2004

Young retail fashion shoppers: hunters and gatherers

Katerina Korlimbinis
University of Wollongong, uow_korlimbinisk@uow.edu.au

Jennifer Thornton
University of Wollongong, jenni@uow.edu.au

Young retail fashion shoppers: hunters and gatherers

Abstract

Store layout and design are crucial components of a retailer's image and reflect a significant percentage of shopper's first impressions of a store - which can either attract or deter potential buyers. However, the current store layout and design of many retail fashion stores largely reflects the shopping preferences of female shoppers, as they shop more frequently and have a greater interest in fashion than men. Given the recent increase in young males shopping for their own clothes, more research and attention needs to be devoted to this target market. Originally content analysis of 17 men's fashion retailers was undertaken to identify two distinctive stores. An experimental design was then used to apply a projective technique of a thematic-appreciation test, using digital photos of each of the two stores, to obtain participants' perceptions of retail atmospherics. Cluster analysis of 228 participants' responses to shopping-attitude items on a questionnaire, from a convenience sample of University students, found a new, more simplistic and practical bi-polar categorization of shopping behaviour. There are hunters - who exhibit distinct preferences in how they want to approach their "prey" and there are gatherers - who enjoy searching for fashion items.

Keywords

hunters, gatherers, young, fashion, shoppers, retail

Disciplines

Business | Social and Behavioral Sciences

Young Retail Fashion Shoppers: Hunters and Gatherers

Katerina Korlimbinis & Jennifer Thornton
University of Wollongong

Abstract

Store layout and design are crucial components of a retailer's image and reflect a significant percentage of shopper's first impressions of a store – which can either attract or deter potential buyers. However, the current store layout and design of many retail fashion stores largely reflects the shopping preferences of female shoppers, as they shop more frequently and have a greater interest in fashion than men. Given the recent increase in young males shopping for their own clothes, more research and attention needs to be devoted to this target market. Originally content analysis of 17 men's fashion retailers was undertaken to identify two distinctive stores. An experimental design was then used to apply a projective technique of a thematic-appreciation test, using digital photos of each of the two stores, to obtain participants' perceptions of retail atmospherics. Cluster analysis of 228 participants' responses to shopping-attitude items on a questionnaire, from a convenience sample of University students, found a new, more simplistic and practical bi-polar categorization of shopping behaviour. There are hunters – who exhibit distinct preferences in how they want to approach their "prey" and there are gatherers - who enjoy searching for fashion items.

Keywords: Store design, shopping behaviour, gender differences, shopping typology, fashion

Introduction

Developing shopper typologies enhances retail strategy decision-making by "enabling retailers to differentiate and target their offerings, locations, and promotional efforts according to the varying patronage responses of the basic shopper types" (Westbrook and Black,1985, p.78). There are many types of shopping orientations such as convenience, ethical, recreational, apathetic, emotional, cognitive, and passive (cf Laaksonen, 1993; Moye and Kincade, 2003; Otnes and McGrath, 2001; Stone, 1954; Westbrook and Black, 1985). This study attempts to simplify the categories of shoppers for fashion retailers targeting young consumers (under 30-year olds). This demographic target market spends a significantly larger proportion of their discretionary income on clothing than other demographic groups, as most people in this age group are more socially mobile, with fashion being an important expression of self-identity (Hermann, 2002). It has been found that females are more concerned about clothes and fashion and are more involved in shopping compared to males (Peters, 1989). Beaudoin, Lachance, and Robitaille (2003) argue that regardless of age, females play a significantly greater role than males in the process of fashion diffusion. Therefore many retailers focus on the female consumer, however, it has been suggested that "apparel marketers have focused on the lucrative women's wear market for a long time - it is now time to focus on men's apparel needs" (Seo, Hathcote and Sweaney, 2001, p. 220). Historically, retailers have spent considerable money and effort catering for the needs of female (or feminine) shoppers to enhance their consumer comfort and shopping experience, whereas less attention has been given to male (or masculine) consumers. There are gender differences in shopping behaviour, which have partly stemmed from traditional gender roles that have for years, in most cultures, nurtured and socialized men to be hunters and providers and women

