

Gender differences in brand commitment, impulse buying, and hedonic consumption

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Abstract

Purpose – Gender is one of the most common forms of segmentation used by marketers. However, not enough data on gender differences has been collected in the field of consumer behavior. Based on tenets from evolutionary psychology, the purpose of this paper is to hypothesize that in comparison to men, women will report higher levels of brand commitment, hedonic consumption, and impulse buying.

Design/methodology/approach – In total, 257 students (153 males and 104 females; M age = 29.9, SD = 6.7) completed questionnaires.

Findings – As hypothesized, women had higher levels of brand commitment ($t(254) = 2.32, p < 0.05$, Cohen's $d = 0.31$), hedonic consumption ($t(254) = 4.19, p < 0.01$, Cohen's $d = 0.53$), and impulse buying in comparison to men.

Research limitations/implications – The study was conducted on shopping in general, while gender differences may be product-dependent.

Practical implications – Since women have higher levels of brand commitment than men, retailers should promote high quality brands for their female customers. Since women have higher levels of impulse buying in comparison to men, and since impulse buying is triggered by sensual cues, retailers can accentuate sensory cues in stores whose products tend to appeal to women. For example, sale assistants might encourage women to touch products, so they can experience the product tactilely as well as visually. On-site ads and pop displays should have a stronger impact in women's departments, due to increased impulse buying.

Originality/value – Gender differences in consumer behavior, though recognized as an important topic, have attracted only limited research attention. This paper helps fill that gap while incorporating an evolutionary viewpoint, which is emerging as a valuable theoretical perspective in the field of marketing.

Keywords Consumer behaviour, Gender, Brands, Marketing strategy, Men, Women, Gender differences, Impulse buying, Brand commitment, Hedonic consumption

Paper type Research paper

An executive summary for managers and executive readers can be found at the end of this article.

1. Introduction

Gender is one of the most common segmentation criteria used by marketers. This makes sense, given that the male-female divide is “easy to identify, easy to access, and large enough to be profitable” (Putrevu, 2001, p. 1). Yet while there is a large body of work on gender differences in the psychology literature, relatively little research has been done on gender differences in consumer behavior. This is surprising, as today's men have taken on many of the shopping obligations that women chiefly performed in the past (Harnack *et al.*, 1998). The present study investigates gender differences in brand commitment, hedonic consumption, and impulse buying. We base our hypotheses on tenets from the field of evolutionary psychology, which over recent years has emerged as a valuable perspective for the study of consumer behavior (Hantula, 2003; Miller, 2009; Saad, 2007).

1.1 Gender differences in personality

Across cultures, women and men differ in personality traits. For example, a meta-analysis of 150 studies reported that overall, males take more risks than females (Byrnes *et al.*, 1999). In a large study of 26 cultures with 23,000 participants, women scored higher on neuroticism, agreeableness and warmth, while men scored higher on assertiveness (Costa *et al.*, 2001). Interestingly, gender differences in the study were most pronounced in European and American cultures in which sex-role differences are relatively small. As Costa *et al.* point out; this suggests that cultural factors are not responsible for the differences in personality traits between men and women.

1.2 Evolutionary explanations of gender differences

Over recent decades, social explanations for gender differences have increasingly been replaced by explanations that take an evolutionary approach (see for example Archer, 2004; Schmitt *et al.*, 2008). Evolutionary psychology views gender differences as rooted in genetic variations that arose millions of years ago through natural selection (Buss, 1995). Studies of modern-day hunter-gatherer societies offer hints to the likely sexual division of labor among our early ancestors. In such societies, the women gather fruits, tubers, and other edible resources in groups, on a daily basis. This allows the women to stay close to home, so they can care for the children. Men, on the other hand, hunt in groups approximately once a week, returning to the tribe with meat that is usually divided equally between all tribe families (Marlowe, 2007). Some have suggested that men prefer to hunt for large, albeit hard-to-catch game, rather than a larger number of smaller animals, because the danger and difficulty

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of such hunts allows men to advertise their skill and prowess, and perhaps gain improved access to potential mates (Hawkes and Bird, 2002).

In short, from the perspective of evolutionary psychology, gender differences exist, in part, because females and males confronted different problems in human prehistory. For instance, men needed qualities that would make them better hunters, and so natural selection favored traits that improved their hunting skills. The hunter needs to be able to manipulate mental representations of objects in space; as a result, today's men have better mental rotation skills than women (Linn and Petersen, 1985), starting as early as infancy (Quinn and Liben, 2008). Women, charged with care of the children, needed psychological traits that improved their parenting. Today, research suggests that women show more empathy than men (Baron-Cohen and Wheelwright, 2004) and have better verbal skills (Strand *et al.*, 2006) – traits that researchers consider important for maintaining family life and raising children.

