

Buyer Attributes for Targeting the College Student in Boutique Clothing Retailing

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Abstract

This paper focuses on certain shopping attributes and attitudes of college-age students versus non-student adult consumers as they relate to shopping boutique clothing stores. A convenience sample of college students at a public university in the mid-south of the United States, their family members and friends was used to examine respondents' perspectives on materialism, buying impulsiveness, and local retail loyalty. A majority of all respondents identified price as their top factor for choosing a store to shop for clothing in general. For specialty clothing, college students indicated significant differences on their greater preference for fashions in boutiques, the opinion that boutiques help find the perfect style, and the belief that boutiques have high quality clothes. Materialism and impulsiveness were higher in students, with female respondents showing higher impulsiveness than males. Non-students tended to have more loyalty to local stores, but the difference was not significant. Suggestions for marketing strategies based on these findings are discussed.

Keywords: materialism, impulsiveness, buyer loyalty, small apparel retailing, college students, clothing boutiques

1. Introduction

The small, locally based clothing retailer faces a tough operating environment these days. Challenges include consolidation in the apparel retailing industry, producing fewer but larger competitors, product pricing trends toward deflation, and an overabundance of retail space (Sullivan and Heitmeyer 2008). In addition, as they search for more market share, national store chains are paying more attention to local markets thereby increasing the competition for the small business owner. The advent of the Internet has further changed the marketplace, providing major new shopping options for the consumer (Cowart and Goldsmith 2007). Online purchases of items such as jewels, cars, and apparel have skyrocketed with apparel as of 2005 being number two in sales on the Internet (Auchard 2005). The college age consumer is particularly active online with 91 percent of them making Internet purchases (Lester *et al.* 2005). The consequences for local retailers are notable: failure rates run 50 to 80 percent for the first five years of operations (Gaskill 2001). To offset these trends, small local or boutique retailers' typical strategy is to attempt to provide product and service offerings that will produce consumer attitudes that are positive toward local businesses. Local entrepreneurs are using experiential retailing techniques seeking to involve the consumer at emotional as well as rational levels in the buying process (Kim *et al.* 2007). The hope is that these attitudes will translate into repeat business that will produce higher sales and profits for the local stores. Essential to meeting these challenges is a better understanding of customers and their shopping attitudes.

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In learning customers' preferences, fundamental questions arise, such as the factors related to a consumer's choice of a retailer and the possibilities for additional target markets such as college students as a part of Generation Y. With Gen Y spending more on goods such as apparel than earlier generations and impacting 81 percent of family clothing expenditures (O'Donnell 2006), the answers to these issues can be important to the success of small, independent stores.

In examining the thinking behind consumers' shopping choices for clothing, certain attitudes can be forefront in the buying decision. A person's attitude toward possessions and money (Moschis and Churchill 1978) can be an underlying factor in identifying their shopping preferences. Other attitudes worthy of scrutiny include the inclination toward spontaneous or impulsive purchases (Bakewell and Mitchell 2004, Rook and Fisher 1995) and local shopping loyalty (Hozier and Stem 1985) or repeat patronage (East *et al.* 2005). It would seem reasonable that a small business could be more successful if it were mindful of these variables when developing strategies and tactics. Small clothing retailers or clothing boutiques are a prime example of the type of small business facing such major competitive challenges described above. This paper studies adult consumers' opinions about boutique clothing stores. It explores some factors that influence a consumer's selection of this type of store and takes a look at the shopping attitudes of college students' as a specific target market. Differences between adult consumers in general and college students are examined regarding criteria used in selecting a clothing store, attitudes towards clothing boutiques, materialism, buying impulsiveness, and local retail loyalty. The study seeks insights regarding shopping tendencies for these groups that can benefit small business retailers, clothing manufacturers, and academicians. In subsequent sections, the literature is reviewed, and the research methodology is discussed. Then the results are reported, and implications are discussed.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Materialism

