

How does the fashion industry market to women as consumers research paper example...

[Business](#), [Customers](#)



Introduction

The shopping and fashion culture is one of the factors that drive the American fashion industry, hence making it more dynamic. However, shopping culture, experience, and interests in the clothing industry differs from one gender to another. According to the NPD Group, 2010 annual report, women in the United States had higher total spending on fashion apparel compared to men (The NPD Group). This indicates that women are increasingly spending, higher in the fashion market than their male counterparts. Most women complain that advertisers do not identify with them since marketers conduct ads with many misconceptions about women's consumption of clothing and fashion (Grail Research).

The youth culture among Americans has contributed to the development of various fashion brands for both local and international markets. However, the American apparel market is more fragmented based on gender, age, location, and taste among other factors (Alreck and Settle). For example, fashion shows among other events have been found to attract more women than men. Bplans (2013) and Strassel (2013) indicate that the US has the highest number and frequency of fashion events in the world. These events and shows as sources of innovation and have a tendency to create awareness among the target consumers of the latest in the clothing and fashion industry. Men tend to shop faster than women. Thus, marketers would display clothes and allocate adequate space and a variety of clothing in a way that targets a specific gender (Welters and Patricia).

American apparel consumers want more online shopping experience as well as a captivating physical store experience for their shopping needs. The NPD

Group indicates that both online and in-store shopping was witnessed more among women than men. This implies that women have a higher shopping culture than men (Rocha and Hawkins). However, despite doing shopping, women tend to shop for skirts and dresses more than other clothing but buy more of skirts than dresses. Besides, this year the women's clothing and fashion consumption are projected to increase by 12%. As a result, advertisers have explored areas like popular websites, fashion magazines, and dailies, famous television and radio shows, award shows, fashion events, and the celebrity culture as avenues for capturing their target consumers (Manuel, Luanda, and Ann).

The purpose of this manuscript is to examine how the clothing and fashion industry targets women as consumers of their products. This paper also looks at the relationship between the American culture and gender with respect to clothing and fashion consumption.

American culture and gender in the clothing and fashion industry

The early eighteenth and nineteenth century American culture was full of feminism, nationalism, and activism. The “Bloomer” was one of the first apparels that displayed an American culture. People sought ideological autonomy and the bloomer style was adopted since it promoted liberalism (Shmoop). This clothing was highly advertised to the public. It offered comfort with less gender distinction (Figure 1). The nineteenth century apparel was adopted and liked by women, but later received heavy criticisms since it was not engendered to a particular sex (Figure2). Thus, there was a need to create costumes that could display one's femininity or masculinity.

Figure 1: The Bloomer clothing in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth century

Figure 2: 19th century clothing ad

The modern American fashion culture especially among women is about garments that are more revealing [e. g. backless/sleeveless blouses] (Figure 3 and 4). Advertisers and designers want to display products that can give a person a higher sense of control over style, beauty and sexuality (Figure 4). The modern American shopper is more radical with social enthusiasm that prompts him or her to always be on the lookout for a new fashion style. Thus, designers and advertisers are creating ads that convey social significance and identity, gender distinction and sexual orientation, social class and lifestyle. However, as much as America is struggling to ensure gender equality and freedom in all sectors, maintaining morality and ethics in clothing and fashion remains a tricky concept.

Figure 3: modern fashion ad Figure 4: modern American ad

Several reasons have been posited to affect consumption across the genders in America. Most players in the clothing and fashion industry indicate that the terror attack on world trade center in 2001 and the global economic recession greatly contributed to reduced income and consumer confidence. This led to reduced spending on fashion and hence reduced sales. Both distributors and retailers had increased stocks of clothing. The clothing industry was worst affected, but the men's clothing industry was more affected than that dealing with women's wear. The demand of men's wear is more elastic than the demand for women's clothing (Alreck and Settle). Currently, the apparel market has gained strength and immensity. As a result, these retailers are distributing the products at a reduced cost

(Marketti and Jean; Grail Research). This trend, combined with improved consumer confidence and income level, especially among women has led to increased shopping and spending on clothing and fashion.

