ABSTRACT

ZHANG, RONG. Consumer Behavior toward Decorative Home Textiles in the U.S. Market. (Under the Direction of Dr. Yingjiao Xu).

The home textile industry, a sub-category of home furnishings, is showing a significant growth. It generates over $14 billion in sales annually and has grown at a compound annual growth rate of 4.7%. The purpose of the study is to gain insight into the U.S. home textile industry by investigating female consumers' buying behavior toward decorative home textiles, including curtains/draperies, decorative pillows/ throws, and table cloth/runners. Specifically, this study aims to: 1) explore female consumers' buying behavior toward decorative home textiles; 2) compare consumers' decorative home textiles shopping behavior among different generational cohorts; and 3) investigate the influence of two relevant personality traits, price consciousness and fashion consciousness, on consumers' shopping behavior toward decorative home textiles. Based on the Consumer Decision-Making Process Model (Blakcwell, Miniard & Engel. (2006), consumers' purchase behavior toward decorative home textiles are categorized into the following four steps: need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, and purchase decision.

An online survey was employed to collect data for this study. Descriptive analyses, ANOVA and correlation analyses were employed to analyze the data to provide answers to the research questions. The results of this study provided great insight into female consumers' decision-making process toward decorative home textiles. Significant differences were revealed among Millennials, Gen X, and Baby Boomers in terms of their purchase behavior toward decorative home textiles. Additionally, it was found that consumers with different personality traits paid different attention to the various attributes of the decorative home textiles. The results have great implications for practitioners in the home textile industry.

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Consumer Behavior toward Decorative Home Textiles in the U.S. Market

by
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BIOGRAPHY

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

With the booming economy, individuals' spending power has continuously increased. Between 2014 and 2017, consumer expenditure per household increased by 7%, reaching about $100,000 million in 2017 (Euromonitor: Consumer Lifestyles, 2018). While the home ownership rate has decreased in the last decade, it has stabilized at around 64% and even with a tendency to increase in 2018, indicating a positive future growth for the home furnishing category since consumers can have more home space or are not restricted by lease limitations (DeSalva, 2018). Besides, consumers are living differently than they had in the past, with diverse family situations and lifestyles (e.g. delayed marriage, single parent), which creates more opportunities with a wider variety of needs for home furnishing products (DeSalva, 2018). For example, Millennials, as second largest generational cohort in the U.S. (Fry, 2018), begin to buy houses because of the major changes happening in their lives such as starting a family, getting a new job, etc., which will increase the participation for home improvements (Lioyd, 2018).

The U.S. home textile industry, as a subcategory of home-furnishings, has experienced continuous development over the past several years, especially for the bedding/mattress category, which generates over $14 billion in sales annually and has grown at a compound annual growth rate of 4.7% (Home Furnishings Industry Insights, 2017). According to Euromonitor International (2018), the current retail sales of the U.S. home furnishing sector reached $145.3 billion in 2017, with the average annual growing rate of 3%. In particular, the home textile retail sales totaled $24.7 billion in 2017, with the similar annual growth rate of 2.5%.

Home textiles usually refer to cloths and fabrics used as a part of home furnishings to make an aesthetically appealing indoor environment and to offer consumers mental relaxation

(What is a home textile, 2017). This study focuses particularly on the decorative home textiles, which are in the category of home textiles and used specifically for decorative purpose.

In the home textile industry, female consumers, which make up about 51% of the U.S. population, consist of a huge market for fashion-related products with increased spending power, compared to male consumers. According to Brennan (2015), females either purchased or affected the purchase of over 80% of all products and services and were responsible for two thirds of total consumers' spending worldwide. As a decision maker, about 90% of all purchases made by female consumers were related to the household, which indicates home textiles being a mega shopping trend for this group (Furniture world, 2010). Also, they have been the primary interest of fashion business and research in the apparel industry (Shim & Kotsiopulos, 1993). Prior researchers found that female consumers are more likely to use fashion apparel as a means of self-definition (Bakewell, Mitchell, & Rothwell, 2006; Solomon & Rabolt, 2004). With the greater market potentials of these female consumers in the fashion industry overall, this study focuses on female consumers' buying behavior toward home textiles.

Meanwhile, both academic and business literature suggested dramatically different consumer behaviors among generational cohorts in the U.S (Anić & Mihić, 2015; Chowdhary, 1989; Gasca, 2015; Synchrony, 2015). For instance, Millennials displayed a high level of price consciousness, which results in more searching of products with low-price tags (Gasca, 2015). On the other hand, Baby Boomers paid more attention to the value and quality of the products (Synchrony, 2015). At the same time, with more Millennials entering into their 30s and starting a family, their needs for home-textile products are expected to be greatly increased (Lioyd, 2018). On the contrary, more baby boomers are entering retirement, after an active career and with accumulated wealth (Schneider, 2019). Their demand for home decorations might be very different from the young generations who just bought their first house. Therefore, this study aims to gain insight into consumer behavior toward home textiles by comparing the three main generations in the U.S., i.e., Millennials, Gen X, and Baby boomers.

Price is a key attribute for consumers when comparing different products and is a key competitive factor for business (Heda, Mewborn, & Caine, 2017). In addition, as decorative home textiles are tended to be used for aesthetic purpose, they have the great potential to attract consumers with a high level of fashion-consciousness. Therefore, this study also investigated the effect of two relevant personality traits, price consciousness and fashion consciousness, on consumers' shopping behavior toward decorative home textiles.

1.2. Statement of Purpose

The main purpose of the study was to gain insight into the U.S. home textiles industry, particularly female consumers' buying behavior toward decorative home textiles. In this study, the following decorative home textile product were specifically studied: curtains/draperies, decorative pillows/throws, and table cloth/runners. The Consumer Decision-Making Process Model, developed by Blackwell, Miniard and Engel (2006), was adopted to guide the investigation of consumers' general buying behavior toward decorative home textiles, in terms of need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, and purchase decision.