Materialistic attitude or materialism is a person's orientation toward possessions and money for happiness (Moschis and Churchill 1978). Material possessions and the acquisition of such are generally regarded as important in American culture. Different media to which consumers are exposed depict the image that material goods, high income, and wealth are the keys to happiness and quality of life. In a sense, modern culture has developed the perception that happiness can be purchased at the mall (Kasser 2002). As a part of life, consumers face daily decision-making about spending money and balancing purchase necessities with discretionary items. Thus the concept of materialism focuses on the point at which the acquisition of goods becomes the primary goal of consumers (Fitzmaurice and Comegys 2006). In measuring the materialism construct, several scales have been developed. In an early effort, Belk (1985) developed a scale of materialism that categorizes materialism into three subscales: possessiveness, non-generosity, and envy. However, some outcomes generated with this scale have appeared to have low reliability. To deal with this drawback, Richins and Dawson (1992) conceptualized materialism as a personal value and as a system of central beliefs. They developed three subscales: acquisition centrality, acquisition as the pursuit of happiness, and possession-defined success. Acquisition centrality refers to the extent to which a person's life is centered in the attainment of possessions. The construct of acquisition as the pursuit of happiness deals with the individual's view that material goods are essential to personal fulfillment. The last construct, possession-defined success, focuses on how much the person uses the quantity and quality of possession to measure their success and that of others. One of the most well-known measures of materialism is the MMA developed by Moschis and Churchill (1978). It is composed of six Likert-type items scored on a 5-point basis from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Different studies have tried to identify factors that influence a materialistic attitude. Two studies by Roberts *et al.* (2003, 2006) have identified that family structure is related to materialism. By focusing on adolescents who have experienced a divorce in their family, the authors identified a stronger link between happiness and material possessions than in intact families. Participants stated that the acquisition of material objects was an escape strategy to cope with the family disruptions. Also, the view that material possessions is a means of judging a person's worth was more dominant among people growing up in disrupted families. Often this view was correlated with the attitude that material possessions have become a central part of life. Similarly, another study found that family disruptions heighten materialism, especially when the child is in late adolescence (Rindfleisch *et al.* 1997). Often younger adolescents do not show the effects of the divorce until later in life. This result could be due to the "sleeper" effect, which states that the visible effects of stressful experiences can be delayed until later in the person's life (Steinberg 2002). For a materialistic person, possessions are not only goods but are a sign of status in society, indicating wealth, power, and prestige (Eastman *et al.* 1999).

The consumer derives more pleasure from the acquisition of the good rather than the actual possession and use of it. Research has shown that materialists tend to spend more time shopping and spend more money during each shopping trip than regular consumers (Fitzmaurice and Comegys 2006). In addition, materialistic behavior often acts as a symbol of the consumer's membership or desired membership in a preferred group in order to define one's self-concept (Hoyer and MacInnis 2007). This can translate into spending money on acquisitions such as clothing seen as necessary to being identified as a member of the group.

Materialism is often associated with negative measures of well-being. For example, a research study by Christopher and Schlenker (2004) identified the link between materialism and higher levels of negative affect. Further, higher levels of anxiety and lower levels of happiness have been attributed to materialistic people (Kasser and Ahuvia 2002). Other research has shown that materialists are trying to cope with feelings of uncertainty about themselves or about uncertainty regarding norms in society (Chang and Arkin 2002). Thus, spending money on material items may increase feelings of certainty while heightening one's self-esteem and overcoming feelings related to self-doubt.

