



A comparison of online and offline gender and goal directed shopping online



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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to model the effect of the consumers' perceptions of their offline and online gendered behaviour on online utilitarian shopping motivation and purchase intentions. We hypothesise that when consumers shop online, their behaviour is mediated by two gendered behaviours, namely offline and online. To test this hypothesis, 515 usable responses were collected in face-to-face interviews. The conceptual model was tested with confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modelling (SEM) across five product categories. Our findings show that the effect of a consumer's perception of their gendered behaviour offline vs. online on online utilitarian shopping motivation and purchase intentions is significantly different. In particular we found that utilitarian shopping motivation online has a significant effect on purchase intentions online mediated by gender (online) overall: *strongly for females but not for males*. Conversely, utilitarian shopping motivation online has a significant effect on purchase intentions online mediated by gender (offline) *for males but not overall and for females*.

1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to model the effect of consumers' perceptions of their offline and online gendered behaviour on, online utilitarian motivation and purchase intentions (Babin et al., 1994; Roy and Ng, 2012; Wood, 2005). This aim is concerned with optimizing the online shopping experience (Chang et al., 2014; Sheehan, 1999). Moreover, through gaining an understanding of variations in gender online and offline, companies can better enable consumers "to experience the body's needs by a virtual projection of the mind into cyberspace" (Achrol and Kotler, 2012, p. 38; Wolin and Korgaonkar, 2003). We propose that when consumers shop online their behaviour is mediated by two gendered behaviours: offline and online. This research is important as online and offline behaviour is not well understood (Brown et al., 2007; Danaher et al., 2003). While previous research has measured gender effects (e.g., Cleveland et al., 2006; Dobscha, 2003; Hyllegard, 2005; Laforet, 2008) no studies have measured gender-related behaviour offline and online, modelling the impact on online shopping motivation and purchase intentions (Hsu et al., 2014; Alreck and Settle, 2002). Otnes and McGrath (2001) argue this gap in our understanding has arisen because gender-related shopping behaviour often contradicts socially constructed and biological stereotypes

(Gentry et al., 2003; Kramarae and Kramer, 1995). Furthermore, Bettany et al. (2010) suggest that we should be moving towards developing theories that help us understand gender-related issues. MacLaran et al. (2004) supports this position, requesting that comparative research looking at multiple consumption of the same product or service needs to be conducted in order to explore differing gender and gender effects across various social settings (Blasco-Arcas et al., 2014).

2. Related literature

Women are often portrayed as nurturing, person-oriented, and child-centred, whereas men are seen to be competitive and work-oriented (Alreck and Settle, 2002; Dholakia and Chiang, 2003). The existing literature on gender effects is disparate. Some resolution to the debate comes from Bem (1974) who proposes that gender is behaviour, popularizing the concept of psychological androgyny (Smiler and Epstein, 2010). Moreover, McMahan et al. (2009) assert that while sex is biologically determined, gender refers to behavioural, psychological, social and cultural meanings associated with concepts of maleness and femaleness. Smiler and Epstein (2010) go as far as cautioning against the use of gender in the traditional sense because of its

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psychometric properties. The limitation of early studies is that they failed to challenge current stereotypes (e.g. Anderson, 1986; Marsh, 1985).

Cultural and political differences have been identified as influencing factors in various gender-based studies. For example cultural differences and political differences (respectively) between women were identified as influencing factors in two offline studies. First, a comparison of French and US women in relation to sex role portrayal, company image and purchase intention revealed French women as more forgiving than their US counterparts (Lundstrom et al., 1999). In another context, 'traditional feminists' were found to more likely show offence about stereotyping in advertising than 'women at large' (Harker et al., 2005). Also, a recent online-based study found that when comparing online information disclosure patterns between Western and Russian SNS users, gender appeared to be a culturally distinctive factor (Kisilevich et al., 2012). These studies suggest gender is a psychometric rather than simply demographic variable. This literature review outlines gender difference offline and online.

2.1. Gender difference offline

A number of studies have tackled gender difference and advertising. Gender differences have been explored in relation to gender stereotyping in advertising (Harker et al., 2005; Jones et al., 1998), sexual appeals in advertising (Putrevu, 2008), the effectiveness of sympathy appeals when shown to females (Kemp et al., 2013) and the private responses of males' and females' to emotional advertising (Fisher and Dubé, 2005). All but the final study revealed a gender effect. In addition, in a study examining consumer responses toward attribute- and goal-framed messages, women displayed less favourable responses toward negative attribute- as well as goal-framed messages than men; furthermore, compared to men, women vocalized more negative thoughts when exposed to negatively framed messages, and generated more negative (positive) advertisement execution thoughts in the negative (positive) frame than men (Putrevu, 2010).