Additionally, from the perspective of Generation Cohort Theory (Inglehart, 1977), this study also aimed to investigate the differences among different generation cohorts in terms of their shopping behavior toward decorative home textiles. Lastly, the study aimed to examine the influence of two relevant personality traits, price consciousness and fashion consciousness, on consumers' shopping behavior.

1.3. Research Questions

The following research questions were developed to guide the investigation of female consumers' buying behavior toward decorative home textiles:

RQ1. What is consumers' buying behavior toward decorative home textiles in general?

RQ2. How does consumers' buying behavior toward decorative home textiles vary among the three generational cohorts?

RQ3. How will personality traits (price consciousness and fashion consciousness) influence consumers' buying behavior toward decorative home textiles?

1.4. Significance of the Study

While the home textile market is growing significantly, limited research is available regarding consumers' purchase behavior. The findings of this study will not only provide a descriptive overview in terms of consumers' decision-making process toward home textiles, but also lend implications to industry practitioners in their endeavors to design, produce, and market the needed products to target consumers.

1.5. Definitions of Terms

Curtains The commonly used window coverings which are made by light and sheer materials. These products are not lined and can not block out light (Ullman, 2019).

Draperies The commonly used window coverings which are made of heavy fabrics with lined and elaborate design (Ullman, 2019). The heavy pattern makes them suitable for blocking out the light, cold and heat, as well as maintaining privacy (Heloise, 2014).

Decorative Pillows Small, decorative soft furnishing items made from a wide range of textiles including cotton, linen, silk, velvet, etc. They are a commonly used piece in interior design (Wikipedia, n.d.).

Decorative Throws Throws are small blankets often used as a décor element over a couch, which can be constructed like a blanket, or hand-woven (Burch, n.d.).

Table Cloth A covering spread over a dining table before the tableware is set (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

Table Runners The narrow length of cloth laid on top of tablecloths or on a bare table (Etiquette Scholar, n.d.).

CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, the scope of this study is first identified. Secondly, an overview of the U.S. home textiles industry is provided. Thirdly, the U.S. consumer market is briefly reviewed. The fourth section introduces the three generational cohorts in the U.S. market. The next section is the overview of the Consumer Decision-Making Process Model. Lastly, the two personality traits are discussed.

2.1. Scope of the Study

When searching for industry information related to home textiles, quite some data were related to home furnishings which home textiles are a part of. Furniture is another industry segment that was also often mentioned together. Therefore, a description and a differentiation of these terms will first be provided before moving on to the industry background information.

Home furnishing is a general term usually used to refer to products that are used to decorate a home, including furniture, floor coverings, home textiles, decorative accessories and others (Kinley & Brandon, 2015; Euromonitor International, 2018). Furniture usually refers to large movable objectives that people can sit on, sleep on, or place stuff on, including desks, table, couches, chairs, etc. (Home Furnishings vs. Furniture, n.d.). Home textiles usually include cloths and fabrics used as the part of home furnishings to differentiate spaces and offer the texture, color, character, feel, and comfort, missing in the interior architecture (What is a home textile, 2017). Based on where the products are used in the house, home textiles are commonly categorized into four types: bed, bath, kitchen, and others (A year of change for Top 5 players, 2004; Textile course, n.d.). Table 2.1 shows the details of each category of home textiles.

Table 2.1 The Categorization of Home Textiles (A year of change for Top 5 players, 2004; Textile course, n.d.)

Bed	Bath	Kitchen	Others
Blankets; Comforts; Pillows; Toppers; Mattress pads; Quilts; Throws; Sheets	Bath accessories; Bath rugs; Bath towels; Shower curtains	Kitchen textile; Table lines	Rugs; Curtains/Draperies; Hand-woven and needle worked tapestries

In general, the main reasons for consumers to purchase home textiles are either for functional or decorative purposes. Functional products are mostly used to meet the basic needs of consumers, such as for comfort, storage, sitting on, sleeping, etc. (Abbas, 2018). With the booming economy, consumers have started to pay more attention to products that meet their aesthetic expectation and are more willing to pay for products that can beautify the whole residential environment (Weinswig, 2016). Thus, for this study, home textiles with a heavy decorative function were selected as the focus. Specifically, the following three types of home textile products were selected: curtains/draperies, decorative pillows/throws, and table cloth/runners.

2.2. Overview of the U.S. Home Textile Industry

The home textile market has risen as one of the most attractive and fashion sensitive segments in the overall textile market with a wide range of products (A year of change for Top 5 players, 2004). In this section, an overview of this industry, including market size and retailing environment, is provided.

2.2.1. Market Size

Home textiles have played an important role for the U.S. consumers. According to Euromonitor International (2018), the current retail sales value of the U.S. home furnishings totaled $145.3 billion in 2017, with the annual growth rate of 3%. The home textile sector kept a very comparable increasing pace of 2.5%, with a total retail sales value of $24.7billion in 2017, which increased from $23.3 billion in 2015 (Statista, 2015). Compared to many sub-categories in the home textiles industry, bed linen and bed spread had a greater market share of 47%, followed by the segments of floor (22%), bath/toilet (20%), kitchen line (7%) and upholstery (4%) (Statista, 2015).

2.2.2. Retail Channels

Traditionally, there are three major types of retail channels in the home textile market, including specialty retailers, mass merchandisers, and department stores (Euromonitor International: Home furnishing, 2018). Specialty stores are the retail businesses that focus on a single class of products with more specialization and expertise (Types of retailers, n.d.). Examples for specialty stores selling home textiles include Bed, Bath & Beyond, Linens N Things, Ikea, and others. Mass merchandisers are retailers or stores selling large quantities of goods quickly through such means as discounting and customer self-service (Types of retailers, n.d.). Good examples of mass merchandisers where consumers can find home textiles include Wal-Mart and Target. Lastly, department stores are retailers that offer a wide range of consumer products in a variety of product categories (Types of retailers, n.d.). Majority of the department stores carry home textiles, such as Macy’s, JC Penney, and Kohl’s. For years, home textiles have been found in brick and mortar stores like Bed Bath & Beyond, IKEA, and Kohl’s, which primarily focus on providing in-store experiences.