2.2 Impulsiveness

Impulsiveness in purchasing goods is a widely distinguished phenomenon. It is characterized by a relatively rapid decision-making process and the presence of a subjective bias that favors immediate possession of a good or service (Rook and Gardner 1993). Buying impulsiveness is defined by Rook and Fisher (1995, p. 306) as the tendency of a consumer to buy "spontaneously, unreflectively, immediately, and kinetically." The authors developed the buying impulsiveness scale, which is composed of nine items scored on a 5-point Likert scale. Studies have shown that the tendency towards impulsive buying is increasing and actually makes up a higher percentage of total purchases than planned ones (Sfiligoj 1996). In fact, considering that impulsive buying behavior accounts for nearly 80% of all purchases in certain product categories, marketers and retailers have long been trying to take advantage of this behavior (Abrahams 1997, Smith 1996). For example, point of purchase displays and package design are two tools used by marketers to persuade consumers to engage in a sudden and spontaneous act of buying impulsiveness. (Jones *et al.* 2003) In addition, the technological developments within the past few decades have contributed to building an environment of continuous shopping. Wells *et al.* (2011) studied the interplay between a buyer's inherent impulsiveness to buy and website quality and found that website quality directly influences the consumer's urge to buy impulsively. Various factors have been identified that influence this type of behavior, such as the consumer's mood (Rook 1987), self-identity (Dittmar and Friese 1995), and cultural differences (Kacen and Lee 2002). A limited number of studies has also determined age as a factor. One such study suggested that consumers under the age of 35 are more prone to exhibit buying impulsiveness than older consumers. (Bellenger *et al.* 1978)

In the past, various studies have focused on the individual traits present in consumers engaging in buying impulsiveness while others looked at culture differences in general between impulsive and regular shoppers. For example, Verplanken and Herabadi (2001) examined specific personality traits present in impulsive shoppers. Their study suggests that individuals are more likely to express such behavior if the traits of extraversion and action oriented behavior are present. General cultural differences were analyzed in a study by Kacen and Lee (2002). Impulsive buying behavior was identified as an individualistic rather than a collectivistic trait. In addition, while such behavior decreased with age in collectivistic cultures, no significant effect was noticeable in individualistic cultures. Phau and Lo (2004) found that online shopping's immediate nature lends itself to the impulsive buyer. In another study, Blakewell and Mitchell (2004) looked at college students and concluded that male students tended to be more impulsive. Another study identified the influence of emotional intelligence on buying impulsiveness (Lin and Chuang 2005). The authors described how high emotional intelligence (EI) leads to a lower impulsive buying behavior. They found that younger adults, who tend to exhibit lower EI, are more prone to engage in buying impulsiveness than older ones. Other studies have investigated the influence of family structure, specifically disrupted families, on buying impulsiveness. One preliminary study examining this topic suggested that a disrupted family can heighten impulsive buying, especially in young adults in their 20s (Rindfleisch *et al.* 1997). A follow up study by Roberts *et al.* (2006) also investigated the influence of growing up in a divorced family on buying behavior. The findings only partially agreed with previous research on family structure's influence on impulsive buying showing that family conditions did have an influence on the buying behavior but only in older adults.

2.3 Buyer Loyalty

Early research on buyer loyalty and retail gravitation was done by Reilly et al. in the 1930s (cited in Levy and Weitz 2004). More recently, interest in studying issues underlying shopping behaviors taking the purchaser beyond local shopping patterns, a practice known as outshopping has increased. (Jarratt 1998) This perspective has focused more on why shoppers go elsewhere as opposed to why they prefer to buy locally.

