expanding their market to the global level with clear and consistent brand images, marketers are ever confronting the issue of how to deal with different cultural values. Cultural value, an influential factor on brand image, is widely accepted as one of the crucial concepts in understanding consumer consumption value, which determines choices of consuming everyday products and services across countries. Most firms endeavoring to establish and maintain a consistent global brand image adopt a standardized brand image strategy which usually does not consider individual target market characteristics including consumption value and cultural value. Therefore, it would be meaningful to empirically show whether these individual differences lead to different brand images across the globe. Cultural values are identified as influential factors on brand images (Roth, 1992, 1995) and consumption values are related with cultural values (Henry, 1976). Based on these findings, this study conceptualized that cultural value and consumption value, which are expected to be inherently different across markets, formulate brand images. This study proposed a model which incorporated cultural value as not only a direct antecedent of brand image but also as an indirect antecedent through consumption value and empirically tested this hypothesized model for both American and Korean university students.

Apparel brands are representative of globalized consumer product brands. The brand Polo was chosen both because many consumers around the world know the label well enough to rate its brand image and Polo implements standardized advertising and merchandise strategies across global markets. Scales were developed to measure brand image and consumption values held by consumers across countries. The brand image scale was developed following the method recommended by Low & Lamb (2000). This study also developed a clothing consumption values measurement scale utilizing the theory of consumption value by Sheth, Newman, and Gross (1991) which is composed of functional, emotional, epistemic, social, and conditional values. In measuring cultural values, this study used SVS (Schwartz Value Survey) since Schwartz (1994, 1999) showed the structure of SVS efficiently capturing the differences in national cultures of over 40 nations including the U.S. and Korea. SVS is composed of seven types of values (harmony, egalitarianism, intellectual autonomy, affective autonomy, conservatism, hierarchy, and mastery) and uses 45 items in measuring such values.
The data used in this study were gathered through surveying university students residing in San Francisco and Seoul, large metropolitan areas in the U.S. and in Korea, using a convenience sampling method. The two cities were selected since they are generally perceived as two of the most cosmopolitan cities in the two countries. 329 questionnaires, 158 from the U.S. and 171 from Korea, were used in exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling.

To identify the underlying dimensions of brand images and consumption values, the exploratory factor analysis using principal component method with varimax rotation was performed. Combined data from the U.S. and Korea were used to extract the common factor items of both countries. After exploratory factor analysis, four factors of brand image were extracted. For the consumption values scale, two factors each for functional, emotional, and epistemic values and three factors each for social and conditional values were extracted.

Regarding the brand image and consumption value scales, confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to further investigate whether the extracted factor properties of the scales fit to each of the two countries. Confirmatory factor analysis was also conducted for the cultural value scale in order to investigate whether the seven cultural value dimensions used by Schwartz (1999) fit to each of the two countries. Using the first-order confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) model, the tests were conducted for each group separately. Throughout this process, items which had factor loadings below .50 or not significant with their latent variable at p < .05 in either data set were eliminated to develop common factors for both countries. Regarding consumption value and brand image, the results showed the generated factors from the combined data adequately fit to the data of each country, and thus the factors could be used as common factor items for both countries to test the hypothesized model. Confirmatory factor analysis also confirmed the seven cultural value dimensions were well-fitting across the two countries.

Having satisfactorial fit of dimensionality and factorial structure of variables, this study could proceed in testing the validity of a causal structure related to the three variables in the model. Using the established and extracted factors, therefore, the hypothesized model was tested to each data set using the structural equation model. Figure 1 shows the measures of the latent constructs from the conceptual framework and the path coefficients among latent constructs for each country with their degree of significance. For the U.S. subjects, all paths were significant. For the Korean subjects, all paths except the one between cultural value and consumption value were significant. The goodness of fit measures for the proposed model for each data set are shown in Table 1. For both countries, $X^2$ statistics were significant and the values of CFI, TLI, and CFI were also quite acceptable fit, indicating the model represents a substantively reasonable fit to both countries. Therefore, it could be concluded that, for the U.S. subjects, cultural values not
only influence brand image directly but also indirectly through consumption values, whereas for
the Korean subjects, cultural values have influences on brand image only indirectly through
consumption value.

“Insert Figure 1 about here”

“Insert Table 1 about here”

The results show why brand images are different between the two countries: It is because
cultural values significantly influence brand image directly or indirectly through consumption
value. As such, it can be concluded that the differences in cultural and consumption values cause
the different brand images between two countries.

There are no studies on the influence of cultural and consumption values on brand image,
especially the differences of brand images cross-culturally. This study would be the first
empirical study to approach global brand image across countries where cultural and consumption
values differ. The results imply that the perceptions about brand images spurred by standardized
brand image strategies may differ significantly in different countries according to each country’s
cultural and consumption values which are learned behaviors. Therefore, the results of this study
provide insights into standardized brand image strategies and suggest some tools that might
prove effective in both countries. Future studies should identify whether this model is applicable
to other countries.

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Shopping Preferences of College Age Apparel Shoppers in Turkey and the United States

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Keywords: Turkey; Retailing; Attributes; Consumers

This paper presents the results of survey research conducted in 2004 comparing the shopping preferences of college-age apparel shoppers in the United States and Turkey. Modern retailing is quickly replacing the traditional ‘mom and pop corner store’, or bakkal, retail formats in Turkey. Turkish consumers are being presented with more store choices than ever. The process of retail internationalization is gaining momentum, and retailing is fast becoming a global industry (Homburg, Hoyer, & Fassnacht, 2002). Retailers in the new millennium are being driven by the opportunities presented in developing economies, such as high economic growth rates, a developing middle class, the weakness of local retailers and the maturation of retailing in the developed economies (Goldman, 2001). These trends can be attributed to rising standards of living, the development and advances in mass media, increased travel, increased technology and its sophistication, and the increased educational level of consumers across nations and cultures (Kaynak, Kucukemiroglu, & Odabasi, 1992).

Turkey’s economy is growing; therefore the level of investment by retailers is expected to grow (Tokatli & Boyaci, 1998). Turkish shoppers are encouraging the expansion of foreign retailers by increasingly purchasing imported products. As the Turkish economy prospers, the size of the consumer class is increasing. Turkey already possesses a very wealthy, western-oriented upper class and a sizable and growing middle class of salaried workers and small business owners who are becoming major consumers of imports (Anonymous, 1995). Forecasts indicate that per capita incomes in Turkey will more than double by the year 2020, potentially making Turkey the 10th largest economy in the world (Loewendahl & Loewendahl, 2001).

Cross-cultural research suggests that consumers from different cultures may expect different things from the shopping experience (de Mooij & Hofstede, 2002; Hong & Koh, 2002; Lyonski, Durvasula, & Zotos, 1996). As stores seek out markets beyond their traditional economic and cultural borders, retailers must understand the tastes, standards and culture of a foreign market if they are going to compete successfully in that marketplace. Turkish consumers are gaining affluence and becoming more western in their outlook (Anonymous, 1993). The retail industry in Turkey is continuing to expand and is shifting from traditional, small traders to large domestic and foreign corporations (Tokatli & Boyaci, 1999).
The main catalyst for changes in Turkish retailing came from Western Europe, first by new production and distribution techniques and then with investments by European multinational retailers in the 1980s and 1990s. Some luxury European retailers that have increased their market share in Turkey include Burberry, Chanel and Versace (Tokatli & Boyaci, 1998).

The rapidly growing consumer market in Turkey offers United States retailers a wide array of expansion opportunities (Anonymous, 1995). Several US retailers currently have a presence in Turkey including Dockers, Levi’s, Toys R Us, DKNY, Calvin Klein, and ACE hardware (Tokatli & Boyaci, 1998). Turkey continues to show great promise as an export market for US products (Fitzpatrick, 1995). Foreign and domestic retailers have enjoyed government incentives as well as the genuine curiosity of the growing Turkish middle-class. This initial success has encouraged other foreign retailers to expand into Turkey, even beyond its three major metropolitan areas of Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir. Domestic retailers have also begun to adapt new business practices in order to compete (Özcan, 2001).

Alexander (1997) defines international retailing as “the management of retail operations in markets which are different from each other in their regulation, economic development, social conditions, cultural environment and retail structures” (p. 37). As global integration unfolds in the world’s marketplaces, decision-making is becoming increasingly complex for consumers (Lyonski, Durvasula, & Zotos, 1996). Whereas in the 20th century global retailing focused on similarities of consumers, in the 21st century effective retailing will require understanding differences among consumers across boarders (de Mooij & Hofstede, 2002). Due to the competitive saturation of domestic markets, many retailers are exploring market development strategies as a primary means of growth (Straughan & Albers-Miller, 2001).

The area of international retailing is relatively new. Little attention has been given to cultural impacts of international retail environment (Straughan & Albers-Miller, 2001). There is only now beginning to be a significant body of research in cross-cultural retailing (Newman & Foxall, 2003). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to contribute to this literature by comparing the shopping preferences of college-age apparel shoppers in Turkey to that of their US counterparts.

Hypothesis 1 stated that US respondents would perceive service attributes to be more important than Turkish respondents. Contrary to the stated hypothesis, t-tests found Turkish respondents perceived 4 of the 7 service attributes to be more important than US respondents. The service attributes rated higher by Turkish respondents were convenient payment options, a staff that effectively deals with customer complaints, an effective system for dealing with enquiries, and acceptance of all major credit cards. There were no significant differences between Turkish and US respondents regarding the remaining three service attributes: a fair policy of returns and exchanges, the fairness of a stores return and exchange policies and the convenience of the stores hours of operation.
Hypothesis 2 stated that, for Turkish respondents, there would be no difference in the importance of store attributes based on gender for the Turkish sample. Hypothesis 2 was partially corroborated. T-tests found no significant results for the following store attributes: a pleasant shopping atmosphere, reasonable check-out times, a clean store, attractive product and promotional displays, attractive décor, and a store layout that makes it easy to find what you need.

There were significant differences based on gender for three variables. Men rated the following store attributes higher than women: a store layout that make it easy to shop, well-placed product displays, and convenient shopping environment.

Previous retail patronage studies (Birtwistle et al., 1998; Lindquist, 1974; Turnbull & Wilson, 1989) have identified that merchandise attributes (i.e. price, quality, selection) in conjunction with the service provided by the staff are especially important to customers when they purchase fashion clothing. A foreign retailer entering into the Turkish market should take culturally specific preferences, such as décor or credit card acceptance, into account when designing and merchandising their stores. This study found that for Turkish consumers, being able to find what they need easily, having convenient payment options, and reasonable prices are important when shopping for apparel. The findings of this study confirm other studies (Bertwistle et al., 1998; Bitner, 1992; Fram & Ajami, 1994; Hong & Koh, 2002; Newman & Foxall, 2003) that store, merchandise, and service attributes contribute positively to the customer shopping experience. The findings of this study also confirm studies (de Mooij & Hofstede, 2002; Goldman, 2001; Jones, 2003; Tokatli & Boyaci, 1998) that expanding to foreign markets presents huge challenges for retail management, due to the variability of such factors as customer perception and culture.

The findings of this research will benefit Turkish retailers seeking to expand into the US market. By comparing the Turkish and US samples, a Turkish retailer could use the information from this study to ascertain the shopping preferences of US college age consumers. The Turkish retailer could then modify its merchandising practices to meet the needs of the US apparel market.
Multi-Channel Shopping: Impact of Consumer Value Mix on Patronage Intention of the Rural Consumers

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Keywords: Multi-Channel, Rural, Shopping, Patronage

The retail industry today is all about choices; consumers have a choice of shopping channels, including stores, direct marketing channels, and the Internet. Consumers can choose only one channel or a combination of different channels and retailers. The rural consumers exhibit “outshopping” behavior by shopping for products and services outside their local retail area (Sullivan & Savitt, 1997; Padopolous, 2001; & Sullivan, Savitt, Zheng, & Cui, 2002). Consumers choose a channel for shopping only when the benefits exceed the costs involved. Shopping benefits and costs of a multi-channel consumer affect the eventual purchase intention across different channels (i.e., rural stores, out-of-town stores, catalogs, and the Internet).

Purpose of the study

This was an exploratory study and examined how the demographics, lifestyles and shopping environment affect the rural consumer value mix which in turn leads to their patronage intention. The interaction of the various variables, which affect channel patronage, will enable the researchers to formulate marketing strategies for sustainability of the rural retailer. Previous studies have only examined one channel at a time and this study was designed to approach the rural consumer’s shopping habits in a more holistic manner.

Method

All the consumers who reside in rural areas and purchase products or services through the multi-channels (i.e., rural stores, out-of-town stores, catalogs, and the Internet) were the population for this study. The sample was convenience sampling with the survey instrument sent to all the faculty, staff, and students of a Mid-West University via e-mail. Professors in the area of fashion merchandising at the university established the content validity of the instrument. A total number of 884 responses were received.

Data Analysis
Exploratory factor analysis techniques were preliminarily applied to identify underlying dimensions of a multi-item scale for consumer value mix. Principal component factor analysis using varimax rotation was initially performed on the thirteen shopping benefit items for each retail channel (i.e., rural stores, out-of-town stores, catalogs, and the Internet). A factor analysis using principal component analyses with varimax rotation was conducted to determine underlying factors of purchase intention for each channel. Exploratory factor analysis was also utilized to reduce the variables of consumer’s opinion with respect to overall shopping experience and choice of shopping channel. All these factors had eigen values greater than 1. The factors were then tested for reliability based on Cronbach’s alpha.