While those retail channels mentioned above still play a major role in the home textile market, the positions of these retailers have changed over the past decade with more players entering the market, including off-price retailers, online retailers, TV shopping networks, and many others (Statista, 2018). Off-price retailing involves selling brand-name merchandise at considerably discounted price, by benefitting from other retailers' closeouts, forecasting errors, and the last season's remaining stock (Wolf, 2018). Off-price retailers, including TJ Maxx, Home Goods, and Tuesday Morning, joined the home textiles market and have been enjoying the growth in this segment (Weinswig, 2017). With the advancement of technology and the retail paradigm shifting from brick-and-mortar retailing to e-tailing, home textiles are also offered by a number of online retailers, including general online marketplaces such as Amazon and specialty online retailers focusing on home furnishings, such as Wayfair. TV shopping is a television specialty channel that targets home shoppers by broadcasting a wide range of products, including fashion, home décor, electronics, etc., through demonstration or explanations (Witkop, n.d.). Two major TV shopping networks, namely QVC and HSN, operate great businesses in the home goods segment. While no specific information is available for the home textiles segment, there are statistics for the whole home furnishing market. According to Euromonitor (2018), Home and Garden specialty stores had the biggest share at 58.1% retail value, followed by internet retailing (13.2%), department stores (5.4%), mass merchandisers (3.5%), and other channels.

The online channel has become really important for most segments of the retail industry recently, including home furnishings. E-commerce revenues of furniture and homewares in the U.S. reached a total of $21 billion in 2015 (Weinswig, 2016). This revenue is expected to grow at a five-year CAGR of 7.6%, generating about $31 billion of total revenue in 2020. While traditional brick-and-mortar home textile retailers still account for the largest industry revenue, these stores are likely to lose market share to online competitors like Amazon that offer a wide range of products at low prices (Scibetta, 2016). With the changing market situation, various retailers have launched a range of home textile products, and distributed their products both in-store and online, leveraging multi-channel synergy.

Despite the great potential of the online channel to be a primary purchasing channel, at the current stage, the online channel has been found to be mainly used by consumers for searching (Weinswig, 2016). To be specific, about 27% of global consumers said they like to search products on the internet, whereas only 17% of these consumers preferred to purchase online when they shop home furnishing products (Weinswig, 2016). In other words, consumers were more likely to appreciate the online channel for information searching than for actual purchase. The reasons behind could be due to greater risks of purchasing online, derived from the inability to allow a direct product evaluation before purchase and the uncertainty conveyed toward online retailing (e.g. security, privacy). (Pappas, 2016).

2.2.3. Market Competition

With market saturation, different retailers in the U.S. home textile industry are facing fierce competition within the industry. Retailers compete with each other on factors such as the price and quality of products, knowledge of the brand and competitiveness of online practices, based on the characteristics of different retail channels (Fernandez, 2019).

The U.S. home textile industry is subject to strong price competition. Mass merchandisers, such as Walmart and Target, take advantages of a low-price strategy (Jayasy, 2017). These large discount stores maximize cost savings by building strong relationships with manufacturers and by purchasing large amounts of inventory at once, which paves the way for them to offer discounted products to consumers and make tremendous profits in the meantime (Jayasy, 2017).

Also, due to the wide variety of products provided by large discount stores, they can create a one-stop-shop environment. In this way, a customer can walk in and buy groceries and home textiles simultaneously, thus, allowing for greater convenience. Similar strategies are implemented by other major players in the market, such as Bed, Bath & Beyond, whose size provides significant buying power that enables them to achieve lower unit costs and access to exclusive product agreements with manufacturers (Fernandez, 2019). Besides, their specialization of home textiles with better quality and reasonable price ranges makes them more competitive than other mass merchandisers (Smith, 2004).

With a wide variety of products, brands, and models, customers are often overwhelmed during browsing and searching for products and relevant information in stores. As a result, more consumers are likely to shop at specialty stores where the products are more emotionally appealing and professionally selected, and the employees are recognized by their extensive knowledge about the merchandise and products, hence, enabling them to receive support regarding the products for purchase (Ott, 2005).

Lastly, retailers compete through establishing the competitiveness in online practices. Consumers today can search and purchase home textiles online with more convenience and wider product selections, which can in turn undermine the in-store sales (Dryden, 2017). Also, online retailers, such as Amazon and Wayfair, can charge lower price because of the savings from not having retail spaces and not hiring store employees (Types of retailers, n.d.), which make them more competitive than other retailers.

2.3. Consumer Market

The United States is estimated to have a population of about 328 million, with 81% of whom were living in cities and suburbs in 2018. It is the third most populous country in the world (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). Many changes have occurred in the U.S. society in the past several years, including the current economics and consumption trends.

2.3.1. Economy

In the recent years, the U.S. economy has revitalized itself with a steady increase in jobs, investments, and profits since 2008. The most positive changes in the economy that occurred from 2016-2017 were the changes in GDP (gross domestic product) and the unemployment rate. According to Trading Economics (2018), the unemployment rate as of December, 2017 was at 4.1%, which was the lowest in 17 years, and the GDP was increased by 3% in 2017. Another important change is the 3.3% growth in U.S. consumer expenditure that occurred in 2016, and it is anticipated to keep growing to reach a total of $12.9 trillion by 2021 (Macke, 2017). These changes indicate a positive outlook for the U.S. economy, with increasing stability in the job market, growing consumers' confidence, and increasing spending power.

2.3.2. Consumption

According to Amadeo (2019), at the end of 2017, average consumer expenditures increased 4.8%, with two-thirds going towards services and experiences such as health care and travelling and one-third being used on non-durable products like apparel. Also, researchers found that Generation X and Baby Boomers have the greatest average annual household spending power ($66,981 and $59,646 respectively), including higher consumption for housing ($21,954 and $18,320 respectively) (Appel, 2017). These numbers are predicted to rise due to baby boomers' intention of downsizing in retirement and generation X reaching the most lucrative years in their careers (Coughlin, 2018). Millennials' spending power is also expected to grow with their maturity into the job market.

