Extended Abstract

Key Words: social media, gender, cultural differences, market mavens

Track Title: **International Business**

Paper Title: **Gender and Cultural Influence on Market Mavens in Social Networks**

Abstract

According to Feick & Price (1987) certain customer groups (market mavens) have a higher propensity to talk to others about their product experience. Market mavens are consumers scoring high on a scale to measure consumer's propensity to provide general shopping and marketplace information. They are motivated to provide useful information to friends and accumulate information for this purpose. Market mavens differ to early adopters and opinion leaders in that the influence of market mavens is more general. An opinion leader's interest in a specific product category appears to be a major motivation for their opinion leadership (Bloch, 1986) and therefore opinion leadership is thought to be product specific as opposed to the market maven's information provision tendency which is thought to span many product categories.

The influence of gender and culture on consumer behaviour in particular on marketing communication has been an area for marketing research since decades (Artz and Venkatesh, 1991; Arnold and Bianchi, 2001; Bristor and Fischer, 1993; Dobscha, 1995; Gould, 1996; Stern, 1987). Current research examining the impact of gender and culture in marketing is, not surprisingly, concerned with the behaviour of consumers in the new media (Riedl *et al.*, 2010; Teoh and Cyril, 2008; Hernández-Ortega *et al.*, 2008).

Subsequently the question arises how these concepts hold in the social media context.

Several studies investigate the role of gender and culture in market mavens and on word-of-mouth referral (Lam *et al.*, 2009; Schumann *et al.*, 2010; Yinlong *et al.*, 2014; Yang, 2013). No study so far has investigated the market maven concept in social media with regard to differences resulting from gender and culture. This empirical research examines a sample of 201 students with different cultural backgrounds using an online questionnaire.

Aim of the Paper: To contribute to the discussion of gender and cross-cultural marketing, with regard to the notion of the market mavens in social media.

Literature

The Market Maven Concept

According to Feick & Price (1987) market mavens are consumers scoring high on a scale to measure consumer's propensity to provide general shopping and marketplace information. They are motivated to provide useful information to friends and accumulate information for this purpose. As opposed to opinion leaders or early adopters market mavens show rather a general knowledge about the market than a specific expertise about products or brands. Following the definition of Yang (2013) Market Mavens are defined as "young consumers who show a strong market mavenism tendency".

Gender

One of the major goals of marketing is to segment consumers and to try to target the products/services to their specific needs. Gender has a long history in marketing, as an important segmentation variable. It meets all the criteria: it is easily identifiable, information is accessible and the segments are large enough to generate more profit (Meyers-Levy and Sternthal, 1991; Palanisamy, 2005). Gender in this study is operationalized as a binary construct – male/female – and is termed as 'gender' as opposed to 'sex', because gender is viewed as both a biological and sociological process (Babin and Boles, 1998; Wolin and Korgaonkar, 2005; Kuruvilla *et al.*, 2009).

According to Kuruvilla *et al.* (2009) research on shopping has shown strong differences in shopping behaviour between genders (Otnesa and McGrath, 2001; Grewal *et al.*, 2003) which may influence the gender of the market mavens as well. This is bound to stem from the fact that the traditional division of labour at home called for the man, the

husband and father, to be the breadwinner while the woman, the wife and mother, was expected to take care of the family and the home. She undertook the childcare and nearly all the household chores, including shopping for the entire family. This has led to gender stereotypes. Both men and women associate shopping with feminine activity. Recent studies, though, have unveiled evidence that points towards an increase in male participation in shopping-related activities.

Social media and eWOM

Word-of-mouth (WOM), the informal communication by consumers about their evaluations of goods and services to other consumers (Anderson 1998), has a strong impact on consumers' purchase decisions (Trusov, Bucklin, and Pauwels 2009). Negative WOM (NWOM), typically arising from a dissatisfactory consumption experience, is particularly important, as consumers are twice as likely to engage in negative as positive WOM (Anderson 1998). Much of the existing empirical research on the antecedents of NWOM has focused on product characteristics or firm actions that lead to negative performance. For example, consumers engage in more NWOM if they perceive that the problem is severe, if the product is more expensive, when they attribute product failure to the firm, and when they feel that complaining to the firm will not resolve the issue (Richins, 1983).