to be gatherers and carers. The conceptualisation of the hunter and gatherer shopping types in this study was derived from this ancient practice where men would hunt for larger animals to kill and provide to the family or tribe and that women would spend their time gathering the smaller food items and provisions. These roles, while quite archaic, still have relevance to the way shopping is assigned and undertaken within modern households, however these roles have also been combined for some couples given changing gender roles. The concepts of 'hunter' and 'gatherer' in this study have been modernized and operationalised into current and popular shopping behaviour traits (see Table 1) which were derived from academic and popular literature, observations of, and discussions with shoppers. Retail stores may benefit by understanding these roles when men and women are shopping for clothes, particularly given that more men are now shopping for themselves (Woodruffe-Burton, 1998).

Store layout and design

Store design, including floor layout, is one of the critical elements of atmospherics and has been shown in many studies to impact on consumer comfort, perceptions of convenience and ease of finding items within a store, time spent in a store, likelihood of purchasing and repeat visitation (Bloemer and Ruyter, 1998; Donovan and Rossiter, 1982; Gilmore, Margulis and Rauch, 2001; Newman and Foxall 2003; Sherman, Mather and Smith, 1997; Spies, Hesse Loesch, 1997). Compounding the importance of layout and design is the extremely high rental costs, particularly in city and regional shopping centres. Clothing retailers spent on average 14% of their gross profit on premium rents and 1.4% on advertising (ABS, 1999). Clothing retailing had the highest proportion of rent, leasing and hiring to total expenses (ABS, 1999). Thus, it is essential for retailers to maximize sales per square foot of floor space by designing stores that appeal to their target market/s. Underhill (1999) explores gender differences and shopping behaviour, and more recently Bakewell and Mitchell (2004) have examined male consumers' decision-making styles. They "believe" that women enjoy browsing and taking their time shopping, whereas males prefer to 'get in and out' as quickly as possible. Similarly, in studies conducted by Fischer and Arnold (1990) and Dholakia (1999) the male-female differences were quite consistent with prevailing stereotypes (for example men generally dislike shopping, see the activity as a chore, and are not competent or rational shoppers, often making impulse and fast decisions; and Christmas gift buying is viewed as "women's work"). Previous researchers have not, however, *specifically* examined the effect of store layout, design and display techniques on shoppers' perceptions of a store. Additionally they have not profiled the shopper types in terms of their preferences for store design and layout. This study seeks to address this issue of optimal store design for different shopper types. This study proposes two distinct shopping behaviours – hunting and gathering – that will impact on how retail fashion stores should best use their floorspace.

Research Objectives and Method

The main objective of this study is to determine if different shopper types exist – in terms of 'hunters' and 'gatherers'. Additionally this study will also analyse if there are gender differences in these potential shopping-orientation groups. It is expected that men are more likely to be 'hunter' shopper types than 'gatherer' shopper types. The study also seeks to identify ways in which retail fashion stores can improve their store layout to better match shopper preferences.

The method for this study is comprised of two stages. Stage one was a content analysis (Kang et al, 1993) of 17 men's fashion specialty stores designed to isolate two stores that used very *different* store layouts and designs, yet were *consistent* on other retail variables such as quality and type of clothing, pricing and with similar target markets of young males. Given the current imbalance of retail offerings for meeting the needs of women, this study focuses on men's retail fashion outlets. Furthermore women are likely to help men shop for clothes (and hunt or gather in men's fashion stores), whereas men are less likely to attend female shopping expeditions (in women's fashion stores). The content analysis was undertaken in a geographic region separate to where the majority of the participants (in Stage two of the study) would shop. However the shopping centre (a Westfield Shopping Centre) was typical of the retail offering that most participants would have previously experienced when shopping for clothes. Digital photographs were taken of each fashion store. The final two stores selected for the second stage of the study, which was a survey, were included in the projective technique section of the questionnaire. Half-page colour photos were used in the study. The first store is a 'hunter' store, as it is spacious and allows the consumer to see their prey from a distance. The second store design is a 'gatherer' store, with the fashion store requiring the consumer to spend time gathering information and finding the items they are looking for. The name of the store was kept from view in the photo, again to minimise the differences between the stores, apart from store design.

