Generational and family structural differences in male attitudes and orientations towards shopping

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ABSTRACT

New evidence suggests Millennial men are assuming the role for household shopping at a growing pace. This study employs the generational cohort theory to examine differences among male shoppers. Specifically, exploring the variables of family structure and social class relative to male enjoyment of their shopping experience through an online questionnaire. ANOVA and logistic regression were used to analyze the data of 443 respondents. The results show significant differences in the impact of family structures across generations. Present social class and the social class during ones upbringing lead to key differences in Millennials in terms of entertainment facilities and willingness to wait on purchases.

1. Introduction

Shopping done by men is on the rise and as a result, male consumers are now garnering more attention from retailers. In a study conducted by Yahoo, nearly 60% of the 2400 men studied reported being the primary shopper in their households for clothing, health, pet and packaged goods (Neff, 2011). Men comprise 49.2% of the U.S. population according to 2010 census data. They hold a considerable amount of spending power. Retailers who are able to entice these seemingly reluctant shoppers will definitely profit. However, to do this will require male shoppers be differentiated based on their preferred attributes and level of shopping enjoyment. Despite limited research on male shopping behavior, there is evidence the present generation is significantly different from its predecessors, and therefore warrants renewed focus. The purpose of this research is to examine 1) male attitudes and orientations towards shopping by generational cohorts and 2) the role differing family structures and social class may have on those attitudes. This research builds on previous research by examining the previously unexplored family structure and social class factors for male shoppers.

Historically, females have been the most active and consistent shoppers, controlling nearly 80% of household spending (Smith, 2015). However, Millennial men are changing the game. This group seems to buck traditional stereotypes of older generations. For instance, unlike older generations, Millennial men are redefining masculinity and finding it possible for them to engage in shopping behavior while they maintain a masculine identity (Funches et al., 2014; Reekie, 1992).

Furthermore, men under the age of 25 years may even possess similar dispositions toward shopping as those held by females (http://yourbusiness.ascentral.com/male-demographics-influence-retail-market; 16856.html). These shifts are evident to a lesser degree in other male age groups as well. Social and demographic changes are putting pressures on traditional gender roles and males are now more involved in shopping compared with previous generations (Dholakia et al., 1995). A deeper understanding of each generation is necessary for marketers to take advantage of these changing male attitudes and behaviors. The primary focus of this research is to examine male shopping behavior within a generational framework in order to clarify the changes that are taking place in male shopping attitudes and orientations.

Similarly, Brosdahl and Carpenter (2011) used the Generational Cohort Theory as a framework to examine the shopping orientations of U.S. men across four different generational cohorts. The results of their research suggest Millennial men enjoy shopping significantly more than other cohorts. The authors' suggest more men in this group come from households with working mothers. This allows them more discretionary time than other cohorts, and they spend this time with friends in shopping environments (Dunne and Lusch, 2008). This suggestion built upon previous work conducted by Lee et al. (2005). Their research investigated which retail factors influenced male shopping enjoyment. Their results indicated significant differences in the importance of "shopping-center features" among male shoppers from different age groups. They too suggested other demographic variables like household composition be examined in future studies. As of yet, no research has

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examined the impact of these particular demographic factors. This study builds upon our previous knowledge of male generational cohort differences by further examining the role of family structure and social class in male shopping enjoyment.

The authors begin with a review of relevant literature on changing patterns of male shopping behavior. Then, the Generational Cohort Theory framework is discussed. Then, the importance of male shopping involvement and enjoyment are explained. Next, a detailed description of research methods and data analysis is provided. Finally, the authors discuss the results and conclusions.

2. Relevant literature & theoretical underpinnings

For the most part, male shoppers have been lumped into one very large unenthusiastic consumer group (Brosdahl and Carpenter, 2011). Clearly, male shopping behavior is changing and as a result further segmentation of this market becomes more important. The changes taking place in male shopping are illustrative of the fact that consumer segments are dynamic in nature. Segments change over time as a result of external market factors (Mattingly and Smith, 2010; Mortimer, 2012). According to the Social Constructionist view, these developments are due in part to changes in everyday practices and social mores that lead to the reshaping of gender identity (Blume and Blume, 2003). The changes in male shopping behavior are largely based on these alterations in gender identity over time.

The research conducted by Otnes and McGrath (2001) sought to compare and contrast the stereotypical male shopping behaviors with actual shopping behavior. They found the stereotypes to be inaccurate and identified numerous instances where males were able to transcend gender stereotypes. This work reignited interest in male shopping and paved the way for more research examining male shopping behavior.