An exploratory factor analysis revealed three factors of shopping benefits in rural stores, and four factors explained 57.80% of the total variance of shopping benefits. These three factors were: Value (\(\alpha = 0.77\)), Assortment/Service (\(\alpha = 0.78\)), and Product (\(\alpha = 0.78\)). Assortment/Convenience (\(\alpha = 0.84\)), and Service (\(\alpha = 0.84\)) were the shopping benefit variables for out-of-town stores and explained 55.83% of the total variance. Service (\(\alpha = 0.89\)), and Assortment/Convenience (\(\alpha = 0.83\)) were the shopping benefit variables for Internet and explained 61.80% of the total variance. Service (\(\alpha = 0.94\)), and Convenience (\(\alpha = 0.88\)) were the shopping benefit variables for catalogs and explained 70.30% of the total variance. An exploratory factor analysis revealed two factors of purchase intention in rural stores i.e. Hard Goods (\(\alpha = 0.81\)), and Personal Products (\(\alpha = 0.76\)), and these two factors explained 62.40% of the total variance. Hard Goods (\(\alpha = 0.87\)), and Personal Products (\(\alpha = 0.80\)), were the two factors for out-of-town stores and explained 67.78% of the total variance. Personal Products (\(\alpha = 0.79\)), and Hard Goods (\(\alpha = 0.75\)) were the two factors for the Internet and explained 62.50% of the total variance. Hard Goods (\(\alpha = 0.89\)), and Personal Products (\(\alpha = 0.63\)) were the two factors for catalogs and explained 68.39% of the total variance.

Exploratory factor analysis of consumer’s overall shopping experience resulted in three factors i.e. Shopping (\(\alpha = 0.94\)), Social (\(\alpha = 0.93\)), and Store (\(\alpha = 0.77\)) and explained 73.86% of the total variance. Consumers’ choice of shopping channel resulted in four factors i.e. Shopping Ease (\(\alpha = 0.72\)), Value (\(\alpha = 0.79\)), Family (\(\alpha = 0.87\)), and Convenience (\(\alpha = 0.53\)) and explained 64.80% of the total variance.

To accomplish the purpose of examining the effect of demographics, lifestyles and shopping environment on the rural consumer value mix which in turn leads to their patronage intention regression analysis was utilized. Personal characteristics were the independent variable and included demographic information (i.e. gender, age, income, marital status, and education). The factors for shopping benefits via rural store: Value, Assortment/Service and Product were influenced by gender with a beta value of 0.19***, 0.23***, 0.19*** respectively. Value (0.12**) and Product (-0.18**) were influenced by age. Assortment/Service was influenced by household income with a beta value of 0.07**. Marital status and education did not affect any of the factors. The independent variable gender, affects Assortment/Convenience (0.26***) and Service (0.24***).
stores. Assortment/Convenience is affected by income (0.07*) and Service is affected by age (0.10*). Marital status and education did not affect any of the factors. Service and Assortment/Convenience, the two factors of shopping benefits via the Internet is affected by gender with a beta value of 0.12*** and 0.16*** respectively. Income affects the shopping benefit factor of Assortment/Convenience with a beta value of 0.08*. Age, marital status and education do not affect any of the factors. The factors for shopping benefits via catalog: Service and Convenience were influenced by gender with a beta value of 0.21***, and 0.20*** respectively. Service (0.14**) was influenced by age. Income, marital status, and education did not affect any of the factors.

The factor, Hard Goods for purchase intention, rural stores was not influenced by any independent variables. Personal Products, the other factor for rural stores, was influenced only by gender (0.29***). The factor Hard Goods for purchase intention, out-of-town store was not influenced by any independent variable, however, Personal Products were only influenced by independent variable age with a beta value of 0.20***. The purchase intention factor, Internet, Personal Products was influenced by only age (-0.13**) and income (0.08*), whereas Hard Goods was only influenced by gender (-0.17***). Hard Goods, the purchase intention factor for catalogs, is not affected by any of the independent variables, however, Personal Products is affected by both gender (0.14*** and income (0.11***).

The factors for consumers’ overall shopping experience Shopping, Social, and Store are all affected by gender and age with beta values of 0.33*** & -0.34***, 0.28*** & -0.29***, and 0.311*** and -0.29*** respectively. The independent variable, income affects Shopping (0.07*), and Store (0.11***). Marital status and education do not affect any of the factors. Gender affects the factors for consumers’ choice of shopping channels, Shopping Ease (0.17***), Family (0.11**), and Convenience (0.13***). Age affects the factors for consumers’ choice of shopping channels, Shopping Ease (-0.12*), and Family (-0.19***). Shopping Ease is affected by income (0.09*) and Value is affected by marital status (0.13**). None of the factors for consumers’ choice of shopping channels is affected by education. The level of significance was at * p <0.05, **p < 0.01, and ***p < 0.001 respectively.

Conclusion and Implications

Today’s consumers are increasingly shopping across multi-channels and are trying to maximize their shopping benefits and minimize their shopping costs. Gender was the independent variable which significantly influenced most of the factors of shopping benefits and purchase intentions of each channel thus suggesting that male and female consumers perceive shopping benefits and purchase intentions differently thus affecting the eventual patronage intention. Age was also another independent variable that influenced shopping benefits and purchase intention factors. Also, gender and age were important variables with respect to consumers’ overall shopping experience and choice of shopping channels and hence it is critical for retailers to understand their consumers’ needs across channels and across different product categories. This is a very relevant topic and the examination of retailing in the
mainstream economy in the rural areas will help understand "forces that affect rural areas" and help "create new programs for improving the social vitality and economic strength of rural consumers and places."

References


Pre-Teen Fashion: Parents’ Attitudes and Behaviors

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Key words: pre-teen, fashion, attitudes, behaviors

Preadolescents and teens is one of the fastest growing market sectors in the United States. According to U.S. Census 2000 data, there are over 40 million Americans between the ages of 10 and 19, representing 15 percent of the total population. Teenage Research Unlimited data show that U.S. teens (ages 12 to 19) spent $172 billion in 2001, an 11 percent increase over the 2000. Michael Wood, Vice President of Teenage Research Unlimited, says “We expect overall teen spending to continue to increase along with the increase in size of this demographic group. The number of teens in the U.S. population has been growing since 1992, and is going to continue to grow until the year 2010, at which time there will be more teens in the U.S. population than ever before. We expect that per-capita spending will remain roughly the same, but we’ll see a gradual increase due to the increase in the size of the population” (http://www.rab.com/sales_meetings/7-02-2.html). Therefore, teens and pre-teens are being targeted heavily by marketers, who recognize the cash clout and influence on family purchases of this consumer group. Marketers also capitalize on the knowledge that the junior high school years are a time of vulnerability to peer pressure and conformity. With pre-teens closely following teen fashions, especially the exposed-look recently, some parents are becoming concerned. This study looked at pre-teens as a subgroup of this fast growing teen market.

Although two-thirds of teens say there is too much pressure to wear the "right" clothing, most have brand preferences with Tommy Hilfiger, Levi’s, The Gap, Polo and Calvin Klein mentioned the most. Friends are teens' most important fashion influences followed by print media (“Back to School,” 1998). Parents and daughters invariably do not agree on the appropriateness of their fashion choices (Waterhouse, 2004). The purpose of this study was to investigate the attitudes and behaviors of parents of pre-teens regarding fashion.

Method

An attitude refers to one’s affective evaluation of a concept which can be an idea or object. Although some authors use a multi-attribute model to measure attitudes, others use a simple concept proposed by Thurstone and Fishbein, that an attitude represents a person’s favorable or unfavorable feeling towards the object in question (Fishbein, 1980). A 5-point agree/disagree Likert-type scale was used in this study to measure attitudes. A similar scale was used to measure related behaviors.

A convenience sample of one hundred parents of pre-teens were surveyed on their attitudes and behaviors towards pre-teen fashion and their daughter’s clothing. Eight attitudinal questions and six...
behavioral questions were included on the survey in addition to demographic questions of age, income, marital status and gender of the parents. Parents were interviewed over a two-week period outside a popular mall. Descriptive statistics were run on the data, and correlations, t-tests and chi-square analyses were used to support hypotheses of relationships between the demographics (as the independent variables) and attitudes and behaviors (as the dependent variables).

Results

About two-thirds of the surveyed parents were married, three-quarters were female, and the large majority was between 32 and 44 years of age. Income levels were evenly distributed among three groups: below $50,000, between $50,000 and $75,000, and over $75,000.

About half of the sample permitted their pre-teen daughters to choose their own clothes, and two-thirds shopped with their daughters. Almost half had bought a designer fashion for their pre-teens who were familiar with designer labels. Two-thirds did not allow their daughters to wear makeup nor allow them to buy whatever clothing they wanted. Only one-third were satisfied with pre-teen fashions today. Three-quarters said mini skirts and cropped shirts were not acceptable for their daughters, but their daughters dressed appropriately for their age, and that apparel for the pre-teen market is suitable for their age group. Only one-third agreed their clothing prices were moderate. Two-thirds felt both peers and the media influenced their daughter’s dress.

Single and married parents differed on some of these attitudes and behaviors based on t-test scores. Married parents significantly more than single parents let their daughters choose their own clothes, felt they dressed appropriately for their age, and agreed their daughters were familiar with designer labels.

Married parents appeared to be somewhat more liberal than single parents, allowing their daughters to buy whatever clothes they wanted and disagreeing less that miniskirts and cropped tops were acceptable.

Fathers and mothers significantly disagreed on some attitudes and behaviors based on t-test analysis.

Mothers were satisfied with fashion trends, felt that pre-teen apparel was suitable for their daughter’s age group, said they were familiar with designer labels, let their daughters choose their clothes, allowed them to wear make-up, and shopped with them more than their fathers.

The age of the parent related to attitudes and behaviors in five instances based on Pearson correlations. Younger parents allowed their daughters to wear make-up, buy whatever clothes they wanted, and felt cropped tops and pre-teen apparel were acceptable and suitable for their age, while older parents felt peer and media influenced their daughter’s style.

Parent’s income level was related to nine attitudes and behaviors using Chi-square analysis. The lowest income group was most satisfied with fashion trends and felt more that cropped tops were acceptable,
while the highest income group let daughters choose their own clothes, felt prices were moderate, bought designer clothes for their daughters, agreed they were familiar with designer labels, felt their daughters dressed appropriately, and pre-teen fashions were acceptable. Parents from the medium income group shopped most with their daughters and felt the media influenced them.

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Conclusions/Implications

Conclusions are limited to one geographical area; however, the data clearly indicate that the demographic make-up of parents affect their attitudes and behaviors related to their pre-teens’ clothing. Younger and married parents generally appear to be more liberal. Mothers agree more than fathers on most of the attitudes and behaviors investigated. This may be an indication that they participate more in the issue of their daughter’s clothing choices. Those with higher incomes buy more designer items and their daughters are aware of designer labels. They also let their children choose their clothes more. Marketers may be able to use these findings in their approach to advertising and promotional campaigns. Apparel companies should take note of the number of parents who are dissatisfied with the clothing available to their pre-teens. Fashions deemed inappropriate for young girls appearing in the media may cause dissention in the family unit.

References


Cross Cultural Intimacy? – A study of intimate apparel between the East and the West

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Key words: pajamas, consumer behavior, cross-cultural

Today in China, we could see people walking down the high streets in pajamas (see picture 1), while in the west, we see pajamas not only in the bedrooms, girls have slumber parties for different reasons, as marriage or baby showers or even for retirements; schools have pajama days for a variety of reasons (see picture 2). Consumer attitudes and behaviors toward “pajamas” would seem to be quite different in these two different cultures.

This comparative research project attempts to uncover some of the cultural, functional and symbolic meanings that are associated with “pajamas” in the twenty-first century.

Consumption of DIY (do it yourself) meanings

In this era of globalization, objects of our material culture have transcended functional values and have become of greater symbolic importance (Baudrillard, 1998; Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998). These symbols have gone through a process of re-signification across time and across cultures and functional design details of the past have become today’s traditions. In the process of cross-cultural assimilation, foreign influences are absorbed and the meaning of products are modified within our local cultures (Arnould & Wilk, 1985). New DIY meanings are created almost daily (Willis, 1990).

A Serendipitous Beginning

Zaltman (2000) posits the importance of serendipity in consumer research. This research was initiated when the first author (Rahman) worked with his students on a design competition project sponsored by major pajamas/socks manufacturer in Canada. The students were asked to develop a new menswear pajamas line for their selected market segment in Canada. Before their design process began, the students based their concept on research of their targeted customers’ aspirations and unmet needs. From their market survey, done through a questionnaires and personal interview process, their findings indicated some interesting data that deserves further examination. Among 120 Canadian males from age 15 to 25, it was discovered that boxers and T-shirts tended to be the current norm; some respondents either sleep naked or half-naked with boxers or briefs only. Only a small number out of the total number of respondents wore traditional pajamas when going to bed.

Questions

Through this pilot survey, the following questions have been raised for further investigation.
What is the definition of “pajamas” for the young male adult in today’s world?

Has a pair of boxers and a T-shirt become the standard, and have they essentially replaced traditional pajamas? When and for what reasons did this shift occur?

Is this a global trend among the young today? What happens in the other parts of the world?

Do we (researcher and practitioners) need to rethink and redefine what “pajamas” are? Are they outdated or still necessary, or are they just something else?

What suggestions could be recommended to designers, apparel manufacturers and academic researchers to further explore this topic in the future?

**A glimpse of the intimacies between the East and the West**

In order to answer those questions in a wider spectrum, a comprehensive survey will be undertaken in two different sites – the cities of Toronto, Canada and Hangzhou, China. This research project will focus mainly on the youth market (age 15-20); for it is this segment of society (Hogg, Bruce, & Hill, 1998; Thompson & Haytko, 1997) that plays a pivotal and important role in the decisions that are made in the boardroom today. This is seen especially in the fashion industry, which focuses on a creative DIY identity (Willis, 1990).

The original questionnaires will be written in English and then translated into Chinese, each version used in their prospective location. A comparison analysis will be developed from the findings to explain how pajamas are perceived in those cities by the young. Also, the evolving conception of “pajamas” will also be examined in the context of contemporary culture and a conceptual framework of modern pajamas will be established.