Initial research focused on factors affecting shopping outside a local retail area, such as loyalty of shoppers toward the local retail area, distance and traveling time to the shopping destination, and type of merchandise sold (Herrmann and Beik 1968). Later, the focus shifted towards the psychographics of outshoppers (Reynolds and Darden 1972), strengths and weaknesses of local markets, and the dollar value of retail trade outflow (Lillis and Hawkins 1974). Research on the demographics of outshoppers revealed that the frequent outshoppers tend to be within the 25 to 54 age group, had some college education, had a higher family income, and was the head of the household. Research on psychographics indicated that the conditions for outshopping are largely influenced by the taste and lifestyle variables of the consumer (Reynolds and Darden 1972). Research by Darden and Perreault (1976) revealed that outshoppers in general are not necessarily younger than average but product-specific outshoppers tend to be younger. For example, outshoppers for big-ticket home products tend to be in an earlier stage of the life cycle. Neither household size nor education has been shown to be related to outshopping, although earlier studies had showed that education was found to be related. According to Darden and Perreault (1976), those shoppers who were less loyal to local stores were more fashion conscious. Also, they disliked housekeeping and demonstrated greater patronage innovative behavior. Hozier and Stem (1985) developed a scale to measure the strength of retail patronage loyalty as a factor affecting outshopping behavior. Their loyalty scale had a strong correlation between the percentage of respondents purchasing locally and dollar amount of outshopping purchases and the retailer attribute rating score. The retail loyalty scale appeared to have a stronger relationship with consumer outshopping behavior than specific consumer attitudes towards local retailers. They concluded that their retail patronage loyalty findings appeared to be generalizable across geographical boundaries.

A product oriented approach has been used to examine the outshopping behavior in a large and densely populated city (Hong Kong). The results from this research by Lau and Yau (1985) suggested that a consumer's outshopping behavior is product specific and is influenced by the product form and price level of the product. Although earlier research showed a relationship between price and consumer outshopping (Herrmann *et al.* 1968), this research found that when shopping for goods like apparel and gifts, consumers have a tendency to outshop more. Although research has been done in the past to estimate the dollar value of the shopping leakage from a smaller community (Lillis *et al.* 1974), a study by Anderson and Kaminsky (1985) utilized a group approach in dealing with the outshopper phenomenon and on developing competitive strategies to deal with the outshopper problem. This study concurred with the product oriented research done by Lau and Yau (1985) regarding the outshopping of products like apparel on factors such as product form and price. Spatially inflexible goods such as food, fuel, and personal care items are purchased from the nearest retailer because traveling a greater distance offers no real comparative shopping advantage. A study by Jarratt and Polonsky (1993) explored the determinants of rural to rural outshopping. Their findings indicated that significant psychographic and demographic variables are associated with outshoppers. The results found that lifestyle activity (consisting of variables such as socializing and entertainment) and innovation (including variables such as impatience, store signage, and quality of sales assistants) were significantly related to outshopping.

A study by Clow and Rohling (1994) identified significant differences among consumers patronizing the local specialty stores, those buying at Wal-Mart, and out shoppers who prefer large urban shopping. The differences in quantities purchased and in dollars spent were due to the higher prices charged by the specialty stores for higher quality merchandise. There were differences in demographics, media habits, products, type of store, and quality of service criteria among the groups. Sullivan and Heitmeyer (2008) studied effects of experiential retailing on shopping loyalty in the Generation Y population, born between 1977 and 1994. They found some tendencies toward store loyalty in this cohort and recommended using marketing strategies rewarding repeat patronage. The authors further concluded that brand image should be emphasized through entertainment and visual displays to draw in the Gen Y consumer. Overall, the review noted above has presented findings on the constructs of materialism, impulse buying, and buyer loyalty.

Materialistic attitudes, emphasizing status and prestige, could have important implications for the small clothing retailer emphasizing distinctiveness, as could tapping into trends toward increases in impulse buying. Certainly maintaining and increasing buyer loyalty is a priority for most clothing boutiques. While these boutiques are often located in college towns, our search revealed little in the way of studies applying these concepts to the small, locally-owned clothing enterprise that may be trying to capitalize on the college market to increase overall sales.

