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SHOPPING STYLES OF FEMALE CONSUMERS IN A DEVELOPING COUNTRY

This paper examines shopping styles of female consumers in the context of a developing country, namely Malaysia. The conceptual framework of shopping styles designed by G.B. Sproles and E.L. Kendall (1986) was applied to understand this lucrative market segment. The total of 468 usable questionnaires were obtained via online survey. Factor analysis revealed 7 distinct dimensions that were labelled: 1) confused by overchoice; 2) cautious consumers; 3) quality consciousness; 4) brand consciousness; 5) fashion consciousness; 6) recreational; 7) time-energy conserving. Keywords: shopping styles; Malaysia; online survey.

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СТИЛІ ШОПІНГУ СПОЖИВАЧІВ-ЖІНОК У КРАЇНІ, ЩО РОЗВИВАЄТЬСЯ

У статті проведено оцінювання жіночих стилів шопінгу в контексті країни, що розвивається, зокрема, Малайзії. Використано концепцію Шпролеса-Кендалла для більш точного розуміння даного перспективного сегмента ринку. Використано дані онлайн-опитування, 468 анкет. Факторний аналіз даних опитування виявив 7 чітких вимірів, що отримують назви: 1) заплутані через надмірність асортименту; 2) обережні споживачі; 3) орієнтовані на якість; 4) орієнтовані на бренд; 5) орієнтовані на моду; 6) шопінг як різновид дозвілля; 7) акцент на економії часу та зусиль.

Ключові слова: стилі шопінгу; Малайзія; онлайн-опитування.

Табл. 1. Літ. 31.

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СТИЛИ ШОПИНГА ПОТРЕБИТЕЛЕЙ-ЖЕНЩИН В РАЗВИВАЮЩЕЙСЯ СТРАНЕ

В статье проведено оценивание женских стилей шопинга в контексте развивающейся страны, в частности, Малайзии. Использована концепция Шпролеса-Кендалла для более точного понимания данного перспективного сегмента рынка. Использованы данные онлайн-опроса, 468 анкет. Факторный анализ данных опроса выявил 7 отчётливых измерений, названных: 1) запутанные чрезмерным ассортиментом; 2) осторожные потребители; 3) ориентированные на качества; 4) ориентированные на бренд; 5) ориентированные на моду; 6) шопинг как вид досуга; 7) акцент на экономию времени и сил.

Ключевые слова: стили шопинга; Малайзия; онлайн-опрос.

Introduction. The last two decades have witnessed many new trends emerging in world retailing, among which globalization and concentration are the most obvious ones. Intensified globalization of the retailing industry brought about the emergence of retail multinationals in various countries (Alexander et al., 2011; Kaynak et al., 2014). Another important trend in this context is that early internationalization activities of retail multinationals largely focused on developed countries. However, recently this pattern has changed whereby international retailers have turned their attention to developing and emerging markets of Asia, Latin America, Central and Eastern Europe (Robles et al., 2014; Mukherjee et al., 2014).

The influx of multinational and large scale retailers into developing countries not only resulted in an overabundance of product choices and multifarious promotional

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activities in retail channels (direct mails, catalogs, social networks, television, newspapers, stores), but also made consumer decision-making increasingly complicated. Consumers in developing countries such as Malaysia once had restricted choice in the retail environment reflecting the traditional nature of their marketing systems (Choo, 2010). With globalization operating in tandem with liberalization of trade policies and economic reform, consumers now experience a more modern marketplace offering diverse labels, quality, prices and brands, creating a massive array of choice for consumers. With the emergence of electronic forms of product display and quick access to market information through the Internet, complexity of decision-making has accelerated to even higher levels of intensity (Mokhlis, 2009; Lysonski and Durvasula, 2013).

Despite these remarkable changes in the commercial environment, little is known about shopping behavior of consumers in the developing world. The existing knowledge largely derives from empirical studies of consumers in developed countries. However, more than 80% of the world's consumers live in emerging transitional economies (Steenkamp and Burges, 2002), while developed nations represent a shrinking portion of the world economy (Wilson and Purushothaman, 2003). Developing countries differ significantly economically, culturally, and demographically from Western countries and historically experienced unique and rapid rates of socio-political and economic change (Batra, 1997), which likely makes them the next great opportunity for global growth (Klein et al., 2006). As the world is increasingly becoming a global market, the need for investigating consumer behaviors in specific cultural contexts and in every part of the globe is concurrently becoming more important (de Mooij and Hofstede, 2002).