Social media has become a prevalent way for consumers to get product related information. According to Statista (2017), there will be 214 million social media users in the U.S. by 2019. Also, 71% of the internet users are social media users and that is expected to be steadily growing. While social media consumers largely consist of younger generations, the older generations have joined as well. On average, Americans spent about two hours a day on social media sites and messaging services (Mander, 2017). A huge part of this time is spent shopping, which changes how and what people consume, and decreases sales in physical stores.

2.4. Generational Cohort Theory

According to the Generational Cohort Theory (Inglehart, 1977), individuals, born in the same period and growing up in the same socio-economic environment, can share similar consumer needs, beliefs and attitudes, which remain constant throughout the generation's lifetime and constitute a generational identity (Schewe & Meredith, 2004). Smith and Clurman (2010) stressed that understanding the motivations and values of a certain generation has become significant to target consumers since each generation is driven by different ideas about the type of lifestyle to which they aspire. Even though prior researchers and historians define names and dates of cohorts differently, the general attitudes and behaviors of the groups are basically consistent (Wellner, 2000). Based on the year when they were born, three main age groups were identified: Baby Boomers (born 1944-1964), Gen X (born 1965-1979), and Millennials (born 1980-1994) (Kasasa, 2018).

2.4.1. Millennials

Millennials, also known as Generation Y, are typically defined as the individuals born between the years of 1980 and 1994 (Kasasa, 2018). As of July 1, 2016, Millennials numbered 71 million in the U.S. (Fry, 2018). This population has the potential to overtake the number of

Baby boomers as the largest consumer cohort in 2019 (Fry, 2018). Millennials are the first generation in history that have grown up immersed in a world of digital technology, which has influenced their personality and attitudes toward life, politics, society and culture (Nielsen, 2014).

Millennials have grown up with using digital devices that bundle communication, entertainment and education all in one (Nielsen, 2014). From an early age, the usage of smartphones and the internet has been the standard of their life. Because of the long-term connection, Millennials tend to adopt new technology faster than any other generations like Baby Boomers. According to the research conducted by Pew Research Center in 2018, more than 92% of the U.S. Millennials owned smartphones, compared to Gen X (85%) and Baby Boomers (67%).

Millennials are a sociable generation (Caitlyne, 2017), and their sociability can be expressed in real life as well as online. Offline, Millennials like to communicate, shop and play with groups. Online, they actively and habitually share and make comments on social media such as Facebook, Snapchat, and Instagram, reflecting their eagerness for connection (Boldfish, n.d.). Social media has already become an important part of their lifestyle. Beside connecting with groups, numerous Millennials use social media as a source of news and other information. According to The American Press Institute (2015), 88% of millennials gathered information from Facebook, 83% from YouTube and 50% from Instagram. With users demanding more content on social media platforms, there are some huge opportunities for brands to grow and interact with consumers, which can, it turn, help to boost digital media consumption.

Millennials tend to seek excitement and to embrace excitement as part of their lifestyle (Solomon, 2018). This generation usually views commerce and even obligatory business trips as opportunities for exploring new environments rather than as a burden for work. While shopping, Millennials purely enjoy the process of exploring different products and sensory satisfaction from such “adventure” and “surprise” instead of only focusing on the results of shopping (Arnold & Reynolds, 2003). They prefer what is known as an ‘experiential lifestyle environment’ (Solomon, 2018).

Millennials are known as being frugal for their consumption. Additionally, price have the greatest influence on Millennials’ purchase decision, compared to other product-related attributes such as quality, style, brand, etc. (Gasca, 2015). The reasons behind this could be due to their low level of income and limited financial status. According to a report from Bank of America (2015), more than 40% of Millennials still receive financial help from their parents, including more than 22% ages 30-34 and 20% who are married or living with a partner. These financial situations can significantly influence the shopping behavior of the Millennial consumers.

While authenticity is commonly pursued by all generations when evaluating product-related information, it is the most pursed by millennials (Moore, 2014). Almost half of Millennials value authenticity over the content of the information itself. They usually investigate the products they intend to buy and read user-generated comments to pave the way for making a decision (Moore, 2014). What they prefer is the assurance of their peers on certain products rather than simple advertisements, which seem to be an exaggerated image of what the product is actually like (Ordun, 2015). In a word, authenticity is vital to Millennials, not only to the brand storytelling, but also in every part of their consumer experience.

2.4.2. Generation X

Gen X is described as the group of people born between the years of 1965 and 1979, the period when Americans were having fewer children (Kasasa, 2018). They were numbered around

50 million in 2016 (Tal, 2016). Most of Gen X grew up during a period of hard economic times, either raised in dual income families or single parents owing to an increased divorce rate, which deeply affected their perceptions more into skepticism, pragmatism and independence (Kane, 2018). They do not believe in destiny that can help them succeed without efforts. Instead, they believe what they have experienced and the achievement earned from their efforts.

In terms of financial status, this generation shows the highest employment rate of any other generations (Chrinian, 2016). However, with the majority of them in their 40s, Gen Xers are the sandwich generation, with elder parents and young kids to take care of. This situation places greater financial responsibilities on this generation than other generations.

Generation X made up the second largest share of home buyers in 2016 at 28%. This generation is usually married and about 30% have at least one child under the age of 18 at home (Riggs, 2017). For them, the main purpose of home buying is usually to have a larger house as well as the reasons derived from job-related relocation and the change in family situation. These consumers are more likely to stay in their house for a decade before moving to other new places, which are usually larger in size (Chrinian, 2016).