1.3 Gender differences in consumer studies

While a recent review suggests that gender differences in consumer behavior are minimal (Gentry *et al.*, 2003), some studies have documented significant differences. For example, women put more time and effort into shopping for Christmas presents than men (Fischer and Arnold, 1990), and enjoy shopping in general more than men do (Rook and Hoch, 1985). Studies also show that women process information in advertising and product information messages in a more detailed and comprehensive manner than men (Meyers-Levy and Sternthal, 1991; Kempf *et al.*, 2006; Laroche *et al.*, 2000). Women also tend to make more impulse purchases than men (Coley and Burgess, 2003; Dittmar *et al.*, 1995; Rook and Hoch, 1985).

Importantly, many of women's documented shopping habits resemble behaviors that would have been needed in a world where gathering available food resources – fruit, nuts, tubers and the like – was critical to staving off starvation. Kruger and Byker (2009) found that women tend to carefully scrutinize products before they buy, prefer to choose from an assortment of products, and are more likely than men to pay attention to when items are likely to be on sale. Similarly, gatherers will examine the fruit in a patch carefully, choosing only those which are ripe and ready to eat, and will return to specific patches according to seasonal changes in ripeness and abundance (Kruger and Byker, 2009).

Further insights come from the literature comparing men's and women's spatial orientation and navigational skills. There is evidence that although men have better spatial skills in general, women may possess specific spatial skills suited for gathering (Silverman *et al.*, 2007). One study conducted at a large farmers' market showed that women were better than men at pointing to the locations of stalls where they had previously been given particular food items (New *et al.*, 2007). This makes sense in hunger-gatherer terms, as foraging sites – unlike game – can be counted on to stay in the same place.

1.4 Brand commitment

Brand commitment is highly associated with brand loyalty (Kim *et al.*, 2008); some argue that it is a necessary and sufficient condition for brand loyalty (e.g. Knox and Walker, 2001). While brand commitment is a function of brand characteristics (Kim *et al.*, 2008), it may also be related to consumer traits. For instance, both brand commitment and loyalty are associated with risk aversion (Matzler *et al.*, 2006).

There is evidence that risk aversion has a genetic basis (Miles *et al.*, 2001) and also that women tend to be more risk averse than men (Byrnes *et al.*, 1999). From the evolutionary perspective, risk aversion is likely to have been selected for in women: A cautious, risk averse mother would have had better chances of protecting her children, and therefore passing on her genes to future generations. A tendency toward risk taking, on the other hand, would have benefited ancestral men as they engaged in the competition for resources and mates (Wilson and Daly, 1985).

The evidence thus suggests that risk aversion is related to brand commitment, and women tend to be more risk averse than men. On this basis, it is proposed that:

H1. Women will report higher levels of brand commitment in comparison to men.

1.5 Hedonic consumption

Hirschman and Holbrook (1982) nicely described hedonic consumption as “those facets of consumer behavior that relate to the multisensory, fantasy and emotive aspects of one's experience with products.” That is, a hedonic shopping experience involves multiple sensory modalities, such as touch, taste, scent, and sound; it is likely to include imaginative ideation and to produce emotional arousal. Hedonic consumption also has indirect effects on well-being, by improving consumers' satisfaction within relevant life domains (Zhong and Mitchell, 2010).

The idea that consumption – shopping – can be a hedonic experience makes sense in light of the evolutionary perspective. People are more likely to spend time doing something, however important, if they enjoy it; and where survival depended on hunting and foraging, those who took pleasure in the pursuit and kill (men) or in making the most nutrient-rich finds (women) would be at an advantage. Present-day shopping is more similar to foraging than to hunting; like foraging, it involves making choices from among a range (large or small) of available objects. In fact, women report enjoying shopping more than men and are more likely to view it as a recreational pastime (Kruger and Byker, 2009). Thus it is proposed that:

H2. Women will report higher levels of hedonic consumption in comparison to men.