Utilitarian values (Csikszentmihalyi et al. 1981) and psychological values (Kaiser 1990) will be discussed in this research project as well. According to the aforementioned student survey, many respondents prefer wearing boxers and T-shirts to bed as opposed to traditional pajamas. Thus, this study will also attempt to determine what functional qualities and psychological attributes are embedded in the minds of today’s youth, and the criteria in which their choices are made.

**In a nutshell**

To our knowledge, there has never been a study on the subject of pajamas in this area. Based on the initial information from our student’s findings, we believe this topic now deserves an in-depth investigation. Pajamas used to be considered as a homogenous product (Kotler & Armstrong, 2001) but this item seems to have taken on a new dimension on the stage of our image-based consumer culture. Through this cross-cultural study, we hope to gain newer understanding and insights into the use of
pajamas from different perspectives, as well as to potentially reveal the omnipresence of a consumer culture that serves as the connecting thread of our globalize world.

References


(pic. 1 People walking down the high street in pajamas, Shanghai)

(pic. 2 Pajama day in a US High School)
Consumer Perceptions of Bio-based Non-woven Composites Products: A Pilot Exploratory Study

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Key words: bio-based; environment; adoption; consumers

Introduction

Environmental protection is a growing concern among U.S. consumers, and demand for environmentally friendly materials is increasing. Development of bio-based, biodegradable products, therefore, may be of special interest to contemporary consumers. Bio-based non-woven composites (BNC), which are biodegradable, are made of natural resources such as corn, sugar cane, and soybeans. Fibers extracted from these materials are fused together to form a non-woven structure, which can be used to make environmentally friendly products. Use of renewable and sustainable materials results in positive impacts not only for the environment, but also for rural economies by reducing reliance on petrochemicals and emphasizing value added use of domestically produced crops. Based on potential environmental and economic benefits, research and development efforts currently are focusing on bio-based materials. The federal government is providing additional support for development in this arena by establishing purchasing policies which require bio-based products. Market demand for most BNC products, traditionally, has been limited to industrial end uses such as packing, construction insulation, and landscaping materials. Recently, however, some BNC products have been applied to automotive interiors, and development of bio-based products for a variety of other end uses is underway (Böttcher, 2003). BNC products, for example, can be developed for use in consumer furnishing applications such as interior blinds and frames, replacing non-biodegradable materials such as plastics.

Purpose

The purpose of the present research was to examine consumer awareness and perceptions of BNC and BNC products. Perceptions, current knowledge, and environmental concerns of potential consumers were investigated. Previous research has shown that environmental concern is significantly related to environmental purchase behaviors (e.g., Shetzer et al., 1991). The primary focus in this study, therefore, was environmental consciousness as a characteristic of potential BNC product adopters. This research will contribute to further development of bio-based products by suggesting marketing strategies that should be effective in attracting targeted consumers.

Methodology and Data Analysis
A survey employing Likert-type items was administered to a convenience sample of college students in a large Southeastern university. The pilot sample consisted of 201 respondents, with 96.5% of the respondents female and 2.5% male. Respondents first were asked to indicate their knowledge of and experience with bio-based materials. Then, they were provided with an explanation of BNC and BNC products, including current applications and potential future applications to consumer products. Additional survey items were included to measure attitude, adoption intention, and willingness to pay more for consumer products made from bio-based materials. Four items designed to measure attitude toward BNC products were adapted from Ratneshwar & Chaiken (1991). Four items measuring adoption intention were adapted from Fisher & Price (1992). Environmental concern was measured by Noe and Snow’s (1990) New Environmental Paradigm (NEP) scale, consisting of 12 items designed to measure general position about society and the environment. An additional scale of four items was included to measure concern regarding landfills, an environmental issue closely related to benefits of BNC products. Principal components analysis with varimax rotation and ordinary least squares regression techniques were employed in data analysis.

Findings

Principal components analysis with a varimax rotation revealed very similar dimensionality of the NEP scale to Shetzer et al.’s (1991) research. The items were labeled: 1) balance of nature, 2) limit to growth, and 3) man over nature. One item that did not meet the .5 factor-loading criterion was dropped. The reliability coefficients for the three items were .81 (4 items), .75 (3 items), and .75 (4 items) respectively. Reliability analyses resulted in the following: attitude toward BNC consumer products (Cronbach’s alpha = .90), adoption intention (.82), and concern over landfill (.88).

In this pilot sample, 70.6% of the respondents indicated they had never heard the term ‘bio-based’. Among nine (4.5%) respondents who indicated they could provide a definition of the term ‘bio-based’, only seven were able to provide a reasonably accurate description. This suggests that current knowledge level of bio-based products is very low. A series of ordinary least squares regression analyses revealed that: 1) concern over landfill was significantly related to all dependent variables (i.e., attitude, adoption intention, and willingness to pay more) (β = .29, p < .01; β = .40, p < .01; β = .21, p < .01); 2) balance of nature (β = .20, p < .05) and man over nature (β = .16, p < .05) dimensions were significantly related to adoption intention; and 3) the limit to growth dimension was related to willingness to pay more (β = .16, p < .10). These results suggest that concern regarding landfills is a strong underlying motivational factor in both adoption and willingness to pay higher prices for BNC products.

Conclusions and Implications

While general concerns over harmony between nature and humans seemed to be related to intention to adopt BNC products, a sense of resource scarcity appeared to possess a more significant relationship with consumer willingness to pay more for a BNC product. This implies that market...
strategies employed to approach consumers with BNC products should address landfill issues and include messages of specific environmental benefits of bio-based products. Messages that address the balance of nature and humans also may be effective in stimulating consumer purchases. While introduction of bio-based products may be costly due to initial developmental expense, findings of the present exploratory study suggest that consumers may be willing to pay a higher price if a sense of urgency regarding natural resource depletion is addressed in the marketing message.

References


Effects of Body Image and Internalized Homophobia on Shopping Behavior

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Keywords:  shopping, homophobia, body image

Shopping behaviors include a variety of actions and attitudes taken with regard to spending and purchasing. Body image encompasses the thoughts and behaviors towards one’s body (Thompson, Heinberg, Altabe, & Tantleff-Dunn, 1999). How one perceives one’s body affects what one does to it, and conversely, what one does to one’s body affects how one perceives it. Body image is linked to compulsive shopping (Lee, 1998), shopping enjoyment, and monetary amounts (Shim, Kotsiopulos, & Knoll, 1991). Shim et al. (1991) showed that men with body dissatisfaction are more likely to shop from catalogues.

Gay men are more dissatisfied with their appearance than straight men (Morrison, Morrison, & Sager, 2004). They are more attuned to body size and use methods such as exercise, dieting, and bodybuilding to control it (Pope, Jr., Phillips, & Olivardia, 2000). When people are dissatisfied with their bodies they seek means to change them, such as purchasing clothing to conceal perceived flaws (Sontag & Achlater, 1982). Also, gay men whose are dissatisfied with their bodies may compensate by wearing expensive name-brand clothing (Kates, 2002).

Currently, consumer spending is the norm (Roberts & Jones, 2001), with debt commonplace (Lea, Webly, & Walker, 1995; Zukerman 2000). Credit cards facilitate consumer purchases; price is not important to consumers with access to a credit card (Roberts & Jones, 2001). Simply having a credit card allows many consumers the ability to purchase items they normally would not purchase.

Although it is thought that gay people have higher incomes than straight people (Cronin, 1993; Lukenbill, 1995) in truth gay and straight people have similar incomes (Badgett, 1998; Yankelovich, 1994). “The average lesbian or gay man earns no more than the average heterosexual woman or man, and in some cases, gay people earn less on average” (Badgett, 1998, p. 12). Thus, gay men may use credit cards if they do not have the income necessary to alter their appearances as desired.

Internalized homophobia (IH) is a gay person’s acceptance of social standards towards gay people (Hudson & Rickets, 1980). Nearly all gay men experience IH (Forstein, 1988; Gonsiorek, 1988). As IH increased in gay men, they may try to visually change their appearance from “gay” to “straight.” Shopping has a long association with women and gay men. Men with high levels of IH may avoid shopping so as not to appear “gay.” It may indicate that gay men
with high levels of IH shop less frequently, spend less time shopping, and enjoy shopping less than gay men with low levels of IH.

Based on the literature, the following hypotheses were developed:

H1: Credit card debt will be correlated with body image and IH
H2: Frequency of shopping will be correlated with body image and IH
H3: Enjoyment from shopping will be correlated with body image and IH
H4: Amount of time spent shopping will be correlated with body image and IH
H5: Venue of shopping will be correlated with body image and IH

Methodology

Instruments

Body image was assessed using three subscales of the Multidimensional Body-Self Relations Questionnaire (Cash, 1996): Appearance Orientation, Appearance Evaluation, and Body Areas Satisfaction. Appearance orientation is the investment one has in one’s appearance; appearance evaluation is a general satisfaction with one’s body; and body areas satisfaction is one’s level of approval of specific regions of the body. All subscales have demonstrated accepted reliabilities (Cash, 1989; Cash, 1996; Muth & Cash, 1997).

IH was measured using the Nungesser Homosexual Attitudes Inventory (NHAI) (Nungesser, 1983). The NHAI contains three subscales: attitudes towards one’s own homosexuality; attitudes towards other’s homosexuality; and attitudes towards revealing one’s homosexuality to others. The subscales have demonstrated acceptable reliabilities (Nungesser, 1983).

Shopping behavior was measured with seven questions. Questions covered amount of credit card debt, frequency of shopping, location of shopping (e.g., department, specialty, discount, and thrift stores, catalogues, online, and television), amount of time spent during shopping, products for which one is shopping (i.e., clothing, shoes, fragrances, accessories, and grooming products), and enjoyment from shopping.

A demographic questionnaire included age, race, income, education, geographic region, income, education, sexual orientation, and relationship status.

Participants

Participants (N=213) were gay men who were at least 18 years of age and learned of this study by word-of-mouth, flyers, postings in gay-oriented on-line chat rooms, postings on gay oriented electronic bulletin boards, or by conducting an Internet search using the words body image, body satisfaction, gay, internalized homophobia, shopping, or consumer behavior. Participants were advised of their rights and that the information they gave was confidential and voluntary.
Data Collection & Analysis

Data were collected using a web-based questionnaire, which was listed with two Internet search directories. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used to analyze the data. Frequencies and means were used for the basic demographics and descriptives, while correlations were used to test hypotheses.

Results

Data from 213 men were analyzed. The average participant is a single, white, gay male age 35, who lives in the USA, has some college experience, and an income between $20,000 and $40,000. Average credit card debt was between $501 and $1000. Participants shopped an average of 1 to 2 hours per excursion and shopped once a month for clothing or grooming products. The preferred shopping venues were department, specialty, and discount stores. Participants indicated they found shopping for clothing and grooming products enjoyable ($M$=2.47 on scale of 1 to 5). Participants shop mostly for clothing and grooming products.

Analysis

Credit card debt was positively related to IH, but it was not related with body image. Therefore, hypothesis 1 was rejected. Frequency of shopping was positively correlated with appearance orientation ($r=0.567$), but not IH. Therefore, hypothesis 2 was partially accepted. Enjoyment from shopping was not correlated with body image or IH. Therefore, hypothesis 3 was rejected. Amount of time spent shopping was not correlated with BI or IH. Therefore, hypothesis 4 was rejected. Shopping venues were correlated with body image and IH. Shopping in a department store was negatively related to appearance satisfaction ($r=-0.170$). Shopping in a specialty store was positively related to appearance orientation ($r=0.484$). Shopping in a thrift store was negatively related to appearance orientation ($r=-0.253$), but positively related to appearance evaluation ($r=0.184$) and appearance satisfaction ($r=0.161$). Shopping via television was negatively related to appearance satisfaction ($r=-0.210$). And shopping in a thrift store was negatively related to attitudes towards others homosexuality ($r=-0.144$). Therefore, hypothesis 5 was partially supported.

Discussion & Implications

Results imply that gay men with high levels of IH may use credit cards to purchase items they could not afford. Perhaps this is done in an attempt to create the illusion of masculinity/heterosexuality, with subjecting thinking that purchasing goods is masculine. Surprisingly, body image was not related to credit card debt. However, previous research which has found a connection between body image and IH (Reilly & Rudd, in review) implies that there is an indirect connection between body image and credit card debt.

A few dimensions of body image are related to shopping behavior. That appearance orientation and frequency of shopping are related is not surprising, and implies that as gay men
become more concerned with their physical appearance, they are more likely to shop. Perhaps this is motivates gay men to find ways to adorn themselves and find ways to call attention to their bodies. However, appearance satisfaction was negatively related to department store and television shopping, implying that gay men turn to convenient shopping venues when they find their appearance distasteful. This may be due to the abundance and variety of styles offered at these venues. Additionally, attitudes towards other’s homosexuality and appearance orientation were negatively related to appearance orientation, perhaps meaning that a thrift store is associated with a “gay” arena for shopping and the items found in a thrift store are viewed as unflattering to the body.

These results can be used in credit counseling and therapy sessions for gay men. Gay men need to be aware of the potential of debt if their IH levels are high. The results can also be used to add to current theory on consumer behavior, by showing that specific aspects of body image, internalized homophobia, and sexual orientation impact shopping.