The second stage of the research was a questionnaire administered to a convenience sample of university students, 19 to 29 years of age. The sample size comprised of 113 'hunter' questionnaires and 115 'gatherer' questionnaires, in total 228 responses were collected. The study was administered in tutorial groups, with each tutorial group exposed to only one of the store images (either hunter or gatherer), to prevent discussion between students. The first section of the questionnaire contained the projective technique, a Thematic Appreciation Test, that involved the participants being shown one of the store pictures and asked: *"Imagine you are about to enter this store to go shopping, please indicate your initial impressions of the store"*. The second section of the questionnaire required participants to show their level of agreement with 'hunter' and 'gatherer' statements, which were developed by the researchers, and also statements regarding the fashion consciousness, shopping-confidence, enjoyment of shopping, masculinity/femininity rating, and decision-making ability obtained from Bruner, and Hensel (2001) Marketing Scales Handbook. The third section obtained demographic information such as age, gender, income, university enrolment status and postcode.

Results

Originally eight items were used to classify the attitudes and preferences of hunters and gatherers (listed in Table 1). Factor analysis revealed that the eight items loaded onto two separate factors (Eigen values of > 1). The first factor has been labelled 'Gatherer' and was characterised by agreement with statements 1-4 in Table 1. The second factor was comprised of statements 5-8 (in Table 1) that would be typical of a 'Hunter' shopper. Furthermore these scale items were used to determine clusters within the sample. Hierarchical cluster analysis, using Ward's procedure (Malhotra, 1999), which in this instance involved grouping similar individuals on the basis of eight attitudinal statements, was used to identify two distinct segments of "hunter" and "gatherer" shoppers. The commonly used non-hierarchical k-means clustering method was not used in this study as the researchers did not want to pre-specify the clusters. The agglomeration schedule indicated a two-cluster solution, with the largest percentage increase in the co-efficient occurring in the last two stages of the clustering

process. To support the reliability of clusters found in this study, the centroid method of hierarchical cluster analysis was used and produced a similar two-cluster solution.

The first step in profiling the hunter and gatherer clusters is to investigate the gender composition of each group. In total, 134 females and 90 males took part in the study (with an even distribution of males and females in each survey group). The chi-square analysis found that 32 females and 57 males were associated with the hunter cluster and 98 females and 30 males were associated with the gatherer cluster. Thus there is a relationship between shopper type and gender, that is, (as expected) males are more likely to be hunters when shopping for clothes and females are more likely to be gatherer shoppers ($X^2=36$, $p=.000$). Some of the results that follow can be attributed to the gender of the shopper, combined with shopping type, however not *all* of the results had gender as a significant covariate. There was no difference in the average age (21 years) and average weekly income ($280) of hunters and gatherers. A statistical summary of 'hunter' shoppers versus 'gatherer' shoppers is provided in Table 1, which includes a comparison of the level of agreement with statements about shopping preferences (statements 1 to 8) with responses given on a Likert scale where 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree and 4=strongly agree.

Table 1 - Profile of Hunters and Gatherer Shoppers

Scale items	Hunter (mean)	Gatherer (mean)	F-statistic	*p-value*
1. I like comparing fashion items to see what items look best together	2.7	3.1	35	.000
2. I like to spend time gathering fashion items	2.1	3.0	89	.000
3. I often visit many stores (in the one shopping trip) when shopping for clothes	2.7	3.6	105	.000
4. I dislike searching for clothing items	2.5	1.8	57	.000
5. When shopping for clothes I like to find what I'm looking for straight away	3.5	2.8	80	.000
6. I prefer stores with a limited variety of items on display so that items can be found easily	2.5	2.2	7	.008
7. I don't spend a lot of time in the one store when going shopping for clothes	2.8	2.0	62	.000
8. I prefer stores where the products are easy to find	3.3	3.0	19	.000

Gatherers, significantly more so than hunters, liked searching for clothes, comparing fashion items, and visiting many stores. They were also more fashion conscious, had greater self-confidence in their shopping ability, enjoyed shopping for clothes and owned more clothes that they had shopped for themselves. Hunters, in contrast to gatherers, preferred: finding items straight away; stores where a product would be easy to find and; a limited variety of items on display. Additionally hunters: disliked shopping; spent less time in one clothes store; made decisions more easily; and were more masculine; in comparison to gatherers. Hunter shoppers were less likely to have shopped for clothes within the previous month than gatherer shoppers ($X^2 = 31$, $p=.000$). Specifically 48% of hunters only shopped once or not at all, with the remaining 52% of hunters shopping twice or more. Gatherers, however, were much more frequent shoppers, with only 17% shopping once or not at all, and 83% shopping twice or more.