1.6 Impulse buying

Retailers typically view impulse buying as an important component of their business; measures used to stimulate impulse buying include strategic product placement and point-of-purchase advertising displays (Wood, 1998). Impulse buying can be described as having a strong and sudden desire to buy a product which one did not intend to purchase, and doing so without much contemplation (Rook and Fisher, 1995; Rook, 1987). Impulse buying is related to hedonic consumption (Rook and Hoch, 1985). Consumers report that they feel better after an impulsive purchase (Rook, 1987), even experiencing a sense of being rewarded (Hausman, 2000). Although such purchases are unintentional, they may indeed be perceived as satisfying certain needs (Hausman, 2000). Indeed, impulse buying has been linked to negative emotions (Silvera *et al.*, 2008) and may serve as a way to alleviate negative affect (Verplanken *et al.*, 2005).

There are at least four reasons why women may be more inclined to impulse buying. First, since impulse buying is related to hedonic consumption, and women score higher in

hedonic consumption than men, we can expect them to show higher levels of impulse buying as well. Second, women, more than men, suffer from anxiety (Feingold, 1994) and depression (Wade *et al.*, 2002). Given the link between impulse buying and negative emotions (Silvera *et al.*, 2008); (Verplanken *et al.*, 2005), women may use impulse buying as a means to improve their mental state.

Third, consumers with a high need to touch are more susceptible to impulse buying (Peck and Childers, 2006). There is evidence that women have a greater need to experience things tactilely than men (Workman, 2010). This need to touch may be a product of natural selection. We have already described how foragers need to examine potential food resources carefully, selecting those that are ripest or in best condition for eating (Kruger and Byker, 2009); doubtless all the senses – especially sight, smell, taste, and touch – would be employed in this selection process. Maternal parenting is another possible trigger of the selection process in regard to touch. In an observational study in Sweden, mothers showed more tending behaviors towards their infants, including touching and holding, than fathers did. These differences existed even in non-traditional families in which fathers took parental leave (Lamb *et al.*, 1982).

Finally, it may be that natural selection selected against behaviors that might lead to impulse buying in men. The hunt requires great care in the timing of the “purchase”: strike too early and the prey will flee. Foraging is kinder toward errors in timing. If a forager digs up a tuber prematurely, the loss (in terms of the time and calories expended) is small. For these reasons, we propose that:

H3. Women will report higher levels of impulse buying in comparison to men.

2. Method

The study participants were 257 students (M age = 29.9, SD = 6.7) from a large Israeli college. The sample included 153 males and 104 females. Socio-demographic data collected from participants included age, gender, family income in comparison to the national mean (1 = well below average, 2 = below average, 3 = about average, 4 = above average, 5 = well above average), and maternal and paternal education (1 = no formal education, 2 = elementary education, 3 = high-school education, 4 = higher education). Parental education was computed as the average of maternal and paternal education.

Brand Commitment was measured using a scale developed by Knox and Walker (2001; 2003). First, participants were asked how committed they were to particular brands for three types of products (paper towels, breakfast cereal, and a daily newspaper). Participants ranked their commitment on a Likert scale from 1 (not at all committed) to 5 (very committed). For each product, participants were then asked what they would do if their preferred brand was not available when needed: 1 = happily buy a different brand, 2 = reluctantly buy a different brand, 3 = not buy the product until the next time you shopped, 4 = try a different shop, 5 = keep trying different shops until you got the brand you wanted.

The Impulsive Trait scale and the Hedonic Consumption scale (Hausman, 2000) included seven items each. Participants were asked how much they agreed with each statement on a Likert scale from 1 (disagree) to 5 (agree). Sample items are: “I often buy things without thinking” (impulsiveness) and “I go shopping to be entertained”

(hedonic consumption). Both scales have face and construct validity (Hausman, 2000).

3. Results

3.1 Reliability and validity

To assess reliability, Cronbach’s alphas were calculated for the three scales. All three showed good reliability, as follows: brand commitment (Cronbach’s α = 0.67), impulsive trait (Cronbach’s α = 0.84), and hedonic consumption (Cronbach’s α = 0.80). Using AMOS 17, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted. The factor loadings for the impulsive trait scale and hedonic consumption scale ranged from 0.50–0.85, showing that each of these scales was indeed based on one underlying factor. Factor loadings for the brand commitment scale were low, so we ran an exploratory factor analysis using principal components analysis with varimax rotation. The analysis revealed two factors, one covering the two items regarding paper towels, and the other including the four items on the breakfast cereal and daily newspaper. It appears that the low level of involvement in purchasing paper towels caused the addition of a second factor for this scale. As expected from previous studies, impulse buying was correlated with hedonic consumption ($r_{(255)} = 0.37$, $p < 0.001$).