References


Consumer Traits and their Relationship to Merchandise Borrowing

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Key Words: consumers, fraudulent, merchandise borrowing

Introduction/Significance of research. Retailers are well aware of the practice of merchandise borrowing (Chandler, 2005; Mercer, 2005; Kang, 2004). The cost of merchandise borrowing for 2002 was estimated to be $16 billion (Kang). Total inventory shrinkage (including shoplifting, employee theft, vendor theft, and administrative errors) for this same year was estimated at $31.3 billion (Chandler). Piron and Young (2000) defined merchandise borrowing as purchasing items with the intention to return items once they have been used satisfactorily. Limited research attention has been paid to fraudulent consumer behaviors, such as merchandise borrowing, with the exception of shoplifting. The purpose of our research was to identify consumer traits that influence merchandise borrowing. Using Fullerton and Punj (1993)'s aberrant consumer behavior (ACB) model we investigated whether demographic characteristics (i.e., age, sex, marital status, major, employment status, retail work experience, income), psychological characteristics (i.e., self-esteem, materialism, cynicism, attitude toward business), and social group influences (i.e., merchandise borrowing of known others) influenced past merchandise borrowing behavior and future intentions concerning merchandise borrowing.

Related literature and model. Piron and Young (2000) developed a profile of the typical merchandise borrower. Female participants borrowed four times more often than did male. Almost all reported cases were related to clothing items. Participants most frequently indicated they borrowed merchandise to meet social needs (e.g., borrowing done to attend and participate in social events). While some borrowers indicated they felt guilty about borrowing, others did not express any guilt. Rather, participants reasoned that “the stores could afford it”, and “as long as it is not illegal it [borrowing] is okay”. Most borrowers indicated they intended to borrow in the future.

Fullerton and Punj (1993) defined aberrant consumer behavior (ACB) as “behavior in exchange settings which violates the generally accepted norms of conduct in such situations and which is therefore held in disrepute by marketers and by most consumers” (p.570). In their proposed model, Fullerton and Punj identified two major factors they believed resulted in either fraudulent or nonfraudulent consumer behavior: consumer traits and characteristics of market settings. Fullerton and Punj did not test the proposed relationships predicted by their model. Our research focused on consumer traits: demographic characteristics, psychological characteristics, and social group influences.

Method. Data were collected using a convenience sample of 269 university undergraduate students. A questionnaire was used to gather data and contained six parts. The first part asked about shopping
frequency. The second part contained an eight-item activism (attitudes toward business) measure (Wilkes, 1978) and a 17-item materialism scale (Richins & Dawson, 1992). The third part contained a measure of social group influence, instruments designed to measure explanations for borrowing by others as well as self, a measure of attitudes toward merchandise borrowing, and a measure of past borrowing behavior. All measures in the third part were developed by the researchers. The fourth part contained scales to measure future borrowing behavior. The fifth part asked participants to supply demographic information. The last part contained a five-item cynicism measure (Rosenbaum, 2003), a five-item neutralization scale (Strutton et. al, 1994), and a 10-item self-esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1965). Participants indicated the extent of their agreement with items in the scales by choosing a response from seven-point scales ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, binary logistics regressions, and multiple regressions.

Results. In terms of demographic characteristics, our participants were relatively homogeneous. Participants’ ages ranged from 18 to 54 with a mean of 21. Participants were women (89.8 %) and single (95.1 %). Most participants were retail merchandising or design related majors (68.9%). Participants were currently employed (79.2%) and worked at retail stores (41.9%). Most participants had experience working for retailers (70.8%). Almost all participants had incomes of less than $10,000. Some participants (18.3%) shared that they borrowed merchandise in the past. Most products borrowed (82.6%) were fashion related products (e.g., clothing and accessories). Nearly forty percent of the participants (39.8%) indicated that someone well known to them borrowed merchandise. Products that these well-known others borrowed also were primarily fashion related products (82.3%). Individuals also borrowed electronics, tools, CDs, software for computer games, home decorations, and tents.

Binary logistic regression analysis indicated that past borrowing behavior was significantly associated with the demographic variable marital status ($\beta = -3.501$, $p < .05$) and social group influence\(^1\) ($\beta = -1.83$, $p < .05$). Participants who were married and knew several other people that borrowed were more likely to have borrowed merchandise.

Multiple regression analysis indicated that future borrowing intention was significantly influenced by attitude toward merchandise borrowing ($\beta = .322$, $p < .001$), followed by the amount of money spent for clothing and accessories ($\beta = .198$, $p < .05$), materialism ($\beta = .182$, $p < .05$), and the social group influence ($\beta = .169$, $p < .05$). Participants, who had positive attitudes toward borrowing, spent greater on clothing and accessories, were materialistic, and knew several other people that borrowed planned to borrow merchandise in the future than others.

\(^1\) In order to make standardized coefficients, researchers transformed it to standardized scale. On the scale, the coefficient represents the change in $\log(p/1-p)$ expected when moving from the low to high extremes of the scale.
Conclusions/Implications. Our research provides partial support for the aberrant consumer behavior (ACB) model. Only social group influence significantly affected the practice of borrowing in the past and in the future. Social group influence may be a normalizing effect on merchandise borrowing. The amount of money spent for clothing and accessories and materialism significantly influenced future intentions to borrow suggesting these individuals place a high value on apparel and perhaps borrow it to impress others. Materialists assess others’ as well as their accomplishments through material possessions (Richins & Dawson, 1992).

References


COLLEGE STUDENTS’ SHOPPING BEHAVIORS BASED ON PRODUCT INVOLVEMENT

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Key Words: Product Involvement and Shopping Orientations

Most apparel retailers target younger generation between 18 and 24 years old because this young group has more purchasing power than the adult market and because young consumers are highly influenced by the newest fashion and fads. The market of the younger generation is expanding with its buying power and has become lucrative. Moreover, many apparel retailers create the marketing strategies to capture college consumers.

It is important to study college students’ shopping behaviors because college students are moving into the real consumers in retail areas. Therefore, this study provides a more comprehensive understanding of college consumers’ shopping behaviors. The purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of product involvement on the college consumer shopping behaviors. This study specifically focuses on the button down shirt. This study also explores how retail store’s preferences, shopping orientations, and information sources affect shopping behaviors toward clothing. In addition, this study helps the apparel retailers to design the best marketing strategies and server college consumers more effectively.

Results are based on responses of 538 college students aged 18 and older. Using the eight items from the product involvement scale, a sum score was derived with range 8 (low) to 56 (high). Reliability (Cornbach alpha) of product involvement of a button down shirt in the college student is 0.88 (p< .001). The results indicated that a means score of product involvement is 34.57. The college students have highly considered their button down shirts.

Product involvement scores were used to develop low and high involvement groups. High and low involvement groups were created by sorting respondents into one of two groups. The mean score plus or minus the standard deviation (M ± SD: M = 34.57, SD = 9.40) was used to create the groupings. The range of summed scores of low involvement (n=93, 17.3%) was from 8 to 25 and the range of summed scores of high involvement (n=93, 17.3%) was from 44 to 56. Respondents whose mean scores clustered around the means (between 26 and 43) were not classified into the groups and were eliminated from further analysis (n=352, 65.4%).

When college consumers were shopping for button down shirts, they significantly concerned about shopping orientations. High product involvement consumers scored higher on shopping orientation factors; fashion consciousness, brand consciousness, and shopping behaviors, than low product involvement consumers. Additionally college consumers greatly used direct and indirect information sources. High product involvement consumers were more influenced by direct and indirect information sources.
sources than the low product involvement consumers. High involvement consumers were more likely to consider about the design and image attribute than low involvement consumers.

High involvement consumers were more likely to purchase their button down shirts at department stores and specialty stores than low involvement consumers. The direct markets, such as catalog or mail ordering, were less interesting places for shopping to the college consumers. However, low involvement consumers were more likely to shop on the Internet than high involvement consumers.

High involvement consumers purchased more number of button down shirts and paid more money per piece of button down shirts than low involvement consumers. Moreover, high involvement consumers were likely to pay more than $20 per units of button down shirts. However, low involvement consumers paid less than $20 per item of button down shirts an average per visit. High involvement consumers bought their button down shirts before new classes begin and before the each season, but low involvement consumers purchased their button down shirts during the sale and when they had extra money for shopping.

This study reported that the different level of product (button down shirts) involvement led to different perception of shopping orientations and to different patterns of shopping behaviors. Before or during shopping, all kinds of information sources and product attitudes greatly influenced the college consumers.
Effects of Acculturation, Product Involvement, and Fashion Leadership on the Purchasing Decisions of American Students Abroad

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The factors that influence the purchasing decisions of American students in foreign countries are multidimensional and varied. This study examines the interrelationships of acculturation, product involvement, and fashion leadership with regard to their influence on the purchasing decisions of American students studying abroad. Acculturation looks at one’s ability to adapt to or learn a second culture. Product involvement assesses one’s interest in a product category. Fashion leadership refers to a willingness to try new products while perceiving oneself as well informed of current clothing styles. Fashion leadership, acculturation, and product involvement serve as the theoretical framework for this study. When a student studies in a foreign culture, they experience a level of acculturation. This acculturation variable interacts with the set variables of fashion leadership and product involvement, variables based in one’s interest in clothing and ability to recognize fashion trends.

Three research questions were developed to explore the interrelationships of the aforementioned variables: (1) How does acculturation influence clothing purchasing behavior while in foreign countries? (2) How does personal interest in clothing influence clothing purchasing behavior while in foreign countries? And (3) How does fashion leadership influence clothing purchasing behavior while in foreign countries?

Method

A questionnaire measured the purchasing behavior of students enrolled at a university located in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States who recently studied abroad. One hundred and eleven (101 female and 10 male) students completed the questionnaire. Survey respondents represented every academic college at the university and approximately 45 majors. The ages of survey respondents ranged from 18 to 23 (mean = 20 years). Collectively, the sample group visited approximately thirty different countries on all seven continents. The United Kingdom was the most frequently visited country. Twenty-seven students spent sixteen to thirty days abroad in the past year (24.3%), fifty-six students spent one to two months abroad in the past year (55.9%), and 21 students (18.9%) spent three to four months abroad in the past year.

The survey instrument measured the following constructs: (1) level of acculturation, (2) product involvement, (3) fashion leadership, and (4) clothing purchasing behavior (dollar amount, and frequency). All items were measured on a 7-point Likert type scale (1 = “Strongly Disagree”, 7 = “Strongly Agree”).

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ITAA Proceedings, #62 - www.itaaonline.org
Measures Measures of behavioral acculturation were adapted from a study by Shen, Dickson, Lennon, Montalto, and Zang (2003). Factor analysis identified two separate constructs of acculturation: clothing related acculturation and consumption related acculturation (cumulative variance = 56%). Reliability statistics (Cronbach’s alpha) for these components were .86 and .65.

The Kapferer and Laurent scale (Kapferer & Laurent, 1994), which contains five antecedents of product involvement, was used to measure consumer interest in clothing items. Five components of product involvement were measured: interest, pleasure, sign value, risk importance, and probability of error. Principal component analysis with varimax rotation suggested four factors of product involvement. Interest and pleasure serve as a combined factor (which was renamed “interest/pleasure” to represent the character of the combined items); sign value, risk importance, and probability of error serve as individual components (cumulative variance = 71%). Cronbach’s alphas reported a range of .64 to .91.

Fashion leadership was measured by adapting items from Hirschman and Adcock (1978), Summers, Belleau, and Wozniak (1992), and Goldsmith, Freiden, and Kilsheimer (1993). Principal component analysis with varimax rotation produced a single factor for fashion leadership. Cronbach’s alpha for the fashion leadership scale was .93. Finally, purchasing behavior was measured by asking students the amount of dollars spent on clothing while abroad and frequency of shopping.

Results and Discussion

Prior to data analysis, mean scores were derived for the multi-item variables. Correlation tables verified the interrelationships among constructs. Stepwise regression was used to determine the relationship among variables. Stepwise regression is a technique for choosing the variables to include in a multiple regression model. Using shopping frequency as the dependent variable, stepwise regression analysis found the interest/pleasure component of product involvement (b = .31, p = .001) to be a significant predictor (R² = .32). Furthermore, the interest/pleasure component of product involvement (b = .27, p = .005) and clothing related acculturation (b = .23, p = .017) were determined to explain amount spent (R² = .32).

Our findings show clothing related acculturation influences the purchasing behavior of American students while studying abroad. This construct assesses one’s interest in purchasing clothing items abroad for the belief that the quality is better, the styles are more up to date with fashion, and/or the clothing will help them blend in better with the population of their host culture. Findings also suggest that the interest/pleasure aspect of product involvement is a strong influencer of how much and how often one shops abroad. Future research is warranted to investigate the extent of influence that clothing related acculturation can exert on purchasing behavior of those who spend time abroad. In addition, Future research may be conducted to provide in-depth knowledge of the relationship between each component of product involvement and how those components are related to how clothing assists
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often one shops abroad. Future research is warranted to investigate the extent of influence that clothing related acculturation can exert on purchasing behavior of those who spend time abroad. In addition, Future research may be conducted to provide in-depth knowledge of the relationship between each component of product involvement and how those components are related to how clothing assists in one’s acculturation. Also, an in-depth study of how fashion leadership may influence clothing consumption in a non-native country is needed.

References


Consumer-Brand Relationship and Attitudes toward Counterfeit Products among Consumers of Fashion Luxury Goods

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Keywords: consumer-brand, relationship, luxury goods

The number of counterfeit products on the global market has rapidly increased. Accordingly, much research (e.g., Kenhove, Wulf, & Steenhaut, 2003; Tom, Garibaldi, Zeng, & Pilcher, 1998) has focused on marketing strategies to discourage illegal manufacturing and selling of counterfeit products. In spite of such efforts against, counterfeit products such as Gucci or Louis Vuitton handbags continue to increase globally. However, it can be argued that those who have purchased luxury goods might have stronger consumer-brand relationships and have less supportive attitudes toward counterfeit products than those who have not. According to some researchers (e.g., Fournier, 1998), consumer-brand relationship theory provides a context for better understanding the relationship consumers form with the brands they purchase. Based on the consumer-brand theory, we assume that buyers of fashion luxury goods may have stronger consumer-brand relationship than non-buyers. Although there has been increased awareness of genuine and counterfeit products issues, there is little research to examine if buyers of genuine goods have a stronger consumer-brand relationship and less supportive attitudes toward counterfeit products than non-buyers. Therefore, the purposes of this study are to examine if consumers who have purchased fashion luxury goods tend to have stronger consumer-brand relationship than non-buyers, and if they develop less supportive attitudes toward counterfeit fashion products.