3. Methodology

Data were collected by an online questionnaire. A convenience sample was employed with the sampling frame consisting of college students at a public university in the mid-south region of the United States and their family members and friends. In this study the factors that influence the selection of a clothing store and the variables concerning attitudes toward clothing boutiques were developed by the authors. Materialistic attitude, buying impulsiveness, and general retail patronage loyalty were measured by previously developed scales. The scale (MMA) to measure materialistic attitude was developed by Moschis and Churchill (1978). It is composed of six Likert-type items scored on a 5-point basis from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The coefficient alpha reliability was reported as .60. Buying impulsiveness was measured by a scale developed by Rook and Fisher (1995). High impulse buyers are more likely to act on sudden buying ideas and are motivated by immediate gratification. This 9-item scale accesses a consumer's tendency to buy spontaneously. This 5-point Likert-type scale ranges from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Local retail shopping loyalty was measured by the General Retail Patronage Loyalty scale developed by Hozier and Stem (1985). This 10-item scale accesses the degree that consumers want to shop locally rather than outside the local community. Each item was scored on a 4-point scale with labels of never (1), occasionally (2), frequently (3), and always (4). The authors reported a test-retest reliability correlation of .87. The questionnaire addressed factors that influence the selection of a clothing store, opinions about clothing boutiques, materialistic attitudes, buying impulsiveness, and local retail loyalty. Boutique was defined in the survey to be a relatively small specialty clothing store. T-tests were used to determine if differences existed between the responses of students and non-students.

4. Results

A total of 297 usable responses were received. Table 1 provides a demographic profile of the sample. About 58 percent of the sample was between 18 and 29 years of age, and the other three higher age groups were close to 14 percent each. Approximately 62 percent of the respondents were female, and about 65 percent of the sample were white, 24 percent black, and 11 percent other. The number of respondents in each income category was somewhat similar in that each category contained from about 16 to 25 percent of the sample.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Sample

Demographic	Category	N	Sample Percent
Age	18-29	172	57.9%
	30-39	45	15.2%
	40-49	39	13.1%
	50+	41	13.8%
Gender	Male	109	37.2%
	Female	184	62%
Student	Student	138	46.6%
	Non-Student	158	53.4%
Race	African American	69	23.5%
	Caucasian	192	65.3%
	Other	33	11.1%
Family Income	\$0-24,999	48	16.3%
	\$25,000-49,999	74	25.1%
	\$50,000-74,999	67	22.7%
	\$75,000-99,999	51	17.3%
	\$100,000+	55	18.6%

Table 2 compares demographic information of students with non-students. Almost all (over 94 percent) of the students fell into the 18-29 age category, while the non-students were about evenly split among the four age categories. The male and female percentages were similar for both students and non-students. In the race category, a larger portion of students (about 28 percent) were black than the non-students (20 percent); approximately 59 percent of the students and 71 percent of the non-students were white. A breakdown of household income was similar for both groups.

Table 2: Demographic Comparisons

Age Category	Students	Non-Students
18-29	94.2%	25.9%
30-39	4.3%	24.7%
40-49	.7%	24.1%
50+	.7%	25.3%
Gender Category		
Male	38.8%	35.4%
Female	61.2%	64.6%
Race Category		
African American	27.7%	19.9%
Caucasian	59.1%	70.5%
Other	13.1%	9.6%
Income Category		
\$0-24,999	21.9%	11.5%
\$25,000-49,999	23.4%	26.8%
\$50,000-74,999	21.2%	24.2%
\$75,000-99,999	16.1%	17.8%
\$100,000+	17.5%	19.7%

The results concerning the factors that influence the selection of a clothing store for personal shopping are shown in Table 3. Price was the most important factor for both groups while the amenities variable was the least important. Of the nine factors listed, only one (parking) showed statistically significant difference (at the .05 level) between the student group and the non-student group.

Table 3: Factors That Influence the Selection of a Clothing Store When Shopping

Variable	Students	Non-Students	T-Value	P-Value
Product selection	3.88	3.92	0.417	0.677
Price	4.12	4.11	0.035	0.972
Convenience	3.73	3.70	0.204	0.838
Service	3.79	3.78	0.037	0.970
Store atmosphere	3.71	3.63	0.622	0.534
Location	3.63	3.72	0.796	0.427
Store image	3.63	3.49	1.160	0.247
Parking	2.83	3.21	2.753	0.006
Amenities	2.40	2.53	1.009	0.314

Opinions of the respondents concerning boutique clothing stores are revealed in Table 4. Students were somewhat positive about clothing boutiques on every variable and tended to be more positive about boutiques than non-students on every variable except one. However, the results indicated that significant differences (at the .05 level) between students and non-students were present on only three variables: The preference for specialty fashions in boutiques, the opinion that boutiques help find the perfect style, and the belief that boutiques have high quality clothes.