Differences in the ways females and males process marketing messages is the focus of a number of studies. Brunel and Nelson (2003) suggest that under low involvement conditions females are more systematic processors than males but as involvement increases, this gender difference disappears. Similarly, as perceived risk increases women tend to change their response pattern to advertising to take in more objective information but with males there is no change in the way information is processed (Darley and Smith, 1993). Another study concluded that female processing often entails substantial, detailed elaboration of the message content resulting in females having increased sensitivity to message claims (Meyers-Levy and Maheswaran, 1991). A study which showed gender differences in purchase intent toward advertisements that are verbal, harmonious, complex and category-oriented versus advertisements that are comparative, simple, and attribute-oriented suggests that women use a relational processing style, whereas men use an item-specific processing style (Putrevu, 2004). Chang (2007) also found that comparative advertising was processed differently by women compared to men, with the former manifesting heightened perceptions of manipulative intent brought about by comparative appeals which in turn resulted in negative advertisement and brand evaluations and reduced purchase intentions. Involvement, perceived risk, message elaboration and processing style are therefore identified as important factors which inevitably lead to evaluative consequences.

2.2. Gender differences online

Men and women seem to have divergent expectations for Internet use (Wolin and Korgaonkar, 2003). Situations in which women tended to be associated with when using technology-mediated services included making friends, fighting for causes, nurturing children, role-

playing, and improving on-the-job productivity (Neilson, 2010). Men were information hungry and desired detailed and accurate information to questions relating to investments, product purchases, and personal interests whereas females have been found to prefer emails (for communicating) whereas males prefer using the Web (for searching) (Jackson et al., 2001; Teo, 2001). Clipson et al. (2012) propose that expectations differ in the case of social networking and therefore men and women use it differently. Certainly this assertion is sustained in other SNS based studies whereby women tended to use SNS to search for information while men used SNS to find friends (Haferkamp et al., 2012). Gender differences in relation to the degree and reciprocity of self-disclosure in online forums were noted by Barak and Gluck-Ofri (2007) whereby female participants tended to be more reciprocal than male participants. Similarly, females were found to be using the Internet for communication purposes more so than males (Joiner et al., 2005), and were reported to utilise different types of websites (Wasserman and Richmond-Abbot, 2005). Furthermore, Wolin and Korgaonkar (2003) report that males are more likely to purchase from the Web and surf the Web for functional and entertainment reasons, but females are more likely to surf the Web for shopping reasons.

As well as expectations, the amount and frequency of use has also emerged as a point of difference between males and females online. However, studies are not entirely consistent in their findings. Joiner et al. (2005) found that women used SNS sites more frequently than men. Also, women were found to access the Web just as frequently as men but were online less than men (Wasserman and Richmond-Abbott, 2005). McMahan et al. (2009) found no gender difference in the time spent Internet shopping but did find a difference in the time men and women spent on different types of features on Web sites. Thus length and frequency of Internet use seems to be contingent on not only modality but perhaps motivation. Furthermore, Wasserman and Richmond-Abbot (2005) propose that knowledge related to web use is an important independent variable that is likely to influence Internet use.

Attitudes towards Internet use also seem to differ. Women are more likely to experience Internet anxiety (Joiner et al., 2005), a conclusion that is supported by another study which revealed increased computer anxiety, less computer self-efficacy and less favourable and less stereotypic computer attitudes in females (Jackson et al., 2001). In addition, women display a higher level of perceived risk in online purchasing than do men, although having a site recommended by a friend seems to ameliorate this trend (Garbarino and Strahilevitz, 2004). Gender differences in beliefs, attitudes and behaviours toward web advertising manifest as males exhibiting more positive beliefs and more positive attitudes toward Web advertising than females (Wolin and Korgaonkar, 2003).

2.3. Online shopping behaviour

Whether or not offline behaviour, and therefore offline-based studies, can offer valuable insights into gender difference online is an important question. Chai et al. (2011) argue that offline expected social norms are sustained in an online context and therefore gender differences need consideration when understanding online behaviour. However, the extant literature again shows a lack of consensus. For example, several studies portray women online to be the principal shoppers (e.g., Dholakia and Chiang, 2003; Mitchell and Walsh, 2004). However, Rodgers and Harris (2003) found that in nearly every study exploring gender in online shopping environments, males were typically reported to be the dominant online shopper. Other studies suggest that males tend to shop online more in technology-mediated channels than non-technology mediated channels (e.g., Wajcman, 1991). However, recent work has suggested there is no difference between males and females in their online shopping behaviour (Kim and Forsythe, 2008). An exploration into why women tend to be less

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