A total of 388 college women who enrolled in apparel-related courses volunteered to participate in this study. The average of age was 23.4 years. Elimination of incomplete responses left 375 eligible responses for analysis. For instruments, consumer-brand relationship (Fournier, 1998) and attitudes toward counterfeiting (Tom et al., 1998) were used for this study. For data analysis, descriptive statistics, factor analysis, Pearson’s correlations, ANOVA, and t-test were used. As a result, buyers of fashion luxury goods tend to have higher scores on consumer-brand relationships than non-buyers (p<.001). Also, among buyers of fashion luxury goods, heavy buyers tend to have strong consumer-brand relationships than light buyers (p<.05). Factors analyses of attitudes toward counterfeit products revealed the following factors: purchasing as alternatives, no-guilt, toward the legality of manufacturing and selling, and attitudes toward the quality. Buyers of fashion luxury goods tend to perceive counterfeit goods as less alternative of genuine products, and to feel guiltier toward purchasing of...
counterfeits than non-buyers (p<.001). Also, the luxury goods buyers tend to have less positive attitudes toward the legality of manufacturing, selling, and buying of counterfeits (p<.001). In addition, buyers of fashion luxury goods tend to consider counterfeit goods as lower quality of products than non-buyers (p<.0001).

These results imply that our data confirm that manufacturers of genuine products need no worry about the rapidly growing circulation of counterfeits because buyers of genuine products have consumer-brand relationship with the genuine products. That is, consumers of genuine goods tend to perceive the brands as relationship partner. However, to make consumers of counterfeits into consumers of genuine products more quickly, it is necessary for marketers of genuine products should develop strategies that teach consumers of counterfeit products that the benefits of genuine products exceed those of counterfeits and the risks of counterfeits are far greater than they think. These findings would benefit marketers and policy makers of fashion luxury goods in understanding the consumers of fashion luxury goods. In addition, it would contribute to the development of a more rigorous methodology for researching consumer-brand relationships in variety of countries globally.

References


Telepresence and Fantasy in Online Apparel Shopping Experience

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Key words: telepresence, fantasy, experiential value, online apparel shopping

Background

Advances in website features (i.e., virtual 3D modeling) have helped the consumer approximate the product experience in a brick-and-mortar store. This simulated product experience is tapped by the construct of telepresence (Klein, 2003; Shih, 1998; XXX, in press), which involves computer-mediated quality and quantity of information and ability to interact with an object or environment as found in the real environment (e.g., brick-and-mortar store). Telepresence positively affects consumer responses (e.g., willingness to purchase) by providing more complete information during evaluation of products (utilitarian value) and by augmenting pleasure (experiential value) during the shopping experience (XXX, in press). We further understanding of the effect of telepresence on consumer responses by examining the mechanism between telepresence and experiential value. In the present study, we propose that telepresence enhances experiential value through facilitation of imagery that involves post-purchase use of the product, termed “fantasy”. This proposition is in line with Holbrook’s (1986) Consciousness-Emotion-Value (CEV) model of consumption, which outlines that consciousness facilitates formation of emotion, which in turn, determines consumer value. According to the model, consciousness includes a variety of mental events such as fantasy during the consumption experience. Research (Fiore, Yan, & Yoh, 2000; MacInnis and Price, 1987) illustrates consumer responses are positively affected by such mental events. We also examine the effect of experiential/hedonic value on consumer responses. Further, we examine the effect of willingness to purchase on willingness to patronize (e.g., revisit the site) (See Graphic 1 for model hypotheses).

Figure 1. Path analysis model showing hypotheses and statistical values.
We used data gathered from eighty-six female undergraduate students of a Midwest university of the
Notes: Standardized path estimates are reported with t-values in parentheses.

* p ≤ 0.05; ** p ≤ 0.01; *** p ≤ 0.001
stimulate telepresence (XXX, in press) and then completed a questionnaire. Multi-item scales, found to
be reliable (alpha>.70) in past research and the present study, were used to measure telepresence (XXX,
in press), fantasy (Fiore & Yu, 2001), experiential value (McQuarrie and Munson, 1986), and willingness
to purchase from and patronize the website (XXX, in press).

Results of the study supported all hypotheses except hypothesis 5 (Graphic 1). Telepresence had a
significant direct effect on fantasy, but explained a small fraction (R² = .08) of its variance, suggesting
that other factors may influence fantasy. Telepresence and fantasy both significantly affected shopping
enjoyment, which led to willingness to purchase. Additionally, telepresence displayed a positive direct
effect on willingness to purchase, which may be due to the ability of telepresence to help consumers
acquire product information needed for rational decision-making before purchase. The hypothesis
proposing a direct effect of fantasy on willingness to purchase was not supported, but fantasy affected
willingness to purchase indirectly through enhanced shopping enjoyment. Therefore, fantasy may
augment the experiential value of the shopping experience rather than assist rational decision-making.
This supported Holbrook and Hirschman’s (1982) claim that experiential elements (fantasy, feelings, and
fun) deserve to be studied for their intrinsic value instead of focusing on their direct relationship with
purchase decisions. Future studies may test the effect of situational product presentations (e.g., 3D
model wearing a swimsuit on a beach) on produce fantasy, experiential value, and consumer responses.
In line with the CEV model, future studies may also explore the role of fantasy created by telepresence
on emotional state, such as level of emotional pleasure, arousal, and dominance and resulting consumer
responses towards the retailer and product.


XXX, (in press). Effect of image interactivity technology on approach responses towards the online retailer. *Journal of Interactive Marketing.*
Apparel Purchasing Behavior of Undergraduate Students

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Six hundred and eighty-two undergraduate students from two universities were surveyed in order to determine what factors are important to them when making clothing-purchasing decisions and how often they purchase clothing items at various retail formats. Respondents were also asked to indicate approximately how much money they spend on clothing items in a month compared to their monthly income. Students were from one university in the southeastern United States and one university in the mid-western United States.

Using a Likert scale with “1” being not important to “5” being very important, respondents were asked to indicate the level of importance of six factors when making clothing-purchasing decisions. The six factors included: 1) price, 2) fit, 3) country of origin, 4) uniqueness, 5) style of garment, and 6) brand.

Results indicated that price, fit, and style of garment showed the highest mean scores. “Style of garment” was the factor with the highest mean score at 4.4 followed closely by the factor “fit” with a mean score of 4.2. “Price” was also important to the respondents with a mean score of 3.2. “Country of origin” was the factor that respondents chose as the least important factor with a mean score of 1.2, and the “uniqueness” factor only rated slightly higher with a mean score of 1.7. Surprisingly, “brand” was also rated as being of little importance with a mean score of 2.7.

Respondents were also asked to indicate how often they purchased clothing items at various retail formats including, 1) mall, 2) discount store, 3) specialty store, 4) catalog, and 5) on-line. The scale used to obtain this information was 1) never, 2)1-3 times per year, 3) 1-3 times per month, and 4) 4-6 times per month. The majority of those surveyed purchased clothing items one to three times per month at discount stores and specialty stores. The results indicated that the college students surveyed rarely purchased clothing items on-line or from a catalog.

The approximate amount of money spent on clothing each month was also analyzed. Respondents were asked approximately how much money they spent each month on clothing by choosing one of three categories: 1) less than $50 per month, 2) less than $100 per month, or 3) more than $100 per month. The majority of the students surveyed indicated that they spend more than $100 a month on clothing items. However, the majority of respondents also indicated that their individual monthly incomes were less than $1000, so overall the students spent an average of more than ten percent on clothing items each month.
Most respondents were single, female, and between the ages of 18 and 24. The majority of the students surveyed attended school on a full-time basis and was employed on a part-time basis.
The Y generation's Consumption of the Generic Brands Apparels in Taiwan and the Quality of these Apparels

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Key words: generic brand apparel, Y generation, focus group interview, textiles and apparel testing

Generic brands or generic products, defined as “products which are named only by their generic class.” Generic brand apparel, which is defined as the non-store apparel sold on the street around the shopping center, is very popular in Taiwan. In general this type of apparels’ price range is between moderate and budget. The generic brand apparel in Taiwan included (1) counterfeit prestige brand, such as Burberry, Miss Sixty, Ralph Lauren, Abercrombie and Fitch, and so on; (2) direct-market’s apparels which are from the manufactory/wholesale to consumer; most of these are made in Taiwan, China, Korean, Hong Kong, or Indonesia; (3) some out of season’s stock of branded apparel, which would break the logo label of the apparel to keep it’s brand image. These generic brand apparel most are sold in following placements, (a) outside the traditional food market where sell the fresh meat and vegetable from 10am-2pm. Most consumers in here are house-keepers (mothers) and white-collar employees who come out to eat lunch. (b) The shopping centers around the famous department stores. There are different types of shopping centers in Taiwan, the young generation likes to go shopping in the department store and spend time around the shopping center. These shopping centers normally start their business at late afternoon and close the business around midnight. (c) Wholesales’ market street in the city, in each city there usually has a center for the wholesales apparel stores. They generally open from 10 am to 10 pm everyday. Now many consumers know the place and go the place to buy the apparel directly instead of purchase in the specialty store. (d) Online store, there are many people sold their clothing on the internet, this type of apparel normally doesn’t have the brand name and won’t tell you detail about the apparel.

The young generation can be separated to two groups: X generation (born between 1965 and 1976) and Y generation (born between 1977 and 1994). In Taiwan the Generation Y was born in the wealth life, they don’t have to worry their life, and most of them are self-centralize, like the fashion merchandises, don’t accept the traditional value or subject norms, like to enjoy life in food and apparel, and are materialism, and like the visual more than wordings (Pao, 1996). In this study we will interview a group of Y generation individuals. From the focus group interview, we found that the Y generation like go shopping a lot but the frequency is really depends on the friends’ invitation. They like to go department stores and also the shopping centers. The amount they spend on their apparel purchasing is about 10-20% of their allowance. If they have more allowance, they will spend more on clothing. They don’t have particular selection of the clothing types; they normally buy what they need at that moment.
Regarding to the social influence of the subjective norms, they will ask their friends’ opinion about the apparel, but they will listen to themselves to make the purchase decision. In addition, they mention, if the sales show them the fashion magazines about the dress they are looking, it will increase their purchase intention. According to the interviewer, they would buy the high fashion generic brand apparel which will be out of style fast in the shopping center. However, they would like to buy the better apparel in the department stores. They think the department stores’ apparel has better quality and service. They complained about the quality of the generic brand apparel, such as pilling in knitwear, separating of the button, the color fasten is really bad, and the shrinkage after washing. In general, Y generations’ after purchase satisfaction is low, but they will still consider repurchase the generic brand apparels if the high fashion apparel is wanted. Since the generic brand apparel is cheaper, after the fashion is out, they won’t feel sorry if they throw it away.

Since the after-purchase of the generic brand apparel’s satisfaction is low, researcher is interested to know in the scientific analyses of these apparels’ quality in “fiber content, color fastness in crocking and laundering, shrinkage after wash, and strength of tensile, tearing, and seaming”. The researcher bought 4 pieces of apparels, which included a knit top and three woven clothes from different locations. The American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) and American Association of Textile Chemists and Colorists (AATCC) methods for testing were used to examine the generic brand apparel quality. The results found the fiber contents were different from the labels in three apparels, the color fastness didn’t meet the requirement in all the testing apparel, and the pilling test in knitwear is poor in both from and back side. However, the three woven apparels did pass the strength test requirement in tensile strength, tearing strength, seam line strength.

References

Promotional Product Marketing to University Students

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Key Words: promotional, products, students, T-shirts

Conceptual Framework. "Promotional products marketing is an umbrella term for imprinted merchandise such as T-shirts, writing instruments, baseball caps, and coffee mugs" (Matteson, 1993, p. 31). Promotional items provide recurring advertising messages at minimum cost (Garretson & Burton, 1998). Individuals are encouraged by such advertising messages to view consumption of a particular product as an expression of personal identity (Breazeale, 1994). Arnett's (2000) theory of development proposes that ages 18 to 25 comprise a unique stage of life called emerging adulthood; a stage of life characterized by identity exploration. A T-shirt imprinted with a picture or slogan may reflect the wearer's identity, preferences, opinions, and so forth (Darden & Worden, 1991). Thus, it is logical that promotional items imprinted with brand names and their associated images would appeal to emerging adult consumers. Companies routinely market products to emerging adults that have been officially rated as unsuitable or illegal for them to use (Linn, 2000), for example, some promotional efforts by alcohol companies are designed to appeal to minors (Grube & Wallack, 1994; Ross & Teinowitz, 1997). One such promotional effort involves giving away T-shirts and other items advertising alcohol (Jutkins, 1995). Products promoted in this manner are especially attractive to minors because the products are free (Garretson & Burton, 1998). The purpose of this study was to survey a sample of university students to determine what promotional items they had received during the current academic year and, in particular, to look at use of T-shirts as promotional items.

Method. A list of 44 promotional items was compiled using a 2004 promotional items catalog as a guide. A convenience sample of students in two large lecture classes were asked to check beside items they had received this academic year, to list up to six companies providing the items, to list how many promotional T-shirts they had received, and the imprint on each T-shirt.