The purpose of this study is to examine shopping styles of female consumers in the context of a developing country, namely Malaysia. The conceptual framework of shopping styles designed by G.B. Sproles and E.L. Kendall (1986) was applied to understand this lucrative market segment. The choice of Malaysia as the setting for this study was made for 3 reasons. First, in line with global development, Malaysia's retail environment has also undergone marked changes since the mid-1990s. The retailing industry has played an instrumental role in the growth of Malaysian economy, contributing about 114.4 bln MYR in 2011 and 125 bln MYR in 2012. By 2020, this industry is expected to boost the total gross national income by 156 bln MYR (PEMANDU, 2014). Secondly, Malaysia has lower degrees of economic development as compared to the USA and the UK, which provides an ideal setting to test whether theoretical explanations of consumer behavior developed largely based on the conditions of a developed Western country, can be applied to a developing Asian country. In addition, Malaysia has undergone rapid and fundamental social changes during the past 30 years, and this provides a rare opportunity to examine whether consumers who live in a changing society behave differently from their counterparts in more stable societies.

Consumer shopping styles. Over the past 3 decades consumer decision-making styles (in short, shopping styles) has emerged as one of the most widely studied topics in the consumer behavior research. G.B. Sproles and E.L. Kendall (1986: 267) define consumer shopping style "as a mental orientation characterizing a consumer's approach to making choice" and suggest that consumers adopt a shopping "persona-

lity" that is relatively enduring and foreseeable in much the same way as psychologists view personality in its broadest sense. Basing on the sample of 482 high school students in Arizona, G.B. Sproles and E.L. Kendall (1986) developed a Consumer Style Inventory (CSI) which identifies 8 mental characteristics of consumer shopping styles: 1) perfectionism or high-quality consciousness; 2) brand consciousness; 3) novelty-fashion consciousness; 4) recreational shopping; 5) price and "value for money" consciousness; 6) impulsiveness; 7) confused by overchoice; 8) habitual, brand-loyal consumer. Identification of these characteristics among consumers help profile individual consumer styles and educate consumers about their decision-making (Sproles and Kendall, 1986).

Since its inception, Sproles and Kendall's CSI has been extensively tested on consumers of different countries to determine its general applicability. To date, CSI has been tested in 3 different groups of countries: 1) economically well developed countries such as the US, the UK, and Germany (Chi and Lovett, 2010; Bakewell and Mitchell, 2006; Mitchell and Walsh, 2004); 2) emerging markets, such as Malaysia, China, South Korea, and India (Mokhlis, 2009; Mokhlis and Salleh, 2009a, 2009b; Hafstrom et al., 1992; Fan and Xiao, 1998; Lysonski and Durvasula, 2013); 3) countries in between, such as Greece and New Zealand (Durvasula et al., 1993; Lysonski et al., 1996).

A comprehensive review by R. Jain and A. Sharma (2013) of the literature accumulated since 1986 to 2010 regarding the psychometric properties and utility of CSI indicated 5 styles indispensable to all consumers irrespective of country, gender, age, culture and religion. These are: high-quality consciousness, brand consciousness, recreational shopping, price consciousness, and confused by overchoice. Based on their review, R. Jain and A. Sharma (2013) concluded that Sproles and Kendall's CSI can be very well used as a basic model for analyzing decision-making styles of consumers.

Methodology. Quantitative research in the form of a questionnaire survey was conducted to meet the research objectives. A two-part questionnaire was designed. The first part had 40 item on CSI scale to measure 8 consumer shopping styles (Sproles and Kendall, 1986) and some questions on demographics. The scales used were five-point Likert scales from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Reliabilities of the scale, according to G.B. Sproles and E.L. Kendall (1986), ranged from 0.48 to 0.76. The second part involves nominal scale items used to collect basic information about respondents' demographics including age, marital status, educational level, occupation, and monthly income.