3.2 Test of hypotheses

As hypothesized, women (M = 2.67, SD = 0.76) showed higher levels of brand commitment than men (M = 2.45, SD = 0.69; $t_{(254)} = 2.32$, $p < 0.05$, Cohen’s d = 0.31 (Thalheimer and Cook, 2002)). To eliminate alternative explanations, the prediction of brand commitment was addressed in a multiple regression analysis with gender, age, family income, and parental education as predictors at the first stage. The analysis explained only 2 percent of the population variance, $F(4,239) = 2.43$, $p < 0.05$, with gender (being female) and family income positively associated with brand commitment. In the second stage, we analyzed only the significant predictors; this model explained 2 percent of the variance as well, $F(2,253) = 4.05$, $p < 0.05$. Table I shows the standardized regression coefficients and statistics for both models.

Women (M = 2.98, SD = 0.82) also showed higher levels of hedonic consumption than men (M = 2.57, SD = 0.74; $t_{(254)} = 4.19$, $p < 0.01$, Cohen’s d = 0.53). Multiple regression analysis with gender, age, family income, and

Table I Multiple regression statistics for the prediction of brand commitment

Predictors	B	SE (B)	β	t
Stage 1				
Intercept	2.35	0.32		7.26 **
Gender	−0.22	0.10	−0.15	−2.34 *
Age	0.003	0.007	0.03	0.38
Family income	0.10	0.05	0.14	2.01 *
Parental education	−0.04	0.06	−0.04	−0.65
Stage 2				
Intercept	2.41	0.17		13.97 **
Gender	−0.24	0.09	−0.16	−2.56 *
Family Income	0.07	0.04	0.10	1.64

Notes: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

parental education as predictors explained 8 percent of the population variance, $F(4, 239) = 6.28$, $p < 0.01$, with only gender (being female) associated with hedonic consumption. In the second stage, we analyzed only gender; this model explained 6 percent of the variance, $F(1, 254) = 17.59$, $p < 0.01$. See Table II.

As hypothesized, women ($M = 2.94$, $SD = 0.89$) also showed higher levels of impulse buying than men ($M = 2.59$, $SD = 0.74$; $t_{(195)} = 3.31$, $p < 0.01$, Cohen's $d = 0.44$). A multiple regression analysis showed that female gender, younger age, higher family income and lower parental education were all associated with impulse buying. The analysis explained 9 percent of the population variance, $F(4, 239) = 7.16$, $p < 0.01$. See Table III.

4. Discussion

The study results showed that in comparison to men, women had higher levels of brand commitment, hedonic consumption, and impulse buying. These results can be explained, at least in part, by evolutionary reasoning. Cross-cultural studies provide strong evidence for a fundamentally sex-based division of labor (Wood and Eagly, 2002). The present-day division of labor appears to continue a prehistoric divide starting in the Upper Paleolithic (Kuhn and Stiner, 2006), in which women's major roles consisted of parenting and gathering while men's major roles involved hunting and guarding the clan.

Since women, as those with responsibility for the day-to-day care of young children, tend to be more risk averse than men, we hypothesized that they would show higher brand commitment. The greater commitment among women found in this study is in accordance with other research – for

example, findings showing that women use supermarket loyalty cards more than men (Bellizzi and Bristol, 2004). We further hypothesized that women would show higher rates of hedonic consumption and impulse shopping. This was indeed the case. We explain these findings as stemming, in part, from the workings of natural selection. Over the millennia, a genetically-based tendency to enjoy behaviors relevant for gathering would have been selected for in women. These genetic tendencies ultimately gave rise to today's phenomena of hedonic consumption and impulse buying. Meanwhile, behaviors that today give rise to impulse shopping would have been selected against among ancestral men, as such behaviors would have been damaging in a hunting context.

The need to understand gender differences in shopping behavior is exemplified in the fashion industry. Today's fashion retailers understand very well that for women in particular, shopping is not just about making the right purchase, but also about the experience. With more couples shopping together, it is imperative to design stores in a way that will serve both parties. Women need the right atmosphere, space, and time to find just the right item. Men want to get the job done. Some fashion retailers have designed their stores so as to keep conflict down and sales up, by, for example, including in their store designs areas where male clients can relax with a coffee, and read magazines or watch sports broadcasts while their partner shops.

4.1 Limitations and future research

Our study was conducted in a particular setting with a particular sample – namely, Israeli students. Israel is a fairly westernized nation with a thriving consumer culture. It may be that our findings would be less relevant to other settings, such as less consumer-oriented cultures, or other groups of participants, such as older shoppers.