Results. Students (ages 17-27; 87 F; 30 M) represented 8 majors and all 4 years of undergraduate school. Among this group, 13% received 0 promotional items; 43% received 1-5 items; 29% received 6-10 items; and 15% received 11 or more items. Of 44 items, 42 were checked by at least one student. Frequently checked items were pens/pencils (n=71), T-shirts (n=60), magnets (n=56), calendars (n=48), water bottles (n=31), gum (n=28), key tags (n=27), mints (n=27), post-it notes (n=27), popcorn (n=25), and Frisbees (n=21). A variety of companies were listed as providing promotional items: the university (n=55), bookstores (n=49), restaurants (n=26), credit card companies (n=23), alcohol vendors (n=12), financial institutions (n=11), and others such as fraternities/sororities and churches. Number of T-shirts received ranged from 1 to 10; 54% of students received at least one promotional T-shirt. Most common
imprints on T-shirts were the university’s name and programs (n=46), credit cards (n=16), and alcohol vendors (n=16).

Conclusions. A perusal of the companies providing promotional items to this group of emerging adults gives a glimpse into appeals to personal identity issues: establishing an identity as a student at a particular university, as a member of a peer group, as independent in financial decisions, and as a risk-taker. Some products and services being promoted are controversial, for example, credit cards and alcohol. The controversy surrounding credit cards involves encouraging students to rely on delayed payments and possibly incurring problematic debt. The controversy surrounding promotion of alcohol is based on encouraging risk-taking behavior detrimental to health (Pollay, et al., 1996). These issues are pertinent to persons of all ages, however, in the lives of emerging adults, these issues are particularly important because the behaviors initiated during this time of life are likely to endure throughout adult life and either enhance or diminish the quality of adult life (Daughton, Daughton, & Patil, 1997).

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32.


Generation Y shopping center expectations: Implications for outlet centers

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Key Words: Outlets, Shopping, Generation Y

Purpose The purpose of this exploratory study was to compare consumers’ satisfaction regarding features offered at outlet shopping centers with their perceived importance of these shopping center features. Specifically, this study examined the perceptions of Generation Y consumers.

Background As outlet centers have evolved, they are now often in direct competition with traditional malls (Berman & Evans, 2001). Yet, the survival of traditional shopping centers has been threatened and traditional mall managers and mall retailers struggle to redefine their role (Daniel & Hughes, 2003). For decades, mall managers and retailers have focused their efforts toward meeting the needs of the affluent and enormous Baby Boom generation to the exclusion of other younger generations. However, the retail spending of the aging Boomer generation continues to decline as they near retirement. Meanwhile, partly because of the lack of attention, the subsequent market segment, Generation X, has clearly become disinterested in malls, particularly traditional malls (Morrow, 2004). On a positive note, the younger Generation Y consumers are a generation that is noted to be “mall friendly,” having grown up in mall environments. They have been touted as the “most consumption-oriented generation in history,” with their meager seven percent of the population accounting for 21 percent of the total spending in the United States (American Demographics, p. J2). Yet, the Generation Y market segment is an enigma; in part too recent and in part too diverse to fully understand. It is imperative to understand the desires of the Generation Y consumer and to develop effective merchandising and marketing strategies for that consumer segment. Moreover, it is important to understand if Generation Y's shopping mall loyalty also extends to outlet centers.

Procedures A self-administered questionnaire was developed for this descriptive and comparative survey. The perceived importance of shopping center features was measured with a 26-statement Likert scale. A comparable 26-statement Likert scale was used to measure satisfaction with the same features at outlet shopping centers. To assure that responses reflected only the Generation Y market segment, a question regarding age was included in the questionnaire. Responses from participants who did not meet the Generation Y age bracket were excluded from analysis. Data was gathered from a purposive sample of 248 students attending university fashion merchandising classes who met the research standards.

Findings Generation Y students’ general perceptions of shopping center features varied. Mean scores for the 26 statements measuring the importance of shopping center features ranged from 3.12 to 4.63
out of a possible range of 1.0 to 5.0, with 5.0 indicating very important and 1.0 indicating not very important, while mean scores for the statements regarding satisfaction with features at outlet shopping centers ranged from 3.04 to 3.95 out of a range of 1.0 to 5.0, with 5.0 indicating very satisfied and 1.0 indicating not very satisfied. Mall features deemed most important to the Generation Y respondents included: “has the type of merchandise/products I like” (M=4.63); “selection of stores in shopping area” (M=4.47); “overall shopping experience (M=4.42);” and “easy to find what I am looking for” (M=4.37).” The mall feature rated least important was “advertisement” (M=3.12). Areas where outlet centers did not measure up to the expectations of Generation Y shoppers included: “easy to find what I am looking for” (-1.07); “has the type of merchandise/products I like” (with a difference in mean scores of -1.04); “selection of merchandise/products” (-0.96); “overall shopping experience” (-0.82); and “selection of stores in shopping area” (-0.80). Only one of the 26 outlet center features exceeded the perceived importance of the feature. The feature most adequately provided in outlet malls included “services in shopping area” (0.06).

Implications Recognizing and understanding Generation Y consumer interests is a first step toward providing shopping center features that are most important to Generation Y consumers. Focusing on assortment of merchandise, variety of stores, and the overall shopping experience will be essential in attracting and retaining the Generation Y consumer. In general, developing a better match between consumer expectations and outlet center features will provide Generation Y consumers with better retail product and service selection. To adequately prepare students for roles as future leaders in the fashion retail industry, Fashion Merchandising educators should stress generational differences in the importance of various shopping center features.

References


Website Success: An Empirical Investigation of the Multidimensional Structure of e-Loyalty

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Key Words: Internet, Shopping, Consumer, Royal

Although selling products and services via the Internet has an enormous potential impact on retailers, it does not always benefit every Internet-based company. Today, e-tailers and researchers pay great attention to customer retention, believing that e-loyalty is vital to the success of their Internet shopping business. Even though retaining online customers appears crucial to the success of e-businesses, few studies have sought to determine the most important factors that affect customer loyalty for Internet shopping. Therefore, the first objective of this research was to identify the multi-dimensional structures involved in e-loyalty. Given that Internet shopping is still a relatively new retail medium and has only recently gone from being a novelty to a utility, it is likely that the role of the importance of constructs in e-loyalty will change over time. Hence, the second objective of this research was to examine any changes in the composition of the multi-dimensional constructs of e-loyalty over the last few years. We believe the e-loyalty model developed in the study should help e-retailers to better understand how to attract new customers and, more importantly, develop better e-marketing strategies in order to retain their customers in this competitive e-market.

Loyalty is generally defined as the frequency of repeat purchasing or the relative volume of same-brand purchasing (Tellis, 1988; Oliver, 1999). Although the Internet has overturned many of the old rules of business, Reichheld and Schefter (2000) found that they are still operative when it comes to customer loyalty. Srinivasan, Anderson and Ponnavolu (2002) identified eight factors (customization, contact interactivity, care, community, convenience, cultivation, choice, and character) that could be involved, and found that all these factors, except convenience, did in fact impact e-loyalty. Rice (2002) identified several further attributes (e.g., design/technical evaluation, emotional experience) that could be used to predict intention to return to the website. In this study, four website-related factors (convenience, security, economic value, and customer service) and three consumer online behavior/attitude related factors (impulse buying, flow, and word-of-mouth) were chosen based on past e-loyalty studies to examine the effects of both website and consumer related factors on e-loyalty, and how the importance of each factor for e-loyalty changes over time. The conceptual model of e-loyalty is shown in figure 1.
An instrument with multi-item scales for the constructs (convenience, security, economic value, customer service, impulse buying, flow, word-of-mouth, and loyalty) was developed based on past studies in similar contexts (GVU, 1999; Srinivan, Anderson, & Ponnavolu, 2001; O’Cass & Fenech, 2001). In order to reveal any longitudinal changes in the e-loyalty model, the surveys were conducted for two time periods, the first in 2001 and the second in 2004. In an effort to maintain consistency across the 2001 and 2004 samples, the survey methods were designed to be as similar as possible by using an identical instrument and identical research sites. Respondents were recruited at various locations in a college town in the Southeastern United States over a two-week period. Prior to data analysis, cases associated with missing values were deleted. Our final 2001 and 2004 sample consisted of 185 and 217 completed and valid surveys.
Following Anderson and Gerbing's (1998) suggestion, a two-step approach consisting of a measurement model and a structural model was performed. The results of the measurement models for both the 2001 and 2004 samples revealed that the hypothesized models were correctly specified and the estimation processes were not constrained by identification problems. All the goodness-of-fit statistics indicated that both the 2001 data and the 2004 data fitted the model well (NFI\textsubscript{2001} = .92, NFI\textsubscript{2004} = .93; CFI\textsubscript{2001} = CFI\textsubscript{2004} = .96; GFI\textsubscript{2001} = .85, GFI\textsubscript{2004} = .83; RMSEA\textsubscript{2001} = .064, RMSEA\textsubscript{2004} = .078; \chi^2/df\textsubscript{2001} = 1.81, \chi^2/df\textsubscript{2004} = 2.34). The convergent validity of the measurement items was examined in terms of their factor loadings and the average extracted variances. The internal consistency reliability of items was accessed by applying the Cronbach alpha. The results indicated that the items representing constructs in the measurement model had good construct validity and reliability. The outcomes of the estimated values of latent endogenous variables and estimated values of latent exogenous variables all exhibited an appropriate sign and size. Although the chi-square values were significant, other fit statistics (\chi^2/df\textsubscript{2001} = 2.58, \chi^2/df\textsubscript{2004} = 3.31; CFI\textsubscript{2001} = 0.94, CFI\textsubscript{2004} = 0.94; NFI\textsubscript{2001} = 0.91, NFI\textsubscript{2004} = 0.92; RMSEA\textsubscript{2001} = 0.068, RMSEA\textsubscript{2004} = 0.059) suggested that the data fit the structural model quite well. Since the overall model tests support the hypothesized model in both samples, the estimated coefficients of the causal relationships between constructs were examined. The results of the causal structural models are presented in Figure 2.
First, the relationships between website-related factors and e-loyalty were examined. The most significant path in the final model is the path between convenience and loyalty ($\beta_{2001} = 0.76$, $\beta_{2004} = 0.67$, $P \leq 0.01$), which supports hypothesis 1a and indicates a strong positive effect of website convenience on loyalty. Hypothesis 1b predicted that increasing website security would enhance customer loyalty. The positive relationship between security and loyalty is supported in both the 2001 and 2004 samples ($\beta_{2001} = 0.19$, $\beta_{2004} = 0.23$, $P \leq 0.01$). Hypothesis 1c, which stated that the economic value given by e-tailers would be positively related to customer loyalty, is also supported ($\beta_{2001} = 0.29$, $\beta_{2004} = 0.55$, $P \leq 0.01$). Economic value was found to have a greater impact on loyalty in the 2004 sample than in the 2001 sample.
2001 sample. Hypothesis 1d posited that website service provided to the customer would have a positive influence on customer loyalty. This result supports the predicted path in both samples ($\beta_{2001} = 0.40$, $\beta_{2004} = 0.18$, $P<0.01$). However, it was found that the level of the impact of customer service on loyalty was weaker in the 2004 sample compared to that in the 2001 sample for customer retention.

Next, the relationships between consumer behavioral/attitudinal factors and e-loyalty were examined. Hypothesis 1e, which stated that customer buying impulsiveness would be negatively related to customer loyalty for Internet shopping, was supported by the 2004 sample but not by the 2001 sample. This indicates there was no significant negative impact of buying impulsiveness on customer loyalty in the 2001 sample, but it had became significant by 2004. This result demonstrates that those shoppers who exhibit the impulse online shopping tendency do not tend to become loyal to e-tailers. In hypothesis 1f, consumer flow was assumed to have a positive effect on customer loyalty. The path was found to be negative and significant only in the 2004 sample ($\beta_{2004} = 0.20$, $P<0.01$), and not significant in the 2001 sample. Hypothesis 1g examined the relationship between customer word-of-mouth and loyalty. This path was found to be positive and significant only in the 2001 sample ($\beta_{2001} = 0.34$, $P<0.01$), and not in the 2004 sample.

For Hypothesis 2, the composition and importance of each factor to loyalty in the two periods was compared. In 2001, e-loyalty was affected by convenience, security, economic value, customer service, and word-of-mouth. The order of importance of each factor to loyalty in descending order of importance was as follows: (1) convenience, (2) customer service, (3) world-of-mouth, (4) economic value, and (5) security. The composition in 2004 was that e-loyalty is affected by the following - convenience, security, economic value customer service, buying impulsiveness, and flow. Among these, it is affected negatively by buying impulsiveness and flow. In descending order, the factors which positively predicted e-loyalty were: (1) convenience, (2) economic value, (3) security, and (4) customer service.

The results showed that website-related factors (convenience, security, economic value, and customer service) have a significant effect on customer retention, but the importance of each factor changes over time. Website convenience was consistently the most important antecedent of e-loyalty, but economic value, website security and customer service were also critical to customer retention. Among selected consumer-related factors, the impact of word-of-mouth is particularly important in the early stages, while the negative impact of impulse buying and flow suggest that online shoppers today are more goal-directed and less likely to purchase impulsively.

Based on our e-loyalty model, e-businesses should be encouraged to develop efficient and effective websites that can save customers “time and effort” when they shop. E-tailers should provide good economic value, security and customer service not only to attract new customers but more importantly to retain them online. It is also important to note that the most influential e-loyalty factors change over time. Even between 2001 and 2004 consumers who were influenced primarily by customer service and...
word-of mouth to become loyal to e-tailers became more concerned about economic value and less influenced by word-of-mouth. Also, loyal customers tend not to pay attention to the flow aspect of the experience and buying impulsiveness is very limited when shopping online.

The managerial implication of this study can be summarized by noting that e-shoppers who become loyal to a website are generally purposeful shoppers looking for convenience and the economic value it provides. Thus, to retain loyal customers, expanding effort on the development of multi promotional website programs to attract shoppers’ impulse responses or to fulfill the needs of recreational entertainment is unlikely to be productive. It is also advisable to remember that loyal e-shoppers are goal-oriented purposeful shoppers rather than recreational shoppers. It is important to develop a customer base by fulfilling their needs for shopping online and understand their reasons for shopping with a particular website.