An online questionnaire was used to conduct a survey using SurveyMonkey, which is an online survey tool which creating and sending surveys and then analyzing results. Online surveys allow researchers reach thousands of people with common characteristics in a short amount of time, despite potential geographic distances (Taylor, 2000; Yun and Trumbo, 2000). Furthermore, online surveys do not require the interviewer to be present and busy people who systematically ignore taking part in a personal interview are often willing to answer questions posted on their computer screens (Szolnoki and Hoffmann, 2013).

Results. In total, 561 responses were received. The initial check of the collected data revealed that 468 responses could be used for data analysis, yielding the usage

rate of 83.4%. The total of 93 responses were discarded because of missing data or inappropriate response patterns. The responses obtained were analyzed via SPSS.

The majority of the respondents were married (62.2%), in the age group of 21 to 30 (56.6%) and 31 to 40 (31.4%), with graduate education (53.4%) and held positions in professional fields (35%). Income ranged from under 2,000 MYR (29.3%) to over 4,001 MYR (14.5%) per month.

Exploratory factor analysis: Factor analysis was used to analyze the data. It reveals interrelationship between variables and then explains these variables in terms of their common underlying dimensions or factors. It is an interdependence technique in which all variables (i.e., all 40 items in CSI) were simultaneously considered. Such analysis is useful in gaining understanding on the main dimensions that underlie the observed sets of item (Hair et al., 1998). To test the appropriateness of factor analysis, KMO measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity were assessed while the factor analysis was run.

The factors were extracted using the eigenvalue-one procedure and Cattell's screen test. The resultant factor matrix was rotated using Varimax. The items that had a factor loading less than 0.5 on its primary factor and the items that had substantial cross-loading(s) were removed. This resulted in the removal of 14 items. The remaining 26 items were then factor analyzed again. This resulted in an acceptable seven-factor solution, as shown in Table 1. All the eigenvalues exceeded 1.0. The value of KMO statistics was higher than the acceptable limit of 0.5 and Bartlett's test was significant. Thus, this factor analysis can be considered appropriate. The resultant factor structure explained 53.8% of the item variance, which is acceptable. The factors were named in line with the previous studies where they reflected similar decision-making characteristics.

Internal reliability and consistency of the scale was computed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The reliability coefficients for the 7 factors ranged from 0.52 to 0.73, thus indicating a fair to good internal consistency among the items for each dimension (Sekaran, 2003).

Factor 1, labelled as "*confused by overchoice*", was composed of 5 items and accounted for 9.6% of the variance ($\alpha = .73$). High scorers on this factor can be characterized as shoppers confused about the quality of different brands and by the information available. They are overwhelmed by the availability of product and store choices. Factor 2 labelled as "*cautious consumer*" that included 5 items ($\alpha = .71$). It accounted for additional 9.43% of the variance. High scorers on this factor are concerned with getting the best value for money. These shoppers take time to shop carefully, they are comparison shoppers. This trait seems to be typical for Malaysian female consumers since it has not been identified in any previous studies.

Factor 3 interpreted as "*fashion consciousness*" comprised 3 items ($\alpha = .71$). It accounted for additional 7.59% of the variance. This factor describes the tendency of female consumers to keep their wardrobe up-to-date with changing fashion, being in style is important to them. This factor is consistent with V.W. Mitchell and G. Walsh (2004) and C. Bakewell and V.W. Mitchell (2006). Factor 4 was labelled "*recreational*". It consisted of 3 items ($\alpha = .64$) and accounted for additional 7.56% of the variance. People scoring high on this factor find shopping pleasant; they shop just for fun. They are likely to gain excitement from seeking out new things.

Table 1. Result of factor analysis, authors'

Factor	Item	Factor loading
Factor 1: confused by overchoice	There are so many brands to choose from that I often feel confused.	0.752
	All information I get on different products confuses me.	0.672
	Sometimes it's hard to choose which stores to shop.	0.669
	The more I learn about products, the harder it seems to choose the best.	0.657
	I often make careless purchases I later wish I had not.	0.648
Factor 2: cautious consumer	I take time to shop carefully for best buys.	0.723
	I carefully watch how much I spend.	0.712
	I look carefully to find the best value for money.	0.661
	I should plan my shopping more carefully.	0.613
	When it comes to purchasing products, I try to get the very best or perfect choice.	0.582
Factor 3: fashion consciousness	I keep my wardrobe up-to-date with changing fashion.	0.782
	I usually have one or more outfits of the very newest style.	0.744
	Fashionable, attractive styling is very important to me.	0.674
Factor 4: recreational	Going shopping is one of the enjoyable activities of my life.	0.733
	I enjoy shopping just for the fun of it.	0.676
	It's fun to buy something new and exciting.	0.657
Factor 5: brand consciousness	The higher is the price of a product, the better would be its quality.	0.694
	The most expensive brands are usually good choices.	0.694
	The more expensive brands are usually my choice.	0.627
	I prefer buying the best-selling brands.	0.621
Factor 6: quality consciousness	Getting very good quality is very important to me.	0.735
	I make special effort to choose the very best quality products.	0.641
	In general, I usually try to buy the best overall quality.	0.621
Factor 7: time-energy conserving	Shopping other stores wastes my time.	0.782
	I go to the same stores each time I shop.	0.709
	I make my shopping trips fast.	0.529