According to DeLace (2011), women's shape wear is attracting consumption among the postmodern women. Thus, manufactures and marketers are concentrating on making innovative products and increasing newness in fashion. Women get attracted to fashion and tend to change their consumerism because they want to maintain themselves and have the latest clothing in the fashion industry. Welters and Patricia (2005), also add that the increase in the level of income as well as the need to demonstrate consumer confidence drive women into shopping for the latest fashion. This in turn drives the fashion industry and makes it even a fast changing industry because of the need to keep with customer demands (Beldona). Compared to men, American women are more subtle and careful when shopping for branded products. Women look for comfort, style, and easy-to-care apparel. They would want 100% cotton clothing that guarantees style, comfort and wrinkle-resistance (Strassel). Women tend to love clothes, and the fashion behind clothing compared to men. Arnold (2009) indicates that females on average tend to express interest in shape, color, texture, fabrics, and embroidery. These are the fundamentals behind clothing and fashion. As a result, women will attend fashion shows, watch television shows, surf the internet, and read fashion magazines with the aim of finding out the latest in the industry. Thus, as a marketing plan, advertisers tend to vary their products based on the above fundamentals with women consumers as their primary targets since women have an 'obsession' for fashion.

The American culture has made its men and women engage in shopping for apparels because of the desire to be outstanding, gain status and authority in the public space, and become popular in the social niche (Hill; DeLace). The presentation of the salesperson and customer service plays a role in influencing clothing consumption. A study done by Marketti and Jean (2007) revealed that good customer service and recommendations by the salespersons offered a positive outcome on shopping and purchase of clothes especially among American teenagers and young adults (Figure 5). Females also tend to fall for clothing purchase because of the brand or designer name irrespective of the product price. Thus, psychographics have a significant role in female consumer preferences, which most manufacturers and clothing markets could be targeting ((Beldona; DeLace).

Figure 5: Recommendation by a salesperson

A study conducted by Rocha and Hawkins (2005) established that women are frequent shoppers than men. Moreover, women enjoy shopping and do so for relaxation purposes or just for purposes of finding out the latest products, brands, and prices of clothing. On the other hand, men shop less frequently and mostly do so where they can easily get what they want. Thus, this leads to the observation that the size and nature of a retail shop could influence gender consumption of clothing products. Male shoppers also tend to fall for clothing that are well arranged, and display since this gives them less shopping time (Bakewell and Mitchell). Men would prefer a one-stop shop for their apparel needs, but the ladies would want to compare prices, products, and even the variety of designers from several shops.

Among the female gender, shopping is viewed as an enjoyable and relaxing

activity. Thus, women engage in extravagant shopping than men and to the female gender; apparel shopping provides a chance of self-indulgence, fantasy, self-expression and a break from the day's routines (Welters and Patricia). Women compared to females want a clothing store with plenty of space, better physical appearance, and patient salespersons. Besides, arrangement of clothing products, display of female wear, salespersons, and having display windows have a significant influence on shopping and purchase between the gender (Bakewell and Mitchell). Using this hypothesis, then the modern advertisers have gone to produce ads that reflect the same since gender shapes the consumer behavior and hence American fashion culture.

Figure 6a: Modern ad and display Figure 6b: Modern ad and display of apparel

Conclusion

This manuscript indicates that there exists a shopping culture among both genders. The female gender goes to a shopping outing more often than the male gender. Females engage more in fashion shows among other clothing events than men. This makes them targets for clothing design and marketing. Moreover, females find shopping especially for sports, dresses, and skirts as a relaxing, and confidence building activity. However, the modern day clothing consumerism would be dictated by the brand name, social status, economic prowess, and need to have the latest fashion unlike in the nineteenth century where fashion ads were associated with activism, nationalism, and feminism.

It has been established that display, promotional activities, and the salesperson with good customer relations influence the American consumer culture. This forms the basis for different marketing strategies based on gender consumer behavior. Gender factors play a critical role in market segmentation, in the clothing and fashion industry. American culture and fashion has evolved over the years from a concept of gendered clothing and embossing to the dynamism of style and class in personal adornment, commerce, social order, political power, and gender relations. Currently, clothing and fashion carry numerous connotations about the American culture.

The eighteenth and nineteenth century fashion carried meaning in feminization and the sentimentality of commodity consumption. Civilization and consumption of goods including clothing products was instigated among women as routes to social subjectivity and materialism. However, currently this culture is full of gender activism that seeks equality, respect for human rights, freedom, cultural tolerance, and political understanding. Moreover, the choice of clothing and fashion for the American shopper is based on sexual appeal, beauty, class, and style. Thus, designers and advertisers generate materials and products that can meet the fashion fantasies and expectation of the modern American citizen (Shmoop).

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