Table 4: Opinions Concerning Boutique Clothing Stores

Variable	Students	Non-Students	T-Value	P-Value
Prefer specialty fashions in boutiques	3.11	2.76	2.572	0.011
Shop at boutiques for personal service	3.09	2.90	1.461	0.145
Boutiques help find the perfect style	3.15	2.86	2.360	0.019
Shop at boutiques for high quality clothes	3.08	2.75	2.716	0.007
Boutiques contact customers on trends	3.29	3.09	1.754	0.080
Boutiques remember me personally	3.21	3.06	1.179	0.240
Parking is an advantage at boutiques	3.04	2.96	0.645	0.519
Boutiques help me find the perfect size	3.13	3.06	0.694	0.489
Like small store atmosphere of boutiques	3.27	3.28	0.070	0.944
Convenience is an advantage at boutiques	3.13	3.06	0.514	0.607
Boutique prices are reasonable	3.09	2.96	1.076	0.283
Location is an important aspect	3.08	3.07	0.108	0.914

A t-test was performed on the responses to the questions contained in the scales measuring materialistic attitude, buying impulsiveness, and retail patronage loyalty. Table 5 shows the results. There were statistically significant differences (at the .05 level) between the student and non-student groups in the materialistic attitudes and buying impulsiveness. Students tended to be more materialistic and more impulsive. Non-students tended to have more loyalty to local stores, but the difference was not significant.

Table 5: Scale Results

Scale	Students	Non-Students	T-Value	P-Value
Local retail loyalty	2.52	2.59	1.064	0.288
Buying impulsiveness	2.99	2.56	4.107	0.000
Materialistic attitude	3.06	2.57	5.372	0.000

Since students were found to be more materialistic and had a stronger buying impulsiveness score than non-students, ANOVA tests were conducted based on the student's gender, race, and family income to see if any patterns could be detected. Results are in Table 6. The only significance difference for students on the two scales was gender with buying impulsiveness. Females displayed a higher level of buying impulsiveness than males.

Table 6: Buying Impulsiveness and Materialistic Attitude of Students

Category	Buying Impulsiveness	F-value (P-value)	Materialism	F-value (P-value)
Gender Category				
Male	2.73	6.63 (.011)	3.07	0.126 (.723)
Female	3.11		3.02	
Race Category				
African American	2.80	1.19 (.307)	2.80	2.45 (.090)
Caucasian	3.05		3.14	
Other	3.07		3.07	
Income Category				
\$0-24,999	3.18	0.906 (.463)	3.23	1.813 (.131)
\$25,000-49,999	3.01		2.85	
\$50,000-74,999	2.78		3.10	
\$75,000-99,999	2.91		2.84	
\$100,000+	3.04		3.26	