A second limitation concerns our findings that women are more likely to engage in impulse buying. Our findings view impulse buying as a general tendency, which is consistent across product categories. Indeed, this is how impulse buying has traditionally been conceptualized (Rook, 1987). Recently, however, some researchers have argued that impulse buying should be studied as a domain-specific behavior (Jones *et al.*, 2003; Rook and Hoch, 1985). For instance, in a US telephone survey, which found that women report more impulse buying than men, the authors note that the questionnaire emphasized the purchase of clothing (Wood, 1998). Some research suggests that while women tend to shop on impulse for fashion, men do so for electronics and music (Coley and Burgess, 2003). This question remains open for further research.

4.2 Summary

In the past, consumers were assumed to be women, and marketers, men (Beetles and Harris, 2005). This is changing, however (Otnes and McGrath, 2001), and today's marketers need to address both male and female consumers. In order to do so efficiently, marketers need to know their similarities and their differences. In the present study we found that in comparison to men, women exhibit higher levels of brand commitment, hedonic consumption, and impulse buying.

4.3 Managerial implications and applications

Since women have higher levels of brand commitment than men, retailers should offer them high-quality brands, which evoke higher levels of commitment. Men, however, should be offered a wide variety of brands to choose from. At the same time, since women have higher levels of impulse buying in

Table II Multiple regression statistics for the prediction of hedonic consumption

Predictors	B	SE (B)	β	t
Stage 1				
Intercept	3.52	0.34		10.21 *
Gender	–0.40	0.10	–0.25	–3.93 *
Age	0.01	0.01	–0.12	–1.82
Family income	0.09	0.05	0.11	1.63
Parental education	–0.13	0.07	–0.12	–1.95
Stage 2				
Intercept	2.98	0.08		39.43 *
Gender	–0.41	0.10	–0.26	–4.19 *

Notes: * $p < 0.01$

Table III Multiple regression statistics for the prediction of impulse buying

Predictors	B	SE (B)	β	t
Intercept	3.81	0.35		10.87 **
Gender	–0.33	0.10	–0.20	–3.16 **
Age	–0.02	0.01	–0.18	–2.74 **
Family income	0.11	0.05	0.14	2.12 *
Parental education	–0.20	0.07	–0.18	–2.96 **

Notes: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

comparison to men, and since impulse buying operates through sensual cues, retailers can accentuate sensory cues in stores whose products tend to appeal to women.

Indeed, catering to all the senses – touch, sight, hearing, taste, and smell – is likely to encourage purchasing behavior among women, by engaging both their tendency toward impulse buying and their general behavior as more committed shoppers. For example, sale assistants might encourage women to touch products, so they can experience the product tactilely. On-site ads and visual displays should have a stronger impact in women's departments and on shelves carrying products aimed at women. With regard to hearing, low-volume slow pop or fast classical music can be used to create a relaxing atmosphere in women's departments, enhancing the experience and encouraging shoppers to linger (Grewal *et al.*, 2003; MacInnis and Park, 1991; Sweeney and Wyber, 2002). Music at high volume is appropriate for zones catering to men, who tend to spend less time shopping (Kellaris and Rice, 1993). Finally, food retailers can engage taste as well as smell by offering customers tastes of the delicacies on offer. Our research suggests that such taste displays are likely to be more effective for female shoppers.

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Executive summary and implications for managers and executives

This summary has been provided to allow managers and executives a rapid appreciation of the content of the article. Those with a particular interest in the topic covered may then read the article in toto to take advantage of the more comprehensive description of the research undertaken and its results to get the full benefit of the material present.

Marketers often use gender as a means to segment consumer markets. Despite this, studies into how gender differences impact on consumer behavior are relatively uncommon. More research is therefore needed, especially given the increasing tendency for men to perform certain shopping duties traditionally carried out by women.

Considerable evidence exists to suggest that males and females possess different personality characteristics. For instance, men are typically more assertive than women and likelier to take risks. Affection, friendliness and neuroticism are among the traits commonly associated with females. Such differences are regarded by many scholars to be universal rather than determined by cultural factors.

Rejecting social and cultural influence has prompted beliefs that evolution may explain why gender differences exist. That “hunter-gatherer societies” still prevail in the modern world provides further rationale for this argument. Such societies mirror those of centuries ago where males hunted for food while females remained close to home. Although the primary role of women was to care for their children, they also had daily responsibility for gathering “fruits, tubers, and other edible resources”. Analysts claim that this “sexual division of labor” helped equip males with greater spatial awareness than females, whose family-orientation is frequently cited as an explanation for their compassionate nature and superior verbal skills.