In a similar classification effort, Temperley (2009) conducted a study which showed male shoppers fell into two distinct groups. The first type of male shopper was defined as the reluctant consumer. The second type of male shopper was defined as an urban heterosexual male interested in enhancing his personal appearance by fastidious grooming, beauty treatments, and the purchase of fashionable clothes. This research builds on the work of Otnes and McGrath (2001) and Temperley (2009) by further exploring actual male shopping behavior. Upon documenting the changes taking place in male shopping, researchers began working to further segment the market.

2.1. Generational Cohort Theory

The Generational Cohort Theory provides a strong basis for segmenting the male market. Generational cohorts are developed based on environmental events experienced during one's coming of age period. These life experiences create values that remain relatively unchanged throughout one's life (Parment, 2013). This segmentation approach provides richer information than segmenting based on mere age, because it sheds some light on motivation as well. The most comprehensive segmenting process involves differentiating consumers based on the importance of attributes, shopping motivations, and attitudes (Ganesh et al., 2007, 2010; Memery et al., 2011). Hence, the primary purpose of this research is examine differences in male shopping behavior using the Generational Cohort theory as its underpinning.

Strauss and Howe (1991) define generations as groups of people born during the same time period and experiencing the same pivotal life events. It is believed these pivotal life events like The Great Depression, World War II, the Vietnam War, assassination of President Kennedy, and September 11, 2001, help define a group's values, attitudes, and beliefs. These macro-level experiences help create segments of consumers with a distinctive set of beliefs and behaviors which remain constant and serve to create an identity for the generation (Egri and Ralsston, 2004; Jackson et al., 2011; Strauss and Howe, 1991).

Generational cohorts are formed around key events in history and are therefore specific to the country of origin; and lead to a forming of a type of national subculture (Egri and Ralsston, 2004). Furthermore, these events create values in those between the ages of 17–23, because during this time, individuals are highly impressionable. One of the aims of this research is to understand these generational changes in more detail. Today's male shopper is different from the traditional male shopper in two key ways: involvement and enjoyment.

2.2. Involvement

The first factor is involvement. Social and demographic changes are putting pressures on traditional gender roles and males are now more involved in shopping compared with previous generations (Dholakia et al., 1995). According to Smith (2008), the numbers of families which adhere to the traditional family structure of a husband as breadwinner and wife as a stay at home mom are declining. "The widespread entry of women into paid employment has played a major role in the transformation of the family (pg. 5)." This puts pressure on both the female and the male to change how they allocate their time to family roles. As a result, men are now taking on more egalitarian roles in terms of housework and shopping duties (Lee et al., 2005). In addition, the average age for a man's first marriage is 28.7 (http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nhsr/nhsr049.pdf). The delay of marriage, coupled with the increased likelihood of divorce, makes men more responsible for and involved in all types of shopping activities than previous male generations. Thereby leaving men with more time where they must care for themselves and their children. Today's male is much more involved in household management and childrearing than ever before.

As the American family composition changes, household tasks become more egalitarian and less female dominated. Different family compositions may be a key factor in the changing shopping behavior of men. The trend of more women in the workforce has led to more equal sharing of previously female dominated tasks (Mattingly and Smith, 2010). Furthermore, modern social and demographic movements are causing changes to traditional gender roles within the home (Mortimer and Clark, 2011). The goal of this research is to examine the intersection of generational cohort and family structure on male shopping behaviors and attitudes. Understanding more about how upbringing in a one-parent or two-parent household may influence male shopping enjoyment is an important contribution of this study.

Consumer behavior has largely neglected the issue of how alternative family structures influence shopping behavior. One notable exception is a study conducted by Rindfleisch et al. (1997). This study examined the relationship between family structure and consumer attitudes and behaviors. The authors found respondents from disrupted families did demonstrate increased levels of material values and compulsive buying tendencies. Given the major changes occurring in family structure, more research focusing on its influence on behaviors is warranted.

These changes profoundly affect men's roles within society and the way they interact with their families, children, spouses, and others. Examining male shopping behavior within a generational framework will clarify the changes that are taking place in their shopping attitudes and orientations. This study focuses on three specific generational cohorts: Millennial, Generation X-ers, and Baby Boomers. Millennials' are those persons reaching young adulthood around the year 2000; Generation X-ers are those born in the range of 1960-early 1980s; Baby Boomers are those born during the post-WWII baby boom (1946–1964).

A few studies have been conducted using this generational cohort framework. For example, a study conducted by Jackson et al. (2011) investigated the extent to which attitudes toward mall attributes and shopping values differ across gender and generational cohorts. The results showed no differences in hedonic and utilitarian shopping values by generational cohort. However, generational differences in attitude were evident in mall hygiene, locational convenience, and