The projective technique resulted in 214 (of the total 228) participants providing a description of their initial impressions of the store. Three expert judges first rated the *entire* response for each participant on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 = extremely negative, 2 = negative, 3 = neutral, 4 = positive, 5 = extremely positive. There was significant inter-coder agreement, with very high correlation between the judges ratings (at _ = .05), indicating consistency in the rating process. The hunter store was rated significantly more positively than the gatherer store (F=9.36 p=.003, means of 3.2 vs 2.8, respectively). Further analysis by the expert raters found that 176 participants (82% of the projective technique responses and 77% of the total sample) gave responses that specifically commented (both positive and negative comments) on store design, atmospherics, layout, variety of merchandise, displays, lighting, and merchandising technique. Comments regarding fashion styles and pricing were not counted in this *tally* of positive and negative comments. The hunter store again received more positive comments that were specifically about the store's design and layout than the gatherer store (F=8.27, p=.005, means of 1.8 vs 1.4, respectively). There was no difference in the negative comments about each store. These findings indicate two factors: 1) the projective technique was successful in evoking thoughts about store layout and design and 2) store layout and design comprises a significant percentage of initial impressions, which again reinforces the importance of creating an effective store layout. An examination of the different clusters' opinions of each stores' atmospherics showed that there was a statistical difference (at _ = .10) between the hunters who perceived significantly more negative aspects of the gatherer store than the gatherers (F=3.25, p=.075, means of 1.9 vs 1.6, respectively).

Managerial Implications and Conclusion

The findings of this study supports a new shopping typology that can easily be comprehended and adopted by retailers, particularly in regard to changes to store design. This study found that most young men (63% in this sample) are hunter shoppers and that most young women (75% in this sample) are gatherer shoppers when shopping for clothes. With more young men shopping for their own clothes, fashion retailers who are targeting young males need to change their store layout from gatherer-friendly stores, which are *negatively* rated by hunters, to hunter-friendly stores. Particularly given that hunters shop less frequently thus providing retailers with only a small window of opportunity to satisfy the hunters quest for bringing home the *kill* (clothing). It is possible that young men may then shop more often if they are more satisfied with their shopping experience. This likely effect of increased satisfaction can be deduced from the high correlation between womens' enjoyment of, and satisfaction with, shopping and their frequency of visits to retailers. The content analysis revealed that hunter-friendly stores had a clear line of sight into the store, often including a wide entrance and a clear window display that allowed the passerby to see into the entire store. A spacious layout was also used, with frontal merchandising clothing on hangers being the best form of merchandise presentation. Grouping products into suggested outfits, and by colour, could also be a way of increasing sales to hunters. Lighting should be bright, however spotlighting can also be used to draw the hunters' attention to particular *prey* (clothing) and help direct movement through the entire store. One of the potential drawbacks to designing a hunter-friendly store is the mental heuristic often used by shoppers in regard to the positive correlation (in the shoppers mind) of spaciousness of the store and expense of clothing (this concern is mainly applicable to low-medium fashion retailers and not to upper-class fashion stores). To accommodate for this potential difficulty, a loop (racetrack) layout is recommended, this would involve using the outer walls of the store to display items, and

keeping the middle of the store relatively clutter-free. The centre of the store could contain a long display of clothes that were outward facing (presented as outfits), set on a 45-degree line of sight. Round-racks and displaying a large volume of merchandise are a deterrent to hunter shoppers, as found in this research.

This study has examined the attitudes and perceptions of 'hunters' and 'gatherers', which could be used by fashion retailers, particularly if appealing to young male hunter shoppers. Males were more likely to be hunters than females, as traditionally stereotyped. Further research needs to explore this classification, in particular, testing the external validity of the findings by assessing other target audiences, such as the baby-boomer segment, which is also a lucrative retail market.

