



Generational Cohort Groups' Hedonic and Utilitarian Attitudes Toward Shopping for Home Furnishings Case Goods

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The purpose of this study was to investigate whether hedonic and utilitarian attitudes toward shopping for home furnishings case goods differed across generational cohorts. The generational cohorts included in the study were: Silent Generation (born between 1925 and 1942), Baby Boomers (born between 1943 and 1960), Generation X (born between 1961 and 1981), and Generation Y (born between 1982 and 2000). The foundation for this study was generational cohort theory, whereby consumers' common experiences with macro-level economic, political, and social events that occur during the pre-adult years can translate into segments of consumers with a distinctive set of values, beliefs, expectations, and behaviors that will remain constant throughout a generation's lifetime and therefore create generational identity (Egri & Ralsston, 2004; Ingelhart, 1997; Strauss & Howe, 1991). Since values and priorities of a particular generational cohort are unique relative to other cohorts, differences in hedonic and utilitarian attitudes toward shopping for home furnishings case goods should be expected.

Over the course of a US consumer's lifetime, based on different stages influenced by needs, financial situation, and preferences, many home furnishings items will be accumulated and replaced. In fact, home furnishings that require major expenditures are usually guided and driven by a consumer's strong motivation to purchase. Mintel International Group Limited (2005) recognized the major life stage changes that are drivers for the purchase of home furnishings, which include but are not limited to the following: leaving home (college or other destination), first home (including rentals/purchases), influence of children over furniture in own room, marriage, first married home (including rentals/purchases), new children, teenage children, larger home purchase, empty nest, smaller home (downsize), and one-person household.

Based on previous findings, hedonic and utilitarian motivations influence attitude (Babin, Darden, & Griffin, 1994). Hedonic motivations and attitudes are known as those that are entertaining and emotionally-driven, while utilitarian is problem-solving and goal-oriented (Babin, Darden, & Griffin, 1994). Since consumption of home furnishings case goods is associated with both, the following was hypothesized: (H₁) hedonic attitudes toward shopping for home furnishings case goods will differ across generational cohorts and (H₂) utilitarian attitudes toward shopping for home furnishings case goods will differ across generational cohorts.

The survey sample targeted participants from a major Southeastern furniture company's database of home furnishings case goods consumers. A total of 190 questionnaires were deemed viable for use in the analyses, which yielded a response rate of 31.67%. In order to address the

research questions of whether hedonic and utilitarian attitudes toward shopping for home furnishings case goods differed across generational cohorts, a profile analysis of repeated measures was performed. The dependent variables were the attitude measurements (hedonic and utilitarian), since study participants completed both measurements in one scale. The independent, categorical variable was age (generational cohort). Although not required for complete profile analysis, all three profile analysis tests, testing for interaction, testing for an overall difference among groups, and testing for an attitude effect, were conducted.

Post-hoc pairwise comparisons using Tukey's HSD procedure for unequal sample sizes were conducted on the main effects to test for mean differences between attitudes (hedonic and utilitarian) towards shopping for home furnishings case goods and for age. Although numerous contrast procedures were available for post-hoc evaluation, Tukey's HSD has been commonly used if all pairwise comparisons are desired (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). The significance level for testing differences in means was set at $\alpha = .05$.

Results showed that some interaction appears to be present based on a profile plot between age and attitudes for the profiles of Generation Y and Generation X. The Wilks' Lambda criterion p-value (0.0036) provided strong statistical evidence of interaction between attitude and age; therefore, supporting the interpretation of the plot. The test for differences among groups did not find differences ($p = 0.3614$) among age (generational cohort) when hedonic and utilitarian attitudes were averaged; therefore, not providing statistical evidence of an age effect (between-subjects effects). The test for an attitude effect found that attitude averaged across age, indicated a category effect (hedonic and utilitarian) based on the Wilks' Lambda criterion p-value (<0.0001). Pairwise comparisons using Tukey's HSD did not provide evidence of attitude mean differences between the age groups.

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