Regarding the online word-of-mouth Awad and Ragowsky (2008) show that men and women develop trust in an online retailer differently, and online trust affects online shopping behavior differently across genders. Overall, the findings show that trust plays a more significant role in intention to shop online for women than for men and that online WOM quality is an antecedent of online trust. Thus, understanding the determinants of WOM quality, which this model shows differ across genders, is an essential part of understanding online consumer trust.

Cultural Differences

The impact of „Gender" and „Culture" in advertising and communication is subject to a number of studies within the least fifty years, for example (Wolin, 2003; Fisher, R. J. and L. Dube, 2005; Schumann, v. Wangenheim et al. 2010).

To the best of my knowledge no research so far has investigated differences of gender and culture with regard to WOM in Social Media. Lam, Lee et al. (2009) examine the impact on cultural differences on WOM, the general likelihood to engage in WOM due to different cultural background the literature is lacking in (Lam, Lee et al. 2009).

Hypotheses

Based on findings in previous studies, the following hypotheses can be drawn.

1.	Gender has a stronger impact on culture than nationality.
2.	The use or non-use of social media is more strongly influenced by gender than by origin (nationality).
3.	Gender has a stronger impact on Mavenerism than nationality.
4.	Recommendation search and recommendation provision is more strongly influenced by gender than by origin (nationality).
5.	A low value at Masculinity is corresponding to a low value at Mavenerism
6.	A low value for Masculinity is corresponding to a low value recommendation search and recommendation provision.
7.	A high value for Power Distance is inversely proportional to the value at Mavenerism.
8.	A high value for Power Distance is inversely proportional to the value recommendation search and recommendation provision

Methodology:

To measure the cultural differences three items for each of the four original dimensions (power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity, collectivism) developed by Hofstede (1983) were employed using a seven point Likert scale. For the concept of market mavens the six item scales of Feick and Price (1987) were used. Both are related with respondents' demographical data and social media behaviour. Hypotheses developed from the literature are tested using correlation analysis.

In the semesters, November and December 2013, May and June 2014 and November and December 2014 an online survey was administered at a public university of applied sciences in Frankfurt, Germany. A student sample is appropriate as the age group between 18 and 29 shows the highest share of users in the US (*Social Networks - Nutzer Altersgruppen | Umfrage*) and between 16 and 24 the highest Social Media Index in Germany (*Social Media - Nutzung nach Alter und Geschlecht in Deutschland 2014 (Social-Media-Index) | Umfrage*). The data was collected from a student sample of 211 answers of which 182 could be used.

The sample comprised 83 males and 99 females. 133 students were German nationals and 49 students indicated holding a non-German passport.

Results and Implications: The results show minor differences in the behaviour with regard to market mavens due to culture and gender in social media networks. The paper discusses the outcomes and limitations of the research. Based on the findings recommendations are given for academia on subsequent research as well as for companies doing business in either international markets as well as in national markets with increasingly culturally diverse target groups with regard to their social media strategies.

References

Arnold, K.A. and Bianchi, C. (2001), "Relationship Marketing, Gender, And Culture. Implications for Consumer Behavior", *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 28 No. 1.

Artz, N. and Venkatesh, A. (1991), "Gender Representation In Advertising", *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 18 No. 1.

Awad, N.F. and Ragowsky, A. (2008), "Establishing Trust in Electronic Commerce Through Online Word of Mouth. An Examination Across Genders", *Journal of Management Information Systems*, Vol. 24 No. 6, pp. 101–121.

Bloch, P.H. (1986), "The Product Enthusiast. Implications for Marketing Strategy", *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 3 (Summer) No. Summer, pp. 51–61.

Bristor, J.M. and Fischer, E. (1993), "Feminist Thought. Implication for Consumer Research", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 19 No. 4, pp. 518–536.

Dobscha, S. (1995), "Gender issues and Consumer behaviour", *JMR, Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 32 No. 3.

