Beyond the Stereotypes of Male Consumption

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SESSION OVERVIEW

This session examined the behavior of male consumers that belies or defies stereotypical male or masculine activities. Each paper explored a culturally entrenched male stereotype or set of stereotypes (e.g., men are the breadwinners in a household, men hate to shop) and moved beyond these stereotypes to explicate how and why men may act contrary to them. There were four papers in this session: “Beyond the Stereotype of Male Shopping Behavior,” by Cele Otnes and Mary Ann McGrath, “Husbands Play ‘Men:’ Feminist Interpretation of Women’s Participation in Preserving Male Stereotypes,” by Suraj Commuri, “What the @#$% is Going On? Linking Message Order Effects and Gender Differences in Ad Persuasion” by Frederic Brunel, Julie Ruth and Michelle Nelson and “The Role of Men in the Meaning and Production of “Homemade” by Linda Price and Eric Arnould.

ABSTRACTS OF PAPERS

“Beyond the Stereotypes of Male Shopping Behavior”
Cele Otnes, Rutgers University
Mary Ann McGrath, Loyola University of Chicago

This paper examines male shopping behavior, and argues that perceptions of "typical" male shopping are, like most stereotypes, more prevalent in the minds of consumers than in actual men’s actual shopping behavior. This study uses five different research techniques to explore issues pertaining to male shopper stereotypes. These include observations, interviews and projective techniques. The study then 1) describes three common stereotypes emerging from perceptions of male shopping behavior; 2) demonstrates how actual male shopping behavior sometimes supports, but more frequently debunks, these stereotypes, and 3) discusses the retail contexts, situational conditions, and shopper motivations accompanying shopping behavior that belies these stereotypes. Managerial implications and suggestions for further research are offered.

“Husbands Play ‘Men:’ Feminist Interpretation of Women’s Participation in Preserving Male Stereotypes”
Suraj Commuri, the University of Nebraska

About 80% of all households in the US are made up of dual-career couples, and women are the chief wage earners in about a quarter of all US households. The “husband as the good provider” model of a household’s productive organization is today far from the reality of many households. Though women have made strides in the external workplace to challenge the stereotypes associated with their gender, masculine stereotypes associated with the roles husbands play within the household continue to persist. A feminist
interpretation of interviews among professional women reveals that while women focus on agentic considerations to explain why stereotypes have been broken in the workplace, they use an *emic* model of social structure to explain why they participate in preserving male stereotypical roles for their husbands inside the household. Consumption-related rituals associated with these behaviors are identified.

What the *@³* is Going On? Linking Message Order Effects and Gender Differences in Ad Persuasion”
Frederic Brunel, Boston University
Julie Ruth, Rutgers University/Camden
Michelle Nelson, The University of Wisconsin-Madison

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

First, this paper discusses past research on gender differences in values, and the implications for marketing communication. We conclude that, based on past studies, females tend to be more altruistic and show a greater concern for others than males do (e.g., Gilligan 1982, Nodding 1984). Specifically, previous advertising studies have shown that in a charity advertising appeal context, females were more responsive to other-oriented appeals than self-oriented ones (Nelson 1998, Nelson and Brunel 1999), in the USA and in Denmark (the reverse being true of males). In the first study, we presented forty-nine female and forty male college students with two charity appeals. The first message asked subjects to give money to the cancer research charity because it would be good for them (a selfish/help-self message). The second appeal was identical to the first one, except that this time, subjects were told that giving money to the cancer research charity would help other people (an altruistic/help-others appeal). After reading both appeals, subjects were asked to “select the International Cancer Society advertising appeal/message that they find most persuasive.” A simple dichotomous choice variable was used to capture the preference. Results were as follows:

Figure One

Ad Appeal Preference Percentage by Sex in Study One

The results from Study One showed that female and male subjects revealed different ad preferences (chi-square = 3.997, p<.05). That women and men would have different preferences was expected. However, it is the direction of