Gen X are considered skeptics because they are unwilling to accept things without thorough research (Chrinian, 2016). Therefore, compared to other generations, they may be less willing to accept traditional marketing methods, which offer simple and exaggerated advertisements. Instead, they prefer to make purchase decisions based on evaluating the features and details of certain products and communicating with others who can be truly helpful in answering product-related questions rather than purchasing impulsively (Fusion Hill, 2016).

2.4.3. Baby Boomers

Baby Boomers were born roughly between the years of 1944 to 1964 (Kasasa, 2018). This generation has showed prominent presence with their market size, compared to other generations. In 2016, the population was about 74.1 million (Fry, 2018). As the largest generational group in U.S. history, Baby Boomers essentially created the consumerism that has long underpinned the U.S. economy.

Baby Boomers are one of the generations that have been constant users of social media and online shopping. A common misconception for retailers is that baby boomers are not online consumers, which is far from the truth. According to a survey conducted by Google (2013), the majority of this generation browse online more than watching TV, and about 82% said that they have experience with social media. However, they tend to prefer a specific type of social media, especially, Facebook (Pew Research Center, 2014). As they prefer to have one-to-one interaction with retailers, social networking sites was revealed as a way to find relevant information about retailers and to get in touch with retailers. Meanwhile, Baby Boomers are the first generation who grew up with TV (Koeppel, n.d.). Thus, they have the tendency to more frequently use TV as the medium for searching and purchasing products than other generations.

However, most of Baby Boomers have reached their retirement stage, which necessitates them to change their purchasing behavior (Siren & Haustein, 2016). Consistently, these retired consumers have downsized their house from a large one, usually in a suburban location, to a smaller one such as a apartment (Friedman, 2018). This changing housing situation can drive them to adopt small, easy-to-assemble and multi-functional home furnishing products for functionality and decoration.

Baby Boomers demand a simple, streamlined and convenient shopping experiences. For this generation, shopping is not conducted for relaxation. One survey found that Baby Boomers put more emphasis on convenience, such as easy-to-access locations, easy-to-navigate stores, and clear return policies when they shop (Wilson, 2017). Moreover, they demand a high level of customer service at the same time. What they want is the simplicity and convenience in their shopping process.

According to Kito (2014), more than 90% of Baby Boomers are financially stable, which might indicate that they are less focused on price of products while going shopping. Instead, they tend to be more loyal to the high-quality products and services they have experienced, and they may be willing to pay a premium for them (Synchrony, 2015).

2.5. Consumer Decision-Making Process regarding Decorative Home Textiles

The buying process of home textiles is different from that of other product categories. Consumers for home textiles tend to seek unique and original products, even if it is often difficult to meet their demand through accurately reflecting their preferences onto products and designs (Weinswig, 2016). Besides, some of the home textiles can be purchased for the long-term usage (Mallon, 2018), and consumers are more likely to conduct an extensive information search and comparison for purchasing certain products. In this section, the consumer decision-making process, which is related to decorative home textiles, will be highlighted.

Home textiles are usually chosen by consumers after much consideration before they make final purchases (Weinswig, 2016). The Consumer Decision-Making Process Model, developed by Blackwell, Miniard and Engel (2006), describes the stages occurring during consumers' consumption process. This model also explains how different internal and external factors influence consumers' shopping decisions (Watson & Yan, 2013). To be precise, the model proposes a total of seven stages, including need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, consumption, post purchase evaluation and divestment. The first three stages are classified into the pre-purchase stage, followed by the purchase stage and the post-purchase stage. With a thorough understandings about the nature of consumers' decision-making process, retailers can be significantly benefited, formulating more effective marketing strategies. As consumers' shopping behavior toward decorative home textiles is the main focus of the study, the first four steps (Figure 2.1) of the decision-making process are discussed.

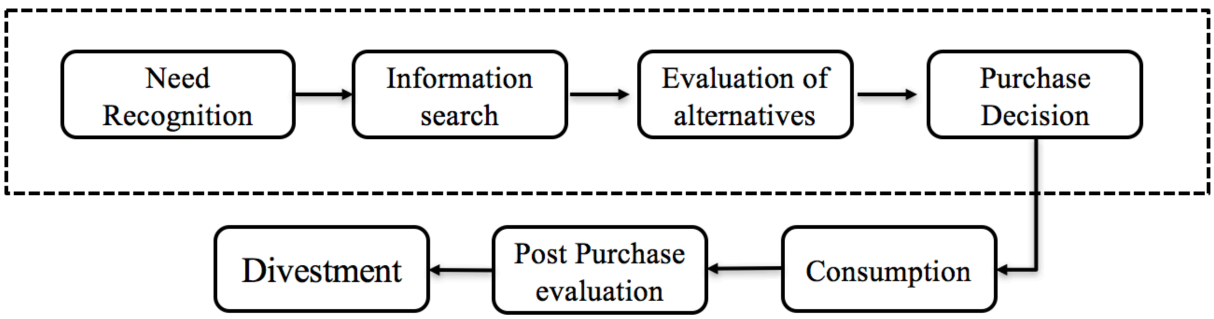


Figure 2.1 Consumer Decision-Making Process Model adapted from Blackwell, Miniard, and Engel. (2006)

2.5.1. Need Recognition

Need recognition, also referred as problem recognition, occurs when consumers realize the discrepancy between the current state and the ideal state (Kotler & Armstrong, 2004), in turn generating the need for certain products. It is usually recognized as the first and most fundamental step in this model because there will not be any of the following purchasing behavior if consumers do not perceive certain needs (Bruner, 1985).

Problem recognition can be derived from the change of their actual state and desired state (Bruner, 1985). There are needs which are recognized while meeting the drop in the actual state.

For example, in the home textile sector, the absence of necessary items or the situations that necessitate to purchase items (e.g. moving into the new residence) can trigger consumers to recognize needs. On the other hand, individuals can also recognize psychological needs, signified by the change of their desired state. For instance, the desire to have new and novel images can be triggered by external stimuli such as advertising or word-of-mouth (Watson & Yan, 2013).