Factor 5 measures *brand consciousness*. It consists of 3 items ($\alpha = .57$) and accounts for additional 6.96% of the variance. This trait characterizes consumers who prefer the best selling, well-known national brands. Those scoring high on this factor are likely to believe that the higher is the price of a product, the better would be the quality. Factor 6 labelled as "*quality consciousness*", was composed of 3 items and accounted for 6.8% of the variance ($\alpha = .58$). Consumers with this trait could be expected to make special efforts to choose the very best quality products.

Factor 7 measures *time-energy conserving* consumer trait. It consists of 3 items ($\alpha = .52$) and accounts for additional 5.9% of the variance. People scoring high on this factor feel that shopping wastes their time. They tend to save time and energy by shopping at the same stores and making shopping trips fast. This trait has been established by two other studies in South Korea (Hafstrom et al. 1992) and the UK (Bakewell and Mitchell, 2006), albeit associated with a different set of items.

Conclusion. Globalization of markets presents domestic and international retailers with considerable challenges and opportunities. Conducting consumer research in a developing country can contribute to our knowledge of "global consumer seg-

ments". An important step towards generalizing marketing theory has been taken by applying consumer behavior concepts in Malaysian setting.

This study has investigated shopping styles of Malaysian female consumers using Consumer Style Inventory (CSI). The results of the factor analysis are comprised of 26 items under 7 dimensions: confused by overchoice (5 items), cautious consumer (5 items), fashion consciousness (3 items), recreational (3 items), brand consciousness (4 items), quality consciousness (3 items) and time-energy conserving (3 items). The results of this study provide general support for the usefulness of CSI scale in understanding shopping styles of female consumers in Malaysia. The study results demonstrate the 5 factors derived from this Malaysian sample correspond well to the factors already explored by Sproles and Kendall's study. In addition, two new shopping styles were identified – cautious consumer and time-energy conserving.

The shopping styles identified in this study seem to represent the basic traits of a growing consumer society, wherein consumers show preference for well-known brands and expect good quality products. Moreover, shopping activity has become an integral part of leisure practices for consumers rather than as a means to buy things. All these trends are visible in most Asian countries today, with the growth in the number and size of shopping malls and availability of different brands across most product categories (Sharma et al., 2007). However, the increasing number of products and stores as well as the amount of market information can overload and confuse consumers and can result in frustration and sub-optimal decisions (Mitchell and Papavassiliou, 1999).

The study has practical implications and raises questions for further study. The results might be useful for multinational retailers already operating or willing to enter Malaysian market. Retail managers might use this approach to identify and understand the characteristics of female consumers and to target this segment with more focused marketing strategies. The results of this study have also broad application in consumer education. The existence of confused by overchoice consumers suggest the development of less complicated products, product manuals and special packages or products to aid consumers to make faster and more effective buying decisions. More targeted marketing educational programs can be introduced at colleges or schools to familiarize students with recent market trends, new products and store development.

The results of this study pose some directions for further research. First, this study employed the exploratory factor analysis approach. Future research could use more sophisticated analytical techniques such as confirmatory factor analysis to test the model established as a result of the exploratory factor analysis. Second, although the model accounted for satisfactory percentage of the total variance in the data, there is still some variance which remains to be explained. Qualitative analysis can be carried out to identify additional new items and possibly new traits which are culture-specific. Third, the current study focused on shopping styles of female consumers in Malaysia. Further study would be needed to see how well the results apply to other developing countries in Asian region.

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