Reference:


Designing Apparel Care Labels: Which is Better – Symbol Based or Text Based?

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Key Words: care labels, consumer confidence, perceived risk, purchase intention

Introduction and Justification

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) regulates care labeling on apparel products sold in the United States under its “Care Labeling of Textile Wearing Apparel and Certain Piece Goods” rule (16 CFR 423). According to the most recent amendment of this rule, instead of using English words to describe the recommended processes for care (e.g., cleaning, drying, ironing) of an apparel item, manufacturers may instead use a set of four basic care label symbols that were developed by the American Society of Testing and Materials.

The use of a universal language for apparel care labeling brings benefits to manufacturers, including faster operation speed and reduction of labeling costs (Meadows, 1999). However, despite the fact that consumers are the end users of apparel care labels, little research has been conducted concerning American consumers’ perceptions of the different presentation formats of care label information (i.e., symbols only, text only, both text and symbols). One notable exception is research conducted by Swinker, Hines, and Schmitt (1999). These researchers found that the majority of consumers surveyed (68%) were unfamiliar with the meanings of the care label symbols. In a more recent study of male apparel consumers, Moore, Doyle, and Thomson (2001) found that a lack of understanding of care label information and symbols was still prevalent.

Understanding consumers’ perceptions of care label information presentation format is important, especially for retailers, because researchers have shown that consumers do tend to consult care labels and to use this information during the pre-purchase evaluation stage (Park & Stoehl, 2002; Shin, 2000). Although it has not previously been studied, it seems logical to assume that a relationship exists between presentation format of care label information and consumers’ level of confidence, perceptions of risk, and purchase behavior. When care label information is presented in a format that consumers do not understand, they will likely feel little confidence (Bearden, Hardesty, & Rose, 2001) in their ability to care properly for the apparel item being considered for purchase. Furthermore, consumers will most likely perceive a high degree of risk (Dunn, Murphy, & Skelly, 1986) to be associated with the purchase of this apparel item if they lack the knowledge necessary to care for the item post-purchase. In situations in which consumers feel a low level of confidence and a high degree of risk, they will most likely be reluctant to purchase the apparel item in question (O’Cass, 2003; Page & Luding, 2003).
The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationships that exist between care label information presentation format and consumers’ level of confidence, perceptions of risk, and purchase behavior. This study was guided by the following questions: Does care label information presentation format (i.e., symbols only, text only, both text and symbols) influence consumers’ level of confidence concerning care and perceptions of risk about apparel items being considered for purchase? Do consumers’ confidence levels and risk perceptions influence their purchase intentions?

Literature Review

Research about Care Labels

Information presented on the care label of an apparel item is a cue that consumers use to collect information about the product during the pre-purchase stage (Park & Stoehl, 2002; Shin, 2000). Care label information appears to be an important cue during the pre-purchase stage regardless of the retail channel in which the apparel is being purchased. Consumers shopping in bricks-and-mortar stores (Martin, 1971), in catalogues (Seitz, 1988), and on the Internet (Then & DeLong, 1999) all mentioned that they used care label information to form impressions during the pre-purchase stage of the attributes they believed an apparel product would possess.

Because care label information can serve as cue to potential buyers, retailers should do all they can to make sure that the presentation of this information on the care label is appealing to the target market. Following the 1997 ruling by the FTC, apparel manufacturers selling products in the United States now have a choice regarding which presentation format (i.e., text only, symbols only, or both text and symbols) to use on their products. Researchers have shown that some individual difference variables have an impact on consumers’ preferences for presentation format. Swinker et al. (1999) found that, compared to older people, younger people preferred the care labels that contained exclusively symbols to the care labels that contained exclusively text. However, the majority of participants in the study did not understand the meanings of the care symbols. Moore et al. (2001) also found a similar lack of understanding among male consumers regarding the meaning of the symbols. The authors suggested that improvements to the symbols, themselves, may improve their communicative ability and thereby increase consumers’ confidence in their ability to care for their apparel items and reduce their perceptions of risk concerning the purchase of these items.

Consumer Confidence, Perceived Risk, & Purchase Intention

Consumer confidence is generally defined as “the extent to which an individual feels capable and assured with respect to his or her marketplace decisions and behaviors” (Bearden, Hardesty, & Rose, 2001, p. 122). In the context of apparel, confidence refers to a consumer’s belief that his or her knowledge or ability is sufficient to make an accurate judgment in certain situations, such as apparel care (O’Cass, 2003). When consumers are presented with care label information in a familiar format.
(e.g., text only or both text and symbols), they should feel confident in their knowledge to select an apparel item for purchase that they have the ability to care for properly after purchase. Additionally, knowing how to properly care for an apparel item post-purchase should reduce consumers’ perceptions of risk. Perceived risk refers to consumers’ expected negative utility associated with the purchase of a particular product or brand (Chakraborty, Allred, & Bristol, 1995). Consumers who understand the care label information should not be concerned about the likelihood of harming the apparel item during post-purchase care and should, therefore, feel less risk associated with the purchase of that item. Thus, the first hypothesis was developed:

\[ H_1: \text{The presentation format of care label information (i.e., symbols only, text only, both text and symbols) significantly influences consumers’ level of confidence in and risk perceptions about their care of apparel items. More specifically, the text only and both text and symbols formats will result in higher levels of confidence in and lower risk perceptions about their care of apparel items than the symbols only format.} \]

Researchers have found that relationships exist between both consumers’ confidence levels and risk perceptions and their intentions to purchase items. O’Cass (2003) found that consumers who are more confident are more likely to make purchases, and Page and Luding (2003) found that consumers who perceive higher risk are less likely to make purchases. Therefore, the second hypothesis is stated as follows:

\[ H_2: \text{Consumers’ level of confidence in and risk perceptions about their care of apparel items are significantly related to their purchase intentions.} \]

Method

Research Design and Measures

Three versions of a questionnaire were completed by 253 undergraduate students (91% female, average age=20.37 years) at two universities. Respondents were randomly given one of the three questionnaires. One version contained the care label information in symbols only, one version contained the information in text only, and the third version contained the information in both symbols and text. The respondents were told that the care label information presented was attached to a $65 dress shirt. Based solely on this information, they were then asked to answer questions on a seven-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree) related to their level of confidence, risk perceptions, and purchase intentions. Level of confidence in their care of the shirt was assessed using eight items (\(\alpha=0.93\)) revised from Bearden et al. (2001). Risk perception was measured with four items (\(\alpha=0.89\)) modified items from Chakraborty et al. (1995). Purchase intention was assessed with three items (\(\alpha=0.97\)). The last section of the questionnaire assessed demographic information.
Results

Hypothesis 1 stated that the information presentation format of care labels significantly influences consumers’ level of confidence in and risk perceptions about their care of apparel items. Multivariate analysis (MANOVA) results indicated that there was a significant main effect of the care label information presentation format on respondents’ confidence levels ($F(2, 246) = 37.98, p < .0001$) and risk perceptions ($F(2, 246) = 18.34, p < .0001$). More specifically, the text only and the combination of text and symbols formats were predicted to result in higher confidence levels and lower risk perceptions with the symbols only format. Consistent with H1, the results showed that the means for the confidence in their care of the apparel item with the symbols only format were significantly lower than for the text only ($M_{\text{diff}} = -1.83, p < .05$) and the combination formats ($M_{\text{diff}} = -1.27, p < .05$). The means for the risk perceptions associated with the symbols only format were significantly higher than for the text only ($M_{\text{diff}} = 1.36, p < .05$) and the combination ($M_{\text{diff}} = 0.93, p < .05$) formats.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that purchase intention is positively related to consumers’ confidence in and negatively related to their risk perceptions about their care of apparel items. More specifically, the results of regression analysis showed that there was a significant positive relationship between confidence and purchase intention ($\beta = 0.47, p < .001$), but no significant negative relationship between risk perception and purchase intention ($\beta = 0.06, p = 0.48, F(2, 244) = 26.38, p < .0001, R^2 = .018$). Thus, $H_2$ was partially supported.

Discussion, Conclusions, & Implications

The findings should be interpreted with caution due to the convenience sample used for this study. However, the findings do suggest that the text only format and the combination of text and symbols format are preferred to the symbols only format. Both the text only format and the combination format significantly increased consumers’ confidence in and reduced consumers’ risk perceptions about their care of apparel items. While increased consumer confidence levels did result in a higher likelihood of purchasing the item, as predicted, no significant relationship was found between risk perceptions and purchase intention, which contradicts the results from previous research (Page & Luding, 2003). However, considering the fact that the sample was composed of younger consumers, many of whom are most likely still financially supported by their parents, the non-significant relationship was not altogether surprising. Given the fact that younger consumers have more fluid identities than older consumers, younger consumers would be more likely concerned with the social risks associated with apparel purchases than the financial risks associated with inappropriate care of apparel items (Sirgy, Grewal, & Mangleburg, 2000). Hence, to better address the relationship between perceived risk and purchase intention, future researchers could repeat this study with a random sample of adults.

In general, the findings indicate that apparel retailers who sell items with care label information presented exclusively with symbols may be doing so at the detriment of their business. Therefore, if the
FTC’s goal is to adopt the universal symbols on all apparel items sold in the United States, relevant institutions need to promote the understanding of care label symbols among American consumers.

References


Internet shopping behavior: A typology of apparel consumers

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Keywords: Internet, Shopping Behavior, Typology, Apparel

Online shopping has been developing quickly. According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, the total retail e-commerce sales for 2003 were estimated at $54.9 billion, which is an increase of 26.3 percent from 2002, accounting for 1.6 percent of total sales. Apparel was not regarded among the best products to purchase online because of the special sensory and fitting characteristics of this product category. Regardless, apparel is a fast growing online shopping category, and particularly during the holiday season. Palmieri (2002) estimated that online sales of apparel and accessories increased by 42% in 2002, to $4.7 billion, or about 2.3% of total sales of such merchandise. According to Business Wire (2000), the online apparel business could become a $22.7 billion business by 2007, which would be the largest category in retail. Despite the rapid growth of online apparel purchases, consumer attitudes toward buying apparel online have not yet been fully examined (Lee & Johnson, 2002). This study aims to explore consumers’ online shopping behavior, and particularly their concerns about purchasing apparel online. Suggestions regarding strategic management for online retailers will also be discussed.

Several issues are important to consumers who purchase apparel online, and these stem from a high level of perceived risk. Forsythe & Shi (2003) defined perceived risk in online shopping as the “subjectively determined expectation of loss by an Internet shopper in contemplating a particular online purchase” (p. 869). Perceived risk is useful to explain barriers to online shopping, as consumers perceive online shopping having higher risk than in-store shopping (Donthu & Garcia, 1999). For online shopping, perceived risk stems primarily from shoppers’ concerns about issues such as the security of their personal and credit card information, as well as their inability to inspect the product in person. Other concerns include whether the product will arrive in time, whether it will be the right product, and if it will arrive in good condition. Other perceived risks come from consumers’ lack of familiarity with the Internet, online retailers, and brand names (Schoenbachier & Gordon, 2002).

Lee & Johnson (2002) found that online apparel purchasers were more willing to provide credit card and other information for making purchases over the Internet if they knew that the vendor was reliable. Similarly, a survey conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers in 2000 found that familiarity with established retailers and manufacturers, as well as apparel brand trust are important in consumer site selection and purchase decisions (Business Wire, 2000). Concerns regarding uncertainty about tactile and fit characteristics of apparel have also found to exist (Schoenbachier & Gordon, 2002). Then & DeLong (1999) found that product availability and fit is the biggest concern when consumers shop for apparel online.
In the present study, a qualitative research methodology was used in order to gain insight into consumer attitudes (Ruyter & Scholl, 1998). Open-ended interviews with twenty college age students were conducted to explore their online purchase behavior. College students were chosen because they are heavy buyers of apparel and represent the future of online shopping (Silverman, 2000). The participants were asked about their experiences with and expectations about purchasing apparel online. Interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes. Questions included whether the participants shop online, how often, and when they purchase online. If the participants shop and purchase apparel online, they were asked to describe the kind of apparel products they purchased online. Participants were then asked about the importance of product brand on their online purchase behavior: if they bought brand name product, and if they switched brands. Interview content was then analyzed and a typology was developed (Spiggle 1994).

Based on the responses to interview questions, the participants were classified into three groups. The first group, “Non-Shoppers,” consisted of those consumers that either do not shop for anything online or have bought only limited items that do not require a detailed inspection, such as books and CDs. “Occasional Shoppers,” the second group, is defined by those consumers that purchase apparel online but prefer to buy apparel in traditional brick and mortar stores. The third group, “Active Shoppers,” consists of those consumers who love to shop for apparel online and view the Internet as their preferred source for apparel purchasing.

It was found that “Non-Shoppers” have the highest level of perceived risk. The major concerns for these consumers are the credibility of online venders, which includes the security of personal and credit card information, being able to get the correct product, and getting accurate product information from vendors. They also perceive a high risk of receiving an unsatisfactory product, which would lead to frustration by having to return and/or exchange the item. Because of the shipping charges and handling fees brought about by receiving unsatisfactory products, most feel it is not any less expensive to shop online. For apparel products, these participants emphasize the importance of fit and comfort of products, for which they feel it is hard to judge online.

Compared with “Non-Shoppers,” “Occasional Shoppers” cite less perceived risk and feel more positive about the benefits of shopping online. They enjoy the convenience, flexibility, and ease of shopping online, as well as the large selection and variety of products online. What bothers them the most are the concerns with remote shopping, which includes long shipping time, paying shipping and handling fees, and hassles with returning unsatisfactory products. They are more price-driven, and like to look for sales and clearance online. For “Occasional Shoppers,” shopping online is a secondary alternative, in that they prefer to shop in the store to be able to touch and try on the product. Clearly, fit
is still a big concern of these consumers, therefore, many like to try on product in store first, and then order it online.