Maslow (1970) proposed that needs are arranged in a hierarchy. Usually only after the individual has achieved needs of a preliminary level, can he move to a higher level. In his theory, human needs consist of five levels from the most fundamental at the bottom to the least fundamental at the top: physiological needs, safety needs, social needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs (Maslow, 1970). Considering the financial limitations of Millennials (Hoffower, 2018), they have greater potential to purchase home textiles for their physical and functional needs to meet their living standard than older generations who may own a higher level of needs toward home textiles, for instance, to fulfill their aesthetic and psychological demand.

2.5.2. Information Search

Information search is the second step of consumers' decision-making process. Once consumers identify and recognize their needs, they tend to conduct an information search to satisfy their needs (Brennan & Gallagher, 2002). There are numerous information-seeking methods and sources of information that can be used by consumers to attain information, including both internal and external search (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2007).

Internal search refers to a retrieval of information from consumer's memory of certain products, usually formed by personal experience in the past (Park & Stoel, 2005). Consumers' previous experience with the object can affect their behavioral patterns due to the differences in their ability to identify and classify the attributes associated with certain products (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2007). The subsequent reactions toward products conveyed by consumers can be based on the absence or presence of certain product attributes experienced by consumers (Staden & Aardt, 2011). When consumers have experiences regarding the product, with a greater perceived knowledge, they tend to conduct external search for related information to a lesser extent (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2007). Hart and Dewsnap (2001) found that consumers are more likely to choose fashion products relying on internal search, specifically, based on their previous shopping experience in retail stores and brand familiarity. Chen-Yu and Kincade (2001) also pointed out that an excellent product image and experience associated with the product have a strong positive effect on consumers' perceived quality and performance expectation toward apparel products.

External research, the process of searching for product alternatives (Punj, 1987), is usually conducted when a consumer has no prior knowledge or when they are dissatisfied with their internal search about a product (Rousseau, 2007). The sources for external search can be classified into typical media sources (i.e. magazines, T.V., movies, internet, etc.), in-store displays, and personal communications (i.e. family, friends, colleagues, salespersons, etc.) (Staden & Aardt, 2011). It is reported by Sproles and Burns (1994) that general media sources for fashion products include fashion articles in newspapers, advertisements, catalogues, radio, TV programs, films, and famous public figures. Also, TV is more prevalently used by consumers than radio as a tool of information searching due to the enhanced visibility (Frings, 2005). For fashion consumption, a large number of consumers prefer to go directly to the stores for inspiration since they can physically try products and visually see the texture, size, and style of different apparel. Consumers can be more involved in the process of in-store searching when new products are launched or when they seek new products (Solomon & Rabolt, 2004). Besides, personal communication is also a common way for consumers to gather information, which can be defined as “word of mouth” (Whitler, 2014). According to Nielsen (2012), about 92% of individuals trust recommendations from their friends and family over any other marketing sources, indicating that they prefer brands that are recommended by trustworthy information sources. Chowdhary (1989) also found that younger consumers are more likely to refer to opinions from their friends as the source of information than older consumers.

2.5.3. Evaluation of Alternatives

Once consumers get enough information to set their own criteria for evaluation, they evaluate alternatives (e.g. brands) based on evaluation criteria in their minds. In this step, consumers compare the performance among each selected product based on individually weighted criteria, which can in turn guide them to make the final decision (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2010).

In previous studies, several different attributes that consumers use for their evaluation were found in the context of apparel shopping. Hsu and Burns (2002) conducted a study to determine the differences of fashion consumption between Taiwanese and U.S. consumers in term of 12 clothing evaluative criteria. The findings indicated similar results on the purchase criteria between the two groups, with more preference on comfort, size/fit, style and price than other attributes (Hsu & Burns, 2002). Eckman, Damhorst and Kandolph (1990) revealed that style has been considered as the most crucial factor for fashion product evaluation due to the aesthetic demand of fashion consumers. Also, a number of criteria revealed in the study showed different influences on consumers’ evaluation in two different purchasing phases. In the interest phase, color, pattern, style, and fabric showed a greater influence on apparel product selection. On the contrary, in the trial phase (trying in the fitting room), fit, style, and appearance on the body were the dominant elements that determined the adoption of apparel (Eckman, Damhorst & Kandolph, 1990).

Varying uses of attributes in consumers' evaluation process can lead to different product choice. In order for a marketing organization to attract more consumers, they need to understand what benefits consumers seek and which attributes will be the most significant in consumers' decision-making process.

2.5.4. Purchase Decision

The purchase decision is the fourth stage in the consumer decision process, which describes the point when the actual purchase is finally made (Johnston, 2016). In this stage, consumers choose the most desirable products in accordance with their evaluations on all the elements and determine the value that the chosen product will bring them. Also, consumers may form their intention to purchase a certain product prior to making a deal. Other influential factors with regard to where to buy, when to buy, and how other people influence purchase decisions can also influence behavior (Alina, 2017; Kotler & Armstrong, 2004).

2.6. Personality Traits

Research indicated a strong relationship between consumers' personality and their different behaviors (Matzler et al., 2005). Consumers' personalities can be shaped either by their inherited characteristics or affected by the social environment, which totally differ from person to person. This can be defined as "the intrinsic organization of an individual' s mental world that is stable over time and consistent over situation" (Piedmont, 1998, p.2). By understanding differences in consumers' personal traits, retailers can find the most appropriate ways to influence consumers. In this study, two individual traits (price consciousness and fashion consciousness) were examined due to the universality and importance of price and fashion-related features of decorative home textiles.

2.6.1. Price Consciousness

Price strongly affects consumers' purchase decision both in stores and online (Baird, 2017). According to Anderson (2014), about eight out of every ten consumers said they consistently look for deals while evaluating the purchase decision, and millennials were most price conscious for the price when it comes to saving while shopping.