Considerable impact of gender differences on consumer behavior has been noted in some investigations. Compared to men, women:

- generally enjoy shopping more;
- exert greater time and effort when buying presents;
- are more thorough in their processing of advertisements and product information; and
- show a higher propensity towards impulse buying.

According to some scholars, the care and precision evident in these habits derive from how their female ancestors operated when searching for the most edible fruits. It is also claimed that women may possess spatial skills necessary for gathering and that this might help them to identify specific locations better than men.

The argument that gender differences are genetic and emerge through natural selection has been explored in relation to brand commitment. It is widely assumed that commitment is a key antecedent of loyalty and inspired by the attributes of a brand. Some association with consumer traits is likewise proposed, with one example being risk aversion's link with commitment and loyalty. From the evolutionary perspective, it is argued that women's leaning towards risk aversion stems from their maternal instinct. The higher propensity among men to take risks is attributed to their inherited need and desire to compete for “resources and mates”.

For many, shopping can be a hedonic experience that involves pleasure that is potentially multisensory in nature. The emotional satisfaction that is derived also impacts on an individual's well-being, albeit indirectly. Making choices from the options available forms part of the enjoyment and analysts liken this more to the foraging rather than hunting activities performed by our ancestors. Consequently, it is suggested that women are likelier than men to enjoy shopping and to perceive it as a “recreational pastime”.

The natural selection theory might also explain gender differences in impulse buying tendency. Enticing consumers to make spontaneous purchases is an important strategy for retailers. Careful positioning of products and advertising at point-of-sale are among the measures used to elicit such behavior. Impulse buying occurs without prior deliberation and is regarded by some people as a reward or a way to fulfill certain needs. A link between unplanned purchases and hedonic consumption might therefore be assumed.

This connection suggests that women are more disposed towards impulse buying than men. Such behavior helps alleviate anxiety and certain scholars have found that females suffer more than males where such psychological problems

are concerned. Another theory is that impulse purchase behavior is driven by “a high need to touch”. According to some scholars, this desire may originate from natural selection in the shape of maternal instincts and the need to carefully inspect potential food sources. The evolutionary approach suggests that men are less prone to impromptu shopping because of the precision and careful timing demanded when hunting.

Students from a large college in Israel took part in a study to further explore these issues. The final sample of 257 incorporated 153 males and 104 females who supplied demographic data regarding age, gender, family income and parental education. Subjects were asked to indicate their commitment to certain brands for three product types: breakfast cereal, paper towels and daily newspapers. How they would act if their preferred brand was unavailable was also recorded. Tifferet and Herstein also obtained participant responses to various statements concerning impulsive buying and hedonic consumption.

Data analysis revealed that:

- correlation exists between hedonic consumption and impulse buying;
- brand commitment was higher among women than men;
- women rated higher than men for hedonic consumption; and
- impulse buying was greater for women than for men.

The authors believe these findings indicate a ‘division of labor’ which reflects continuation of the ‘prehistoric divide’ described earlier. They also cite examples where the higher rating of women in these categories is evident. For instance, previous research has showed that supermarket loyalty card usage is higher among females than males. Another example is provided by the fashion industry where women value the experience as much as the actual purchase. Retailers should therefore aim to create an environment that appeals to both females and males alike. An appropriate atmosphere, space and time are important to women, while men might appreciate areas to relax in as their partner shops.

To elicit their commitment, retailers must offer women high-quality brands. Where men are concerned, it is better to provide a wider choice. Another suggestion made by Tifferet and Herstein is to use sensory cues to increase the possibility of females engaging in impulse buying. Being encouraged by store assistants is one idea forwarded, while ads and visual displays in relevant departments is another way to catch the attention of women. The authors believe that appeal to hearing can be accentuated by playing low-volume music of the pop or classical type. Higher volume music may appeal better to men, some analysts have argued. Female customers in particular are likely to be enticed by food retailers that offer samples to exploit taste and smell senses.

One recommendation for future research is to explore samples with differing levels of consumer-orientation. Certain claims have been made that women are likely to impulse buy in some product categories and men in others. Consequently, scholars might investigate further to ascertain whether behavior is subject to between-domain variation.

(A précis of the article “Gender differences in brand commitment, impulse buying, and hedonic consumption”. Supplied by Marketing Consultants for Emerald.)