“Active Shoppers” feel less perceived risk when shopping online. They are confident about their knowledge of product category and their ability as well as their experiences with online shopping. Although they look for good deals online, it was found that price was not their major concern. For apparel products, what really mattered to this group was style and quality. Because they cite shopping with retailers that have good services and products that satisfy them, fit was not a big concern. This group does not think trying on and feeling the apparel product before buying is necessary. On the other hand, they enjoy shopping for apparel online and purchase a wide range of apparel. This finding confirms those of a study done by Roper Starch Worldwide and Yahoo Internet Life magazine on apparel online shoppers, which found that female online apparel shoppers had a greater variety of apparel than their off-line counterparts (Seckler, 1999).

It was found that overall each group differed in their level of perceived risk. “Non-Shoppers” felt the overall risk was too great to shop for apparel online. “Occasional” and “Active Shoppers” placed less importance on perceived risk. “Occasional Shoppers,” however, viewed online shopping as a secondary channel for apparel purchasing, in that if they were unable to find what they want in the traditional retail store, they would search for it at the same retailer’s web site. They also cite using the Internet for product search prior to buying the product in the store. Active Shoppers prefer the Internet as their primary source for purchasing apparel, but also mention the importance of specific brand and/or retailer sites for reducing overall risk of buying online.

This study illustrates how consumers differ in their use of the Internet to purchase apparel, and how they deal with perceived risk. The findings suggest that online apparel retailers should acknowledge these consumer segments through relative market strategies that would serve to promote online sales. Besides providing a satisfactory product, customer service is very important to online apparel consumers. Receiving the product in time and being able to return and exchange products without extra charges are major concerns for “Non-shoppers” and “Occasional shoppers.” Taking these concerns into account, retailers may want to design their return polices in a manner that would encourage consumers to shop online. As it was indicated by “Active Shoppers,” once they try it and are satisfied, they are more likely to return to the Internet for further purchases. Because of perceived risk, consumers are more likely to shop at companies where they have good product and shopping experiences. Therefore, building trust is important for online retailers, which can be achieved by providing security assurances, quality products and services, as well as interactive Web design that provides enlargeable product pictures, detailed and accurate product information, and easy to find products. Alternately, this study confirmed the importance of meeting consumer needs by alleviating the perceived risk of buying apparel online.
References


Shopping for apparel online gains popularity – familiarity and brand trust drive purchases


Consumer Satisfaction with Internet Fashion Purchases

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Key Words: consumer satisfaction, Internet purchases, fashion

Consumer satisfaction is a key issue for retailers since increased satisfaction is related to repeated buying, loyalty and positive word of mouth (Grempty, Martensen, & Kristensen, 2000). The Internet is a rapidly growing and competitive medium for the selling of goods, with trends showing that more people are accessing, using and shopping over the Internet. Apparel has been a strong growth category in online retail sales and has grown at a faster rate than many other E-tail areas (Regan, 2001). It is also consistently a top revenue-generating sector in E-commerce (Maravilla, 2001). There are attributes introduced in the Internet shopping platform that do not exist when shopping through traditional brick-and-mortar stores. Investigating these Internet shopping attributes that have relationships with consumer satisfaction can reveal the factors retailers need to address to retain consumer loyalty.

The purpose of this study was to investigate consumer satisfaction with Internet fashion shopping, to determine what factors have relationships with consumer satisfaction and whether consumer satisfaction has a relationship with repurchase intent from a Web site. A better understanding of what factors have relationships with overall satisfaction with Internet shopping can benefit both businesses and consumers. Therefore, this study focused on the relationship between Internet shopping attributes, perceived value and expectation congruency with overall consumer satisfaction. In addition, the relationship between overall consumer satisfaction and intent to repurchase was also explored.

Both the buying process model and the expectation-disconfirmation model stress the importance of consumer satisfaction, the overall feeling a person has about a product/service after it has been bought, with intent to repurchase. The buying experience, along with satisfaction or dissatisfaction, will affect expectations for future buying. Studies also consistently show that overall consumer satisfaction affects consumer loyalty and increased buying (Bei & Chiao, 2001; Dubrovski, 2001; Grempty, Martensen, & Kristensen, 2000; Rust & Zahorik, 1993). Also Shankar, Smith, & Rangaswamy (2003) asserted that the relationship between satisfaction and loyalty is even stronger online than offline because satisfied customers can readily bookmark the site for easy and repeated access to the E-retailer. Independent variables for this study included: Internet shopping attributes (perceived ease of use, perceived information which included quality sufficient information and information accuracy, perceived security of transactions, satisfaction with shipment and delivery, satisfaction with return policies, satisfaction with customer service), perceived value, expectation
congruency, Internet experience, Internet shopper type, and demographics. Dependent variables were overall satisfaction and intent to repurchase.

Method

Sample and Data Collection. The sample included 163 Internet fashion shoppers, aged 18 years or older, who had purchased clothing, shoes, or accessories over the Internet. The sample was made up of 78 men and 85 women. Ages ranged from 18 to 79 years of age, with most in the 25-29 years of age bracket. Annual household incomes ranged from $19,000 to $199,999, with most earning between $40,000-$49,999. The sample consisted predominantly of Caucasians and Asians (83.5%), with African Americans (7%), Hispanic Americans (4%), and others (5.5%) following. Respondents were well educated with 56 percent having earned a Bachelor’s degree and 53% had advanced degrees. About 75% of the sample was single and 80% did not have children. Most of the sample resided in the United States (86%) with the remainder from Hong Kong, France, Japan, Mexico, Philippines, and Thailand. Most respondents had 7 to less than 8 years of Internet experience and had made 5-10 online purchases in the last year.

Respondents were recruited from four online communities: Ringo.com, Everyoneconnected.com, Asianavenue.com, and Myspace.com. These interactive online communities offer free membership and feature forums and discussion boards where Internet users frequently provide comments and feedback. These sites were selected since they provided ready access to many active Internet members. Site membership ranged between 4,000 up to 1,700,000 in the researcher’s extended network access. Exposure to such a vast number of Internet users increased the chance of locating participants who had purchased fashion goods online since 1) these individuals had ready access to the Internet, and 2) these individuals use the Internet on their spare time, they would be more likely to want to respond to the online survey.

An online survey was used since it was consistent with the context of this investigation studying Internet shoppers. This online approach allowed subjects to be in a relevant setting when completing the survey. This approach was also effective in identifying and reaching Internet savvy users and shoppers of the Internet. They were identified and recruited using a preliminary posting or a classified ad depending on Web site structure. The same posting was also displayed on the researcher’s member page so that other users who surfed on could access the survey. This prescreening allowed identification of qualified individuals (18 years of age or older and have purchased a fashion good over the Internet) as appropriate subjects for the study. Those who chose to participate were directed to the Internet questionnaire URL through a link. Participants could also submit completed surveys through the community site if they elected not to use their personal emails. After subjects completed questionnaires, the survey responses were sent back to the researcher’s email inbox, and responses coded and complied into the SPSS-X (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) computer program.
Questionnaire. The questionnaire contained a total of 26 items and subjects were asked to respond to their last Internet fashion goods purchase, Internet usage and shopping, as well as demographic information. A structured questionnaire was developed to insure standardized responses and to help avoid ambiguity in the responses. The five fill-in items included: Web site shopped, reason if item was returned, ethnic background, country of residence, and additional comments.

Items Q3-Q4 (ease of use, sufficient information) and Q9-Q13 (information accuracy, perceived value, overall satisfaction, intent to repurchase, expectation congruency) were adapted from VanScoyoc’s study (2001) with minor changes. The Chronbach’s alphas for these adopted constructs ranged from .77 to .88 indicating acceptable reliability. From the review of literature, four items that were known to be consumer concerns were also included in the questionnaire. These items were security of transactions, shipment and delivery, return policies and customer service (Q5-Q8).

The first item asked subjects to identify the Web site used and the second asked whether the fashion good purchased was clothing, shoes or accessories. This served to give validity to responses and to help keep in mind which purchase experience respondents were rating. The following eleven items measured the independent and dependent variables and used a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5), with (3) being neutral. Two items also addressed consumer returns, whether or not the fashion product was returned and reason for keeping or returning the product. These were included only for the purposes of exploratory research.

To explore the subject’s familiarity with the Internet and Internet shopping, two items were included. The first question asked subjects to indicate how many years they have been using the Internet, ranging from “less than 1 year” to “9 years or more.” To distinguish between infrequent Internet shoppers and frequent Internet shoppers, subjects were asked how many Internet purchases of any product group they made in the last year.

Data Analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the respondents and to provide frequencies and mean rankings of the Internet shopping attributes. Frequencies and percents were also provided for perceived value, expectation congruency, overall satisfaction and intent to repurchase. To examine the relationship between the six Internet shopping attributes, perceived value, expectation congruency, Internet experience, age, education, income, intent to repurchase and overall consumer satisfaction, correlations tests were run. t-tests were performed on Internet shopper type, gender and education to test for differences in overall satisfaction between the groups. A one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was performed with independent variable ethnicity and the dependent variable overall satisfaction.

Results

Correlation analysis indicated that perceived ease of use, perceived information quality, perceived security of transactions, satisfaction with shipment and delivery, satisfaction with return
policies, and satisfaction with customer service all had significant (p<.0001) relationships with overall consumer satisfaction. Perceived value and expectation congruency also had statistically significant (p<.0001) relationships with overall consumer satisfaction. Correlation analysis results indicated that Internet experience did not have a statistically significant relationship with overall consumer satisfaction. t-test results indicated that the difference in overall consumer satisfaction between infrequent Internet shoppers and frequent Internet shoppers was also not significant. As predicted, there was no difference between demographic groups in overall consumer satisfaction. The demographic variables of age, education, income, ethnicity, and gender did not have any relationship with satisfaction. Correlation analysis between overall consumer satisfaction and intent to repurchase did result in a statistically significant relationship.

Conclusions

The strong positive correlation between overall satisfaction and intent to repurchase supports findings from previous studies and also affirms that this relationship applies to Internet shopping. E-retailers need to continue to pay more attention to retaining their online customers since they are likely to repurchase. Special attention also needs to be directed towards consumer expectations since it had a strong positive relationship with overall satisfaction, yet the mean score for expectation congruency was lower than for other variables. Information quality also warrants special attention when selling fashion goods over the Internet since consumers cannot examine the merchandise prior to buying. They rely heavily on the information and displays provided. Customer service and perceived value need to be addressed since ratings were low but correlations with satisfaction were high.

References


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ITAA Proceedings, #62 - www.itaaonline.org


Contemporary interpretations of traditional Chinese dress: A comparison of consumers in China vs. Chinese immigrants in the United States

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In recent years, ethnic influences have become more noticeable in the U.S. fashion market, primarily because, according to Norment (2000), there is an increased desire on the part of consumers to reflect their ethnic and cultural identity through dress. Similarly, Yu, Kim, Lee, & Hong (2001) predicted that Asian and other ethnic styles of dress would become more popular during the first decade of the 21st century. Among these styles, the Chinese *cheong-sam* was cited as one of the most prominent examples. According to the 2002 US Bureau of Census, the population of Chinese immigrants to the US (not including Taiwanese) was estimated to be 2.5 million, totaling approximately one percent of the entire U.S. population. This large number of Chinese consumers living in the United States makes it a promising market segment for selected products, including apparel. However, little is known about the extent to which ties to their home country might impact their consumption behavior and patterns within their new cultural context.

As Kim and Arthur (2003) found in their study of Asian American consumers in Hawai‘i, apparel consumption is often used as a primary mode of ethnic identity expression within the United States. In the present study, traditional Chinese dress is the focus in the exploration of the significance of cultural meanings in dress for Chinese immigrants in the U.S. and to discover whether or not they place more importance on the communication of ethnicity through dress as compared to consumers in China. The primary objective is to examine the extent to which elements of traditional Chinese dress may be more important to consumers seeking to communicate their ethnic background and identity within the diverse context of U.S. society as compared to the more homogeneous environment of the People’s Republic of China.

A qualitative methodology was used to explore the potential similarities and differences between consumers in China and Chinese immigrants to the United States in terms of their attitudes toward and perceptions about ethnic dress. A total of 14 depth interviews (McCracken, 1988) were conducted with females over the telephone, with an equal number being in China and the U.S. A snowball sampling method was used to locate participants. Fourteen was deemed an appropriate number given the in-depth nature of the interview method (Griffen and Hauser, 1993). Participants were asked about their recent apparel purchases as well as their activities with regard to Chinese cultural celebrations. As part of the process, participants were also asked to provide photos and describe via email their favorite clothing that reflects elements of traditional Chinese design.
The interviews were then interpreted for key issues that surfaced between and across the participant’s responses (van Manen, 1990). Three primary themes emerged with regard to motivations for purchasing ethnic dress that were then explored in-depth. The three themes include: celebrations of tradition, distinction versus commonality, and aesthetics of ethnicity. Spring Festival in particular was a focus for all participants during the course of the interviews, as this is the oldest and most significant celebration for the Chinese, and because it traditionally involves buying a new outfit to wear on the holiday. It was found that purchasing clothing inspired by traditional Chinese styles to wear on this holiday has become more popular among consumers in China within the past two years, while for those participants who immigrated to the U.S., it has always been an important part of celebrating Spring Festival.

As an exploratory study of ethnic identity and apparel, this study has implications for understanding the significance of ethnic styles of apparel within different cultural contexts. The results of this study confirmed Jacobsen and Gates’s (1979) findings, which suggest that material artifacts such as ethnic dress are important vehicles by which an individual conveys his or her feelings of belonging to or attitude toward a particular ethnic group. Although important differences were found between the two groups, further research is needed in order to fully explore the implications of these differences for understanding the role of apparel in the acculturation process experienced by Chinese consumers after immigrating to the United States.

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