Price consciousness is defined as "the degree to which the consumer focuses exclusively on paying a low price" (Lichtenstein et al., 1993, p.235). Consumers with a high level of price consciousness care about searching for low price in the market, and they experience emotional value and enjoyment through purchasing products in a low-price range (Alford & Biswas, 2002). Additionally, price-conscious consumers place greater emphasis on the price of products and carefully weigh the potential benefits with balancing between price and quality (Wakefield & Inman, 2003). Oppositely, less price conscious consumers are not motivated to process the price information extensively (Kukar-Kinney et al., 2007). Due to their low involvement with price, their perceptions of monetary value toward products are uncertain. Instead, they are more likely to perceive a discount as a cue for significant reduction in the quality (Alford & Biswas, 2002). Thus, consumers' price consciousness can influence the way consumers process the purchase decision in terms of information search, evaluation of alternatives, and purchase behaviors.

2.6.2. Fashion Consciousness

Fashion is used by consumers to visually express their ideal self or self-image (Goldsmith, Heitmeyer & Freiden, 1991). Fashion consciousness is defined as the degree of individual consumers' interest and sensitivity to fashion, which can be exhibited through the desire to incorporate up-to-date fashion style into daily life (Bakewell et al., 2006). Zhou et al. (2010) indicated that consumers with a high level of fashion consciousness have great potential to explore new things in fashion and to enjoy the pleasure that fashion items provided. Some other researchers found that fashion-conscious consumers are more inclined to prefer fashion-related attributes than other elements such as comfort and appropriateness when making a purchase decision. (Bakewell et al., 2006; Nam et al., 2007). Meanwhile, Shephard et al. (2016) pointed out that the degree of fashion consciousness can differ by gender. Specifically, female consumers showed a high level of fashion consciousness. Hence, they tend to value recreational aspects of shopping compared to male consumers, who placed a greater importance on convenience. Also, female consumers showed a greater intention to adopt and try up-to-date fashion products.

Decorative home textiles play a similar role to fashion products, which are tended to be used for aesthetic purpose. Comparing to the utilitarian purpose of shopping, aesthetic-related shopping procedures tend to be greatly driven by intrinsic and hedonic motivations such as social shopping motivation (e.g., shopping for social needs) and idea shopping motivation (e.g., exploring different fashion stores to find new fashion trends) (Arnold & Reynolds, 2003). These are the items consumers may like to shop for fun without any specific needs.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Questions

The purpose of the study is to gain insight into the U.S. home textiles industry, particularly female consumers' buying behavior toward decorative home textiles. The following research questions guided the design of the current study:

RQ1. What is consumers' buying behavior toward decorative home textiles in general?

RQ2. How does consumers' buying behavior toward decorative home textiles vary among the three generational cohorts?

RQ3. How will personality traits (price consciousness and fashion consciousness) influence consumers' buying behavior toward decorative home textiles?

3.2. Data Collection

An online survey (Appendix A) was conducted to investigate female consumers' buying behavior toward decorative home textiles, including curtains/draperies, decorative pillows/throws, and table cloth/runners. The data collection took place from January to February of 2019. Before the implementation of the survey, an IRB approval (Appendix B) was obtained through North Carolina State University. Qualtrics, which is an online software for collecting and analyzing data for market research, was used to create the online survey. Respondents were provided with a web-link directing them to the questionnaire, which might take about five minutes for a thorough completion.

The target respondents were females between 21 to 65 years old, which includes Millennials, Generation X and Baby Boomers. The goal was to obtain around 400 completed surveys. Survey links were sent by Qualtrics to members of the panels they maintained to solicit participation. While processing the data collection, ongoing monitoring was implemented to delete incomplete surveys and surveys completed in a careless manner. A total of 31 surveys were eliminated.

3.3. Survey Instruments

There were three sections in the questionnaire. The first section measured consumers' general buying behavior toward decorative home textiles based on the Consumer Decision-Making Process Model. The second section measured consumers' personality traits, including price consciousness and fashion consciousness. Established scales were adopted or modified to measure the constructs. Lastly, basic demographic information, including age, marital status, household income, housing status, education, employment status, and living area was also collected. Multiple choice questions were used to ask the respondents to choose the item(s) that matched their preferences or personal information (Q1-Q18, see Appendix A). Among these questions, Q4-Q6 and Q8-Q11 were measured using 5-point Likert scales with 1 being Strongly Disagree (or Not Important) and 5 being Strongly Agree (or Very Important). Below is the detailed information of the first two sections (Q1-Q11).

3.3.1. General Buying Behavior toward Decorative Home textiles

This section (Q1-Q9) measured consumers' general buying behavior toward decorative home textiles based on the decision-making process, including need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives and purchase decision.

Need Recognition Four items were used to measure consumers' needs to buy decorative home textiles. Question 1 and 2 addressed the consumers' shopping frequency and the time for the last purchase of decorative home textiles. Question 3 asked about the reasons for the last purchase of decorative home textiles. Question 4 (5-point Likert scale) identified the common reasons for the replacement based on the characteristics of each decorative home textile product that the study focused on, including seasonal changes, signs of wear, coordinating with the interior environment and keeping up with the fashion trend.

Information Search Question 5 (5-point Likert scale) asked the respondents to indicate the importance of each potential product information source for their information search of decorative home textiles. Three main categories (typical media sources, physical stores and personal sources) of external information search developed by Staden and Aardt (2011) were adopted and modified per the context of this study.

Evaluation of Alternatives Question 6 (5-point Likert scale) addressed respondents' perceived level of importance on the attributes in their purchase decision regarding decorative home textiles, including product attributes (style, color, durability, comfort, ease of cleaning, fiber contents and fabric texture) and brand attributes (brand name, country of origin and price). All the elements from this question were extracted from existing literatures for fashion and textile products (Sakpichaisakul, 2012; Hsu & Burns, 2002; Sanad, 2016) and modified to correspond with the characteristics of related products that needed to be investigated in this study.

