The Y Generation’s Purchase Decision of Denim Jeans Relating to Fit Issues

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The y generation (y gen) has been of great interest for market research in the apparel industry. The y generation is anyone born between 1981 and 1995. They are the largest consumer group in the history of the U.S. (OnPoint Marketing & Promotions 2007). They have grown up in the digital world and are aware of the resources that are available to them. Although young adults are, historically, self absorbed, gen yers have an extra sense of their individual identity and they resent it when others suggest that they know them better than they know themselves (Sebor, 2006). This generation is also more diverse than any other previous generation in the history of the U.S. Their exposure to a variety of global viewpoint has created a “mix and match” culture (Morton, 2002). This generation has already begun to have an influence on the U.S. economy and will continue to do so in years to come. It has become important for many companies to get a clear understanding of what this generation is searching for in apparel commodities.

Jeans are part of American culture and the y generation has been wearing them since they were toddlers. While many things have gone in and out of style, this generation has adopted denim jeans as a valuable commodity. They became largely accepted by female members of the y generation in the mid 1990’s when the low rise jean was introduced. While denim jeans are a valuable commodity, designer jeans have not been able to become valuable for the y generation. In the article in USA Today entitled, that some young gen yers will occasionally shop at thrift stores, not because they have to, but because they want to save money (O’Donnell, November 2006). Veterans of the denim industry, like Levis Strauss and Gloria Vanderbilt, have all redesigned their labels to provide better fit for their costumers with affordable prices.

Apparel companies have already made efforts to attract this generation, but there is still an absence in understating fit problems in apparel garments with this particular age group. Apparel manufacturers at some point used vanity sizes to help solve the issues of fit. It has also been difficult for manufactures because styles for Missy have noticeably changed in pants with a lowered waistline placement and curved hipline (Shin & Istook, 2006). Shin and Istook (2007) note that the problem with jeans is that manufactures in the U.S. are still using sizing systems that are based on the hourglass figure or pear shape and are not representative of the majority of U.S. women. Several previous studies have been done to investigate fitting problems. However, there is an absence in the area concerning the y generation’s shopping preferences that are related to fit issues.

The purpose of this study was to get a better understanding of y generation’s concern of denim jean’s fitting problems. It was also vital to look at where and from whom this generation was shopping, and if there was any influence from the media on their purchasing power. The following alternative hypotheses have been formulated to address this issue:
Hypothesis 1: The internet/media significantly influences the decision to purchase a certain style of denim jeans.

Hypothesis 2: There is significance of shopping place preferences among the age groups.

Hypothesis 3: There is significance of fitting problems related to the price category.

Hypothesis 4: There is significance of factors by the media to purchase a denim jean.

Methodology
A survey was developed to get an inside standpoint of y generation’s concerns of Jean’s fitting problems and to find out if the media influences the decision of purchasing denim jeans. Simple random sampling was used to select 100 subjects (female between the ages of 18-26). The data were collected from January to March 2008. The subjects consisted of 63 % Caucasian, 29 % Hispanic, 4% Asian, 3% Mixed racial, and 1% African-American. A little more than 50% of the participants were between the ages of 21-23, 39% were between the ages of 18-20, and 10% were between the ages of 24-26. They filled out the survey that consisted of 22 questions pertaining to media/internet usage influences on decision to purchase denim jeans, shopping places, shopping preferences of brand names and price range category, fitting problems on wearing denim jeans, brand name and price range category related to the fitting problems, price range category related to the fitting problems, and size category related to the fitting problems.

Data entry and analysis was done using Statgraphics®. Descriptive statistics were used to compare frequencies for each variable: age groups (18-20, 21-23, and 24-26), internet/media influences (internet, TV, magazine, radio, newspaper, no influence), shopping place (internet, specialty stores, department stores, discount stores, retail stores, and catalogue), size category (small, medium, large, x large, and xx large), fitting problems (hip, waist, pants length, crotch length, and no problem), factors of purchasing (cost, fit, color, brand, store), brand name and price range category. In the brand name and price range category, the participants were asked to choose from groups of different priced jeans. In the survey, the answers were broken into five categories but only four price ranges were chosen (budget, moderate, bridge, and designer). High-end designer jeans were listed on the survey but were not selected.