5. Discussion

Virtually all factors considered by respondents that influence the selection of clothing stores in general were viewed similarly by both students and non-students. Parking availability was the lone significant exception, being viewed as more important by non-students. Generally non-significant trends revealed that the student responses had a higher mean in five of the factors and the non-student responses were higher on four factors. A surprising result is that the only factor that showed a significant difference between the two groups was parking, which is probably due to the age difference of the groups where almost half of the non-students were over 40 while almost none of the students fell into that age cohort. Parking convenience may become more of a factor with age and declining physical ability. Otherwise, both groups apparently evaluate factors very similarly when choosing a store to shop for clothing. There were differences, however, between the two groups when it comes to specialty clothing shopping. The primary implication of the results concerning the opinions about boutique clothing stores is that students have a more positive attitude of clothing boutiques than do non-students. Students have a higher opinion of boutiques as a source of specialty clothing. They tend to perceive these shops as offering higher quality and more stylish apparel. Consequently, college students are potentially a good target market for boutiques. Based on these data, marketing strategies should emphasize name brand apparel with reputations for style and quality. The shop itself should be marketed similarly in terms of distinctiveness to capitalize on college students' tendencies to look for these qualities in specialty stores. Advertising should focus on not just on price but also on other factors including product selection, service, and store atmosphere. Price sensitivity seems to be less of an issue but should not be ignored given the high priority given pricing by both groups in choosing a clothing store generally as well as the general economic difficulties nationally are taken into account.

The literature indicates that a more materialistic consumer tends to spend more time shopping and spend more money per shopping trip than do regular customers (Fitzmaurice and Comegys 2006). It follows that if the small business owner could attract more materialistic consumers, sales could increase. Our finding that college students tend to be more materialistic than non-student shoppers lends additional credence to targeting this market. The materialist's focus on image and prestige further emphasizes a differentiation strategy for the boutique retailer, where impressions of eliteness in apparel style can demonstrate in-group membership. Shoppers who are more impulsive when buying tend to buy more spontaneously, immediately, and unreflectively (Phau and Lo 2004, Rook and Fisher 1995). With impulse buying becoming an increasingly larger share of purchasing behaviors, if a small business can find and attract more impulsive shoppers, the operation will tend to increase sales. Since these shoppers do not plan many of their purchases, price often will not tend to be the most important factor in their buying decisions, and they may be more amenable to higher pricing for boutique items. In this study, while all respondents identified price as their top factor, students showed to be more impulsive than non-student shoppers. Females especially were more impulsive. Consequently, while price cannot be ignored, it may be of somewhat lesser concern for students who exhibit a more spontaneous buying pattern. So to further tap the student market based on this study, advertising should focus on not just on price but also on other factors including product selection, service, and store atmosphere.

In addition, advertisements targeted to these highly impulsive consumers should use the scarcity appeal. The theme would be to "buy now." Ads could limit the time or volume, and payments could be delayed. The emphasis would be on immediate gratification. Specialty shops offering women's apparel should take particular note of these strategies since, in this study, female respondents demonstrated more impulsiveness than their male counterparts. It should be noted, however, that this finding contradicts Bakewell and Mitchell's (2004) research showing males to be more impulsive. The literature generally has indicated that older consumers tend to develop a higher level of loyalty to local retailers. However, in this study while the non-student respondents had only a slightly higher mean than student respondents, the difference was not significant. Consistent with Darden and Perreault (1976) regarding shoppers who were less loyal to local stores being more fashion conscious, this study shows college students to be more interested in clothing quality and style, wherever they find it. Thus, buyer loyalty appears to warrant lesser emphasis in marketing strategies for small clothing retailers in differentiating the college student market. The original question explored by this study was whether the college market bore certain characteristics that made it worthwhile to focus on for the specialty apparel retailer. Our data indicate that the answer is that college students are somewhat different than other adults and that they indeed may be a potentially a good market for some clothing boutiques. Generalizing information and interpretations should be restricted due to limitations of this study.

Although it appears reasonable that the opinions analyzed in this study do offer clues to the clothing boutique shopping mindset of students in particular, the convenience sampling procedure employed precludes inferences beyond this data set. Additionally, it should be noted that attitudes and shopping habits in the mid-south might be substantially different from those found in other parts of the country. More research is needed to confirm this study's results. A suggestion for future research is to use a national sampling frame. Various regions of the country could be compared the results with the mid-south region. A comparison of various ethnic groups and of different income groups could be done. Also, different types of retailers could be studied, and a comparison of different nations could be examined. With increasing retail competition, small retailers could be helped by being more knowledgeable about the drivers of sales to college students and adults in general.

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