Purchase Decision Three questions were used to measure the process of purchase decision. Question 7 addressed the different types of shopping channels that consumers usually choose for buying decorative home textiles. Six main categories of retail channels were included in this study (discount stores, department stores, specialty stores, online retailers, off price retailers and TV shopping). Question 8 (5-point Likert scale) measured consumers' general shopping intention for decorative home textiles, which included the preference for shopping online and offline. For the attitudes toward shopping online for decorative home textiles, two categories of perceived benefits (4 items) and perceived risks (6 items) were used in question 9

(5-point Likert scale). Each item was developed and modified from the existing academic research toward online shopping (Nupur & Aanchal, 2018; Javadi et al., 2012).

3.3.2. Personality Traits

Price Consciousness Price consciousness (Q10), the degree to which the consumer focuses exclusively on paying a low price, was measured by a total of five items from Alford and Biswas (2002). A sample question was 'I am willing to make extra efforts to find lower prices'. The items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale.

Fashion Consciousness Fashion consciousness (Q11) represents the extent of individual consumer's interest and sensitivity to fashion, which is exhibited through the interest in keeping up with fashion trends, shopping fashion products, accessing fashion-related media and resources (Bakewell et al., 2006). It was measured by using five items adopted from Sprotles and Kendall (1986). A sample question is as follows: 'I keep my wardrobe up-to-date with the changing style.' The items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale.

3.4. Data Analysis

SPSS data analysis software was used for data analysis. Descriptive analysis was conducted to generate the sample profile and general consumer buying behavior toward decorative home textiles based on the Consumer Decision-Making Process Model.

Furthermore, multiple one-way ANOVA and descriptive analyses were both used to investigate the influence of generational cohort on the decision-making process toward decorative home textiles. Additional post-hoc analyses were also conducted to identify the difference among different groups with dependent variables that are statistically significant. In addition, correlation analysis was conducted to test the correlation of fashion consciousness and price consciousness with the process of evaluation of alternatives.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter consists of four main sections. The first section is an overview of the sample profile. The second section includes a descriptive analysis of consumers' general buying behavior toward decorative home textiles. Section three analyzes how generational cohort influences consumer's general buying behavior toward decorative home textiles. Section four analyzes how price consciousness and fashion consciousness influence consumers' buying behavior toward decorative home textiles in the process of evaluation of alternatives.

4.1. Sample Profile

After removing 31 incomplete questionnaires, a total of 395 valid responses were retained. All respondents were classified into three generational groups based on the age: Millennials (21-40), Gen X (41-55) and Baby Boomers (56-65). As displayed in the Table 4.1, about half of the respondents were Millennials (N=194), followed by Gen X (N=128) and Baby Boomers (N=73). In terms of marital status, about half of the respondents were married (48.1%), with 30.6% reported single. More than half of the respondents (52.3%) had annual household income less than $50,000. Most of the respondents either rented (37%) or owned houses (54.2%). In terms of education, most respondents at least attended colleges or had earned a bachelor's degree or graduate degree. Most respondents had jobs, either part-time (20.5%) or full-time employment (39.0%), followed by unemployed status (35.4%). More than half of the respondents lived in suburban areas.

Table 4.1 Sample Profile

Demographics	Frequency	Valid Percent (%)
Age		
21-40	194	49.1%
41-55	128	32.4%
56-65	73	18.5%
Marital Status		
Single	121	30.6%
Married	190	48.1%
Separated/divorced	57	14.5%
Others	27	6.8%
Annual Household Income		
Less than $ 30,000	114	28.8%
$30,000-$49,999	93	23.5%
$50,000-$69,999	67	17.0%
$70,000-$99,999	58	14.7%
$100,000 and more	63	16.0%
Housing Status		
Rent	146	37.0%
Own	214	54.2%
Staying with parents/family members	35	8.8%
Education		
High school graduate or less	82	20.7%
Some college	102	25.8%
Associate's degree	56	14.2%
Bachelor's degree	107	27.0%
Graduate and above	48	12.3%
Employment status		
Students	20	5.1%
Unemployed	140	35.4%
Part time	81	20.5%
Full time	154	39.0%
Community		
Urban	83	21.0%
Suburban	206	52.2%
Rural	106	26.8%

4.2. RQ1: What is consumers' buying behavior toward decorative home textiles in general?

Descriptive analyses were conducted to summarize the general purchasing pattern of female consumers toward decorative home textiles based on the decision-making process, including need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternative and purchase decision. The results of each step were discussed below.

4.2.1. Need Recognition

The initial stage of the purchasing process begins with the recognition of needs. In terms of shopping frequency (Table 4.2), most of the respondents only purchased decorative home textiles less than four times a year (37.5% conducted purchasing once a year or less and 41.5% purchased 2-3 times a year), indicating an infrequent purchase pattern of decorative home textiles.

Table 4.2 Shopping Frequency of Decorative Home textiles

Shopping Frequency	Frequency	Valid Percent (%)
Once a year or less	148	37.5%
2-3 times a year	164	41.5%
4-5 times a year	50	12.7%
More than 5 times a year	33	8.3%

Furthermore, more than half of the respondents (54.2%) purchased decorative home textiles within 3 months, which was indicated in the Table 4.3, followed by 3-6 months ago (20.0%) and 6-12 months ago (11.6%).

Table 4.3 Last Purchase of Decorative Home textiles

Last Purchase	Frequency	Valid Percent (%)
Last month	103	26.1%
1-3 months ago	111	28.1%
3-6 months ago	79	20.0%
6-12 months ago	46	11.6%
1-2 years ago	27	6.8%
More than 2 years ago	29	7.3%

In terms of reasons for the last purchase, most of the respondents bought decorative home textiles to replace the old items (58.0 %), followed by renovation (24.6%), impulse buying (22.0%), and sales/promotion (19.2%) (Figure 4.1). Since replacement was the leading reason for purchase, the resulting gap between purchases can be explained by the low engagement and shopping frequency among consumers. However, there were still many consumers conducting the last purchase due to renovation, sales/promotion or impulse buying, which could inspire retailers to capitalize on other reasons to stimulate consumption.