Frequency tables and contingency tables for each set of variables were created, and a total of 21 tables were developed to compare each set of variables. Chi-square analysis was used to test the following significances: internet/media influences among the age groups, shopping place preferences among age groups, fitting problems related to the price range categories, the factors of purchasing associate with the size category. Statistical results were evaluated at the 0.05 level of significance. Bar charts were used to analyze the results. A pie chart was used to illustrate the media influence on the decision to purchase denim jeans.

Results
Result 1: The research question was about what type of media had an influence on their decision to purchase a style of jeans. A chi-square test was used for significance testing and yielded a value of 0.801 with P-value of 0.8492. The chi-square test at a 95% confidence level shows that there was no significance of different media/internet influence among the age groups. Overall, of the 100 respondents to the question, 46% indicated that they do not have any influence on their decision to purchase denim jeans. The only two relevant sources that impact what gen yers buy
are magazines and television, and 36% stated that magazines played a role, and only 11% stated that television is an influence on the jeans they bought. Finally, only 4% felt that the internet impacted their shopping preferences. It can also be noted that radio and newspaper were not considered an influence on their decision.

Result 2: The second hypothesis was to find out if there was any significance of shopping place preferences among the age groups. A chi-square test was used for significance testing and yielded a value of 24.027 with P-value of 0.0075. The chi-square test at a 95% confidence level shows that there was significance of shopping place preferences among the age groups. It was found that 48% of the participants shop at specialty stores, such as: Express, Gap, American Eagle, etc. The majority that shops at specialty stores came from the ages of 21-23. It was also observed that this particular age group shops more at higher-end retail stores like Nordstrom and SAKs than other age groups. It was found that the ages of 24-26 shop less in specialty stores (2%), showing the observed frequency was less than two times the expected frequency. This can be due to the fact that they have shopped around in different apparel companies and have found fitting problems in all price ranges. It was found that the ages of 18-20 shop more at discount department stores than any other age group, showing the observed frequency was more than the expected frequency. In the contingency table, 73% of the discount department store was the ages of 18-20. The y gens are known for being money conscious and shopping at discount stores not because they have to but because they want to save money.

Result 3: The third hypothesis was to investigate if there was any significance of fitting problems related to the price category. In the result, only 3% responded there was no problem with fit. No fitting problem was found in the budget price category at 1% and the better price category at 2%. It was found that they have fitting problems regardless of the preference of brand name or shopping place. Overall, the biggest fit problem was pants length at 47%. This result can be caused by the fact that most denim companies carry only three lengths for jeans: short, regular, and tall. The second biggest fit problem was waist at 23%. Hips at 11% and selected crotch length at 2% were the biggest fit problem. A chi-square test was used for significance testing and yielded a value of 26.708 with P-value of 0.0312. The chi-square test at a 95% confidence level results that there was significance of fitting problems related to the price ranges. While respondents in the better price category had fewer problems in hip, waist, and crotch length than expected, it was found that they had more problems in the thighs at 23%, showing the observed frequency was more than the expected frequency. In the moderate price range, they had more fit problems in the hip and waist area than expected frequency. In the bridge price range, they had more fit problems in the hip area. In the budget price category, they had more fit problems in the area of the pants length, thigh, and waist.

Result 4: The last hypothesis was to investigate if there was any significance of factors to purchase a denim jean. According to the chi-square test at a 95% confidence level, only cost and fit became relevant factors in deciding to purchase a pair of jeans. Color, brand, and store were not considered by the participants. Fit was the most important factor in choosing to buy denim jeans, 87% of the participants chose it as the reason to buy a pair. Cost was second in 13% percent. A chi-square test was used for significance testing the factors relation to sizes and yielded a value of 15.438 with P-value of 0.0086. According to the chi-square test and frequency table, it was observed that respondents who wear large sizes considered cost more than the
expectation, while respondents who wear small sizes considered fit more than cost. This can be in part due to the overwhelming disappointment in finding jeans that fit and settling for a reasonable price.

**Conclusion**

In the previous reiterative review, the y gens spend more time watching television and browsing the internet than any other age group. In this research, the majority of the y gens were not influenced by the media and internet usage. It was interpreted that since so much information was poured into the internet, the y gens became good at catching false advertising. They might have access to the internet, but they still rely more on their peers and savvy skills to decide what they purchase. While fit is a major concern for all age groups, the y generation is indifferent. They also desire to have great fitting jeans at reasonable prices. Regardless of the price ranges, y gens are having problems with fit, especially with length. This could be caused by the fact that apparel manufactures ignored different body shapes of the specific target customer. Future research should be done for understanding the y generation’s different body shapes and various fitting issues.

**References**