Reference

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 1999. Retail Industry, Australia (Cat no 8622.0).

Bakewell, C. and Mitchell V.W., 2004. Male Consumer Decision-Making Styles. International Journal of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research. 14(2), 223-240.

Beaudoin, P. Lachance, M.J Robitaille., 2003. Fashion Innovativeness, Fashion Diffusion Among Adolescents. Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management. 7 (1), 23-30.

Bruner, G.C., and Hensel, P.J., 2001. Marketing Scales Handbook: A Compilation of Multi-Item Measures. Chicago, Ill., USA. American Marketing Association.

Coley, A. and Burgess, B., 2003. Gender Differences in Cognitive and Affective Impulse Buying. Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management. 7(3), 282-295.

Dholakia, R.R., 1999. Going Shopping: Key Determinants of Shopping Behaviours and Motivations. International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management. 27 (4), 154-165.

Donovan, R. J. and Rossiter, J. R., 1982. Store Atmosphere: An Environmental Psychology Approach. Journal of Retailing. 58(1), 34-57.

Fischer, E. and Arnold, S.J., 1990. More Than a Labour of Love: Gender Roles and Christmas Gift Shopping. Journal of Consumer Research.17 (3), 333-346.

Gilmore, R., Margulis, W. and Rauch, R.A., 2001. Consumers' Attitude and Retailers' Images in Creating Store Choice. A Study of Two Different Sides of the Same Story. International Journal of Value-Based Management. 14(3), 205-221.

Hermann, A., 2002. Shopping for identities: Gender and Consumer Culture. Feminist Studies 28 (3) 539 - 545.

Kang, N. Kara, A. Laskey, H.A Seaton, F.B 1993. A SAS For Calculating Intercoder Agreement in Content Analysis. Journal of Advertising. 22 (2),17-28

Laaksonen, M., 1993. Retail patronage dynamics. Learning about daily shopping behaviour in contexts of changing retail structures. Journal of Business Research 28 (1/2), 3–174

Malhotra, N.K., 1999. Marketing Research: An Applied Orientation. Upper Saddle Rover, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Moye, L.N. and Kincade, D.H., 2003. Shopping Orientation Segments: Exploring Differences in Store Patronage and Attitudes Toward Retail Store Environments Among Female Consumers. International Journal of Consumer Studies. 27 (1), 58-71.

Newman, A. J. and Foxall, G. R., 2003. In-Store Customer Behaviour in the Fashion Sector: Some Emerging Methodological and Theoretical Directions. International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management. 31(11), 591-600.

Otnes and McGrath., 2001. Perceptions and Realities of Male Shopping Behaviour. Journal of Retailing. 77 (1), 111-137.

Peters, J.F., 1989. Youth Clothes Shopping Behaviour: An Analysis by Gender. Adolescence; Academic Research Library. 24 (95), 575 -581.

Seo, J. I. and Hathcote, J.M., 2001. Casualwear Shopping Behaviour of College Men in Georgia, USA. Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management. 5 (3): 208-222

Sherman, E., Mather, A., and Smith, K., (1997). Store Environment and Consumer Purchase Behaviour: Mediating Role of Consumer Emotions. Psychology and Marketing. 14(4), 361-378.

Spies, K., Hesse, F., Loesch, K., (1997). Store Atmosphere, Mood and Purchasing Behavior. International Journal of Research in Marketing. 14, 1-17.

Stone, G.P., 1954. City shoppers and urban identification: Observations on the social psychology of city life. American Journal of Sociology. 60 (1) 36–45.

Torresa, Summers and Belleau., 2001. Men's Shopping Satisfaction and Store Preferences. Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services. 8, 255-212

Underhill, P. (1999). Why we Buy: The Science of Shopping. New York, Simon and Schuster.

Westbrook, R. and Black, W., 1985. A Motivation-Based Shopper Typology. Journal of Retailing. 61(1), 78-103.

Woodruffe-Burton, H., 1998. Private Desires, Public Display: Consumption, Postmodernism and Fashion's "New Man". International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management. 26 (8), 301-310.