Feick, L.F. and Price, L.L. (1987), "The Market Maven: A Diffuser of Marketplace Information", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 51 No. 1, pp. 83–97.

Fisher, R. J. and L. Dube (2005), "Gender Differences in Responses to Emotional Advertising. A Social Desireability Perspective", *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 30, pp. 850–858.

Gould, S.J. (1996), "Gender Identity and Gender Salience. A Dual-Path, Person-Situation Approach To Gender Effects In Consumer Research", *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 23 No. 1.

Grewal, D., Baker, J., Levy, M. and Voss Glenn B. (2003), "The effects of wait expectations and store atmosphere evaluations on patronage intentions in service-intensive retail stores", *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 79, pp. 259–268.

Hernández-Ortega, B., Jimémez-Martínez, J. and Martín-De Hoyos, J. (2008), "B2C E-Commerce Acceptance: The Moderating Effect of Gender", *Communications of the IBIMA*, Vol. 6, pp. 104–112.

Hofstede, G. (1983), "NATIONAL CULTURES IN FOUR DIMENSIONS", *International Studies of Management & Organization*, Vol. 13 No. 1/2, pp. 46–74.

Kuruvilla, S.J., Joshi, N. and Shah, N. (2009), “Do men and women really shop differently? An exploration of gender differences in mall shopping in India”, *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, Vol. 33 No. 6, pp. 715–723.

Lam, D., Lee, A. and Mizerski, R. (2009), “The Effects of Cultural Values in Word-of-Mouth Communication”, *Journal of International Marketing*, Vol. 17 No. 3, pp. 55–70.

Otnesa, C. and McGrath, M.A. (2001), “Perceptions and realities of male shopping behavior,” Volume 77 No. 1, pp. 111–137.

Richins, M.L. (1983), “Negative Word-of-Mouth by Dissatisfied Consumers: A Pilot Study”, *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 47 No. 1, pp. 68–78.

Riedl, R., Hubert, M. and Kenning, P. (2010), “Are There Neural Gender Differences In Online Trust? An FMRI Study On Perceived Trustworthiness Of Ebay Offers”, *MIS Quarterly*.

Schumann, J.H., Wangenheim, F. v., Stringfellow, A., Yang, Z., Blazevic, V., Praxmarer, S. Shainesh, G., Komor, M., Shannon, R.M. and Jiménez, F.R. (2010), “Cross-Cultural Differences in the Effect of Received Word-of-Mouth Referral in Relational Service Exchange”, *Journal of International Marketing*, Vol. 18 No. 3, pp. 62–80.

Stern, B. (1987), “Gender Research And The Services Consumer. New Insights And The New Directions”, *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 14 No. 1.

Teoh, K.-K. and Cyril, E.U. (2008), “Exploring the Roles of Gender and Ethnicity as Antecedents of Trust in 3D Immersive Electronic Commerce”, *Communications of the IBIMA*, Vol. 2, pp. 1–5.

Wolin, L.D. (2003), “Gender Issues in Advertising. An Oversigth Synthesis of Research: 1970-2002”, *Journal of Advertising Research*, Vol. 43, pp. 111–129.

Yang, H. (2013), “Market Mavens in Social Media: Examining Young Chinese Consumers' Viral Marketing Attitude, eWOM Motive, and Behavior”, *Journal of Asia-Pacific Business*, Vol. 14 No. 2, pp. 154–178.

Yinlong, Z., Feick, L. and Mittal, V. (2014), “How Males and Females Differ in Their Likelihood of Transmitting Negative Word of Mouth”, *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 40 No. 6, pp. 1097–1108.

“Social Media – User Age and Gender in Germany 2014 (Social-Media-Index) | Umfrage”, available at: https://px.iubh.de/pmp/nph-pp/de/00/http/de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/315913/umfrage/nutzung-von-social-media-nach-alter-und-geschlecht-in-deutschland/ (accessed 13 April 2015).

“Social Networks - User Age groups”, available at: https://px.iubh.de/pmp/nph-pp/de/00/http/de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/38919/umfrage/altersgruppen-der-nutzer-von-social-networks-in-den-usa/ (accessed 13 April 2015).