Shopping Orientation, Store Attributes, and Apparel Retail Format Preference

Lizhu Davis, Hongtao Yue, and Dean Davis
California State University, Fresno, USA

Keywords: Orientation, Attributes, Retail, Preference

Background and Purpose. The U.S. apparel retail market has reached a very high level of intensity with a large variety of retailers. Besides traditional major apparel retailers (department stores, specialty stores, and discounters), a group of new businesses, including off-price retailers, factory outlet stores, category killers, boutiques, and non-store retailers emerged and evolved in the past 30 years (Stone, 2012). Because of the saturation of the retail market and changes of consumer shopping behavior, the apparel and retail industry has suffered greatly. Many retailers including Macy's, Guess, and Sears have closed stores in 2017; some iconic apparel companies such as American Apparel and Nasty Gal went bankruptcy. Therefore, it is critical than ever for apparel retailers to understand consumers' patronage behavior, especially factors affecting their preferences and choice of different retail format.

Shopping orientation is consumers' general believes, feelings and actions toward shopping. It is a reliable and important predictor of consumer patronage behavior in the retail environment, both online and offline (Davis & Jai, 2014). Store attributes are evaluative criteria consumers have toward the store (Jin & Kim, 2003). To be competitive, retailers have to offer specific store attributes that their target consumers desire. Although many studies have focused on identifying desirable store attributes for shopping at different stores and shopping orientation of frequent shoppers at certain retail format, limited studies have comprehensively investigated the relationship between shopping orientation, store attributes and retail format preference (Carpenter & Brosdahl, 2011). Therefore, this research intended to study the impact of shopping orientation and store attributes on consumers' preference of apparel retail format.

Methodology. An online survey was developed to measure consumers' shopping orientation, apparel store attributes, store choice preference and demographic characteristics. This study adopted consumer style inventory (Sproles & Kendall, 1986) for apparel shopping orientation and 27 items from previous studies for salient apparel store attributes. A 5-point Likert-type scale from 1 (not important at all) to 5 (very important) was used to measure responses to those scale items. For store preference, respondents were instructed to rate their preferences of 25 national apparel retailers that carry both men's and women's apparel. Undergraduate students from a major state university in the southwestern United States recruited potential participants using social media such as Facebook over a two-month period. Over 600 respondents participated in the study, insulting in 566 usable responses. Overall, the sample characteristics reflected the college student population of the local university community.

Analysis and Results. Exploratory factor analyses were first conducted to identify underlying factors of shopping orientation, store attributes and retail store formats. The maximum likelihood analyses using Varimax rotation with Kaiser Normalization revealed five factors with an eigenvalue of one or greater for shopping orientation (quality consciousness, brand

consciousness, fashion consciousness, brand loyalty, and price consciousness), four factors for store attributes (merchandise and convenience, shopping environment, fashion image, and social status), and five different store formats (specialty stores, department stores, youth fashion stores, fast fashion stores, and value fashion stores).

Multiple regression was used to analyze the effects of shopping orientation and store attributes on apparel retail format preference. The regression model for specialty stores is significant (F=13.339, p<0.001, adjusted R^2=0.184) with brand consciousness (β=0.260, t=4.634, p<0.001), fashion consciousness (β=0.244, t=4.775, p<0.001), price consciousness (β=-0.139, t=-3.064, p<0.01) and shopping environment (β=-0.163, t=-2.815, p<0.01) as significant predicators. The regression model for department stores is significant (F=7.402, p<0.001, adjusted R^2=0.120) with brand consciousness (β=0.153, t=2.645, p<0.01), merchandise and convenience (β=0.133, t=2.167, p<0.05) and social status (β=0.097, t=1.989, p<0.05) as significant predictors. The regression model for youth fashion stores is significant (F=5.456, p<0.001, adjusted R^2=.090) with brand consciousness (β=0.161, t=2.729, p<0.01) and shopping environment (β=0.120, t=1.970, p<0.05) as significant predictors. The model for fast fashion stores significant (F=12.143, p<0.001, adjusted R^2=0.181) with fashion consciousness (β=0.312, t=6.159, p<0.001) and shopping environment (β=0.158, t=2.719, p<0.01) as significant predicators. The model for value fashion stores is significant (F=7.493, p<0.001, adjusted R^2=0.103) with quality consciousness (β=-0.153, t=-2.829, p<0.01), brand consciousness (β=0.157, t=2.725, p<0.01), brand loyalty (β=-0.195, t=-4.104, P<0.001) and price consciousness (β=0.158, t=3.375, p<0.01) as significant predictors

Discussions and Conclusions. The findings reveal shopping orientation and store attribute significantly affect respondents' retail format preferences. Overall, brand and fashion consciousness are most important shopping orientations while merchandise/convenience and shopping environment are most important store attributes that affect respondents apparel retail format preference. The findings provide valuable insights to retailers to understand their market position and deliver shopping value that consumers seek and desire.

References

Carpenter, J.M. & Brosdahl, D.J.C. (2011). Exploring retail format Choice among US males. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 39(12), 886-898.

Davis, L. & Jai, C. (2014). Effects of religiosity on apparel shopping orientation: An exploratory study. *International Journal of Business Anthropology*, 5(2), 24-36.

Jin, B. & Kim, J.O. (2003). A typology of Korean discount shoppers: shopping motives, store attributes, and outcomes. *International Journal of Service Industry Management* 14(4), 396-419.

Sprotles, G. B., & Kendall, E. L. (1986). A methodology for profiling consumers' decision-making styles. *Journal of Consumer Affairs*, *20*(2), 267-279.

Stone, E., 2012. In fashion: Fun! Fame! Fortune! (2nd ed). New York: Fairchild Publications, Inc.