

For Immediate Release



AUB study finds equality among sexes in an unlikely place: shopping

Beirut, Lebanon- 07/03/2014 -Differences in the shopping habits of Lebanese men and women are much less than expected, a new study from AUB has found.

Professors Laurence Leigh and Leila Hanna-Khauri, from the Olayan School of Business, conducted a study, on four hundred groups of shoppers in several fashion and sports stores in central Beirut. Their research, which Leigh presented in January 2014 at the 13th International Marketing Trends Conference in Venice, looked at the commonly held belief among market researchers that “men buy, women shop.” Contrary to this conventional wisdom, they found that males tend to spend as much time and money when they visit stores as females.

While observing the groups of shoppers and questioning them about their planned and unplanned purchases, a picture emerged of gender-related shopping habits in the city: Males tend to be more likely to enter stores with a shopping plan. However, once in the store, there was little difference between the sexes in the amount of time spent shopping and their propensity to buy items not in their shopping plans.

“One interesting observation, based on a very small sample, was that when males made unplanned purchases they tended to spend more on them than females,” explained Leigh. “This suggests that male shoppers may actually be better targets for promoting ‘impulse items.’”

The researchers concluded, however, that “sex doesn’t matter” - at least in the Lebanese context.

“These results were not at all what we expected,” said Leigh. “However, what we don’t know is whether this similarity in shopping habits is a feature of the Lebanese environment or part of a broader ‘metro-sexual’ phenomenon. What we want to do now is replicate the research in Europe or the US to see how habits there compare with the Levant - but right now our results don’t support the view of a recent *Harvard Business Review* article that described the ‘female economy’ as so distinct that it represented ‘a bigger opportunity than China and India combined.’ Our study suggests that gender-related differences in shopping behaviors are much more nuanced than that!”

Laurence Leigh is an assistant professor of marketing at AUB. A graduate of Cambridge University, London Business School and the University of North Carolina,

Chapel Hill, he taught marketing both in the US and Europe before coming to AUB in 2006. His research has appeared in the *Journal of Marketing Research*, the *International Journal of Emerging Markets* and the *Multinational Business Review*. He has also consulted extensively on international marketing issues as well as participating in the development of a number of successful start-up ventures.

Leila Khauli-Hanna is an instructor of marketing at AUB since 2000. She has an MBA from Bowling Green State University, Ohio, and has taught marketing and economics in the US and France as well as Lebanon. Her cutting edge courses at AUB have included a very successful elective in social media, and she has been nominated twice for the teaching excellence award. Her research and consulting interests lie in the creative industries, including fragrance and fashion in Lebanon and the digital transformation of businesses in the region.

ENDS

For more information please contact:

Maha Al-Azar, Director of News and Information, ma110@aub.edu.lb,
01-75 96 85

Note to Editors

About AUB

Founded in 1866, the American University of Beirut bases its educational philosophy, standards, and practices on the American liberal arts model of higher education. A teaching-centered research university, AUB has more than 700 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 8,500 students. AUB currently offers more than 100 programs leading to the bachelor's, master's, MD, and PhD degrees. It provides medical education and training to students from throughout the region at its Medical Center that includes a full service 420-bed hospital.

Stay up to date on AUB news and events. Follow us on:

Website: www.aub.edu.lb

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/aub.edu.lb>

Twitter: http://twitter.com/AUB_Lebanon