THE IDEA OF NECESSITY:
SHOPPING TRENDS AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

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Research Focus

- Research on college student shopping habits, perceptions of appearance, and views of necessity
Background Information

- Veblen; Conspicuous Consumption
  - Acquiring and displaying items in an effort to show off wealth

- Crane; 1850-1900, wardrobe growth for middle class
  - More clothing to women, as they increasingly appeared outside the home

- Taylor, Funk, and Clark; Luxury or Necessity?
  - From 1996-2006, “necessity” items list grew
## Method

- **Survey**
- 199 UNH undergraduates
- **Convenience sample**
- Partially representative of the UNH undergraduate student population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>State Residency</th>
<th>Housing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Population Values</strong></td>
<td>20 years</td>
<td>Male: 46%</td>
<td>In-State: 58%</td>
<td>On-Campus: 59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female: 54%</td>
<td>Out of State: 42%</td>
<td>Off-Campus: 41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sample Values</strong></td>
<td>19.5 years</td>
<td>Male: 38.3%</td>
<td>In-State: 56.1%</td>
<td>On-Campus: 77.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female: 61.7%</td>
<td>Out of State: 43.9%</td>
<td>Off-Campus: 22.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
General Societal Pressures

- “People are judged because of their clothing.”
  - 74.90% agree
    - 68.00% of males, 79.17% of females
- “College students view their peers who commonly wear name brand clothes to dress “nicer” than others.”
  - 61.58% agree
    - 56.94% of males, 64.4% of females
- “Appearance is important to me.”
  - 80.51% agree
    - 74.67% of males, 84.16% of females
- “Some college students buy name brand clothes to show off.”
  - 81.25% agree
    - 82.20% of males, 80.67% of females
- “Trends affect the way I dress.”
  - 49.74% agree
    - 34.67% of males, 59.16% of females
## General Spending

### Frequency of Shopping for Leisure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Frequently</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>26.15%</td>
<td>26.15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>25.13%</td>
<td>51.28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>31.79%</td>
<td>83.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrequently</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>16.92%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Frequency of Shopping for Leisure by Sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male (cumulative)</th>
<th>Female (cumulative)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Frequently</td>
<td>12.00% (12.00%)</td>
<td>35.00% (35.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>20.00% (32.00%)</td>
<td>28.33% (63.33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>36.00% (68.00%)</td>
<td>29.17% (92.50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrequently</td>
<td>32.00% (100.00%)</td>
<td>7.50% (100.00%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conspicuous Consumption Scale

- A compilation of agreement statements, such as:
  - “It is important for me to have name brand clothes”
  - “Trends affect the way I dress.”
  - “Appearance is important to me”
  - “People are judged because of their clothing”
Conspicuous Consumption

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of Shopping</th>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Frequently</td>
<td>17.51 (4.71)</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>25.79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>15.88 (4.46)</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>25.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>14.66 (4.65)</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>32.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrequently</td>
<td>14.00 (6.36)</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>16.84%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P-value: 0.0055
Conspicuous Consumption

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male Brand Name Tops</th>
<th>Female Brand Name Tops</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Likelihood of “Buying for the Label”</strong></td>
<td><strong>Likelihood of “Buying for the Label”</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than Likely</td>
<td>More than Likely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.63</td>
<td>18.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least Consider it</td>
<td>At least Consider it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.85</td>
<td>16.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than Likely</td>
<td>Less than Likely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.48</td>
<td>13.96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P-value: 0.0014  
P-value: 0.0000
Impulsive Behaviors & Control Factors

**Impulsive Behaviors**

- **Sample:**
  - Significant relationship with likeliness of “buying for the label”

- **Males:**
  - Being impulsive had no relation to “buying for the label”

- **Females:**
  - Being impulsive had a very significant relation to “buying for the label”

**Control Factors**

- **Sample:**
  - Significant relationship with likeliness of “buying for the label”

- **Males:**
  - Having control had no relation to “buying for the label”

- **Females:**
  - Having control had a very significant relation to “buying for the label”
Wants vs. Needs

- Item checklist: What do students regularly consume or own, and what do they think is necessary?
  - 44 items
  - Clothing/accessories, electronics, conveniences, leisure items, hygiene products
  - “Necessary” in relation to being a college student in today’s society
## Wants vs. Needs

### Average Items Owned by UNH Undergraduates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Sample</strong></td>
<td>27.83 (9.30)</td>
<td>63.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Males</strong></td>
<td>24.21 (9.34)</td>
<td>55.02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Females</strong></td>
<td>28.26 (7.26)</td>
<td>64.28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Average Items thought to be a “Necessity”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Sample</strong></td>
<td>17.46 (9.30)</td>
<td>39.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Males</strong></td>
<td>16.00 (9.71)</td>
<td>36.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Females</strong></td>
<td>18.80 (8.61)</td>
<td>42.73%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion

**Sex Similarities**
- Recognize the pressure to look a certain way
- Conspicuously consume in regard to appearance
- Thinks less is necessary than what they actually own

**Sex Differences**
- Females are shopping for leisure more often
- Females let those pressures actually affect their clothing choices more than men
  - Impulsivity and lack of control
Why these results?

- Socialization of genders
  - “Pretty Princess” vs. “Big, Strong Boy”
    - Female focus: more often appearance related
    - Male focus: more often doing/action related
  - Clothing is socially desirable for females, but not so much males
  - Possibly a matter of insecurity and lack of confidence for females?
Conclusions

Limitations

- Small sample
- Not fully representative
- Time frame
- What do students consider “name brand”

Future Research

- How much more do we own than we actually believe to be necessary, and of what we think is “necessary”, what truly is?
- Is there a direct relation between the amount of reflected appraisal girls receive and how much they will conspicuously consume later in life?
References


References
