



## Mother/Daughter Relationships and Fashion Influences

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Consumers are influenced in their fashion styles in a variety of ways (Bertrandias & Goldsmith, 2006). They often talk to each other, and seek and give opinions. Opinion leadership and opinion seeking are recognized as among the most important word-of-mouth influences on product sales and brand choice (Behling, 1992; Bertrandias & Goldsmith, 2006). Conversely, opinion seekers typically have less interest in and knowledge of products (such as fashion) than opinion leaders and; therefore as consumers, they seek information and advice from opinion leaders (Goldsmith & Clark, 2008).

Age and generation have been identified as common differentiating factors between market groups (Lutz, Moore, & Wilkie, 2002; Wood, 2004). Thus, college age women and middle age women are typically identified in two different market segments. Influences, on the other hand, are often shared between mothers and daughters, particularly from mothers to their young daughters (Rawlins, 2006). As girls progress through adolescence, influences may be redirected away from initial guides such as mothers, toward peers and other social sources. Similarly, as women age, they may seek contemporary fashion information from younger women, particularly if there is a strong existing relationship, such as with a daughter. Interestingly, although family members have traditionally been identified as major influences for one another, the role of mothers and daughters influencing one another with respect to fashion has not been extensively explored.

### Research Questions

Because relationships between mothers and daughters have long been considered unique, primary relationships between family members, and are relationships often with friendship characteristics (Rawlins, 2006), the mother/daughter pair was selected for this study. This study explored the relationship of mothers and their late adolescent/early adult daughters (ages 18-25) with respect to fashion influences. The broad research questions for this study were: (a) How do mothers of late adolescent/early adult women influence their daughters' fashion styles? (b) How do late adolescent/early adult daughters influence their mothers' fashion styles? (c) What is the relationship between: fashion leadership, fashion involvement, opinion leadership and opinion seeking with respect to intergenerational style influences of mother/daughter pairs?

### Method

Surveys were employed to investigate mother/daughter pairs' relationships between fashion influences and their fashion involvement, fashion leadership, opinion leadership, and information seeking behaviors. Daughters were recruited in college classrooms where they completed and returned their surveys; the daughters personally distributed the mother surveys in sealed envelopes then mothers returned their surveys by mail. In total, 198 surveys were

distributed to daughters; out of those, 145 were returned by mothers, resulting in usable data from 145 mother/daughter pairs. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected.

#### Results and Implications

Mothers and daughters agreed on the level of fashion influence that mothers have on daughters, but daughters perceived that they had more fashion influence on mothers than mothers reported. Additionally, levels of fashion involvement, fashion leadership, and opinion leadership differed significantly between mothers and daughters, with daughters possessing higher levels of each. Mothers and daughters possessed similar levels of information seeking though qualitative analysis revealed that the type of information sought from one another was different.

Mothers tended to seek style information from their daughters whereas daughters looked to their mothers for advice on price, fit, and appropriateness of clothing for specific events. This study supports the notion that roles of mothers and daughters transform as daughters move through late adolescence/early adulthood with respect to influence in fashion style, though mothers retain a nurturing role while daughters emerge as opinion leaders.

The information from this study provides merchants, retailers, and marketers more detail about two diverse, but related, market segments--the mother/daughter pair. Because both groups are heavy consumers (Michon, Yu, Smith, & Chebat, 2007) it is imperative that the retail industry understand how to build brand value to these consumer groups and present retail store formats that are conducive to shopping behaviors of mothers and daughters. Furthermore, because mothers and daughters each have specific needs to be addressed as well as potential collective needs, retailers and marketers benefit from a better understanding of both individual and partner relationship needs to be able to continuously restructure their promotional strategies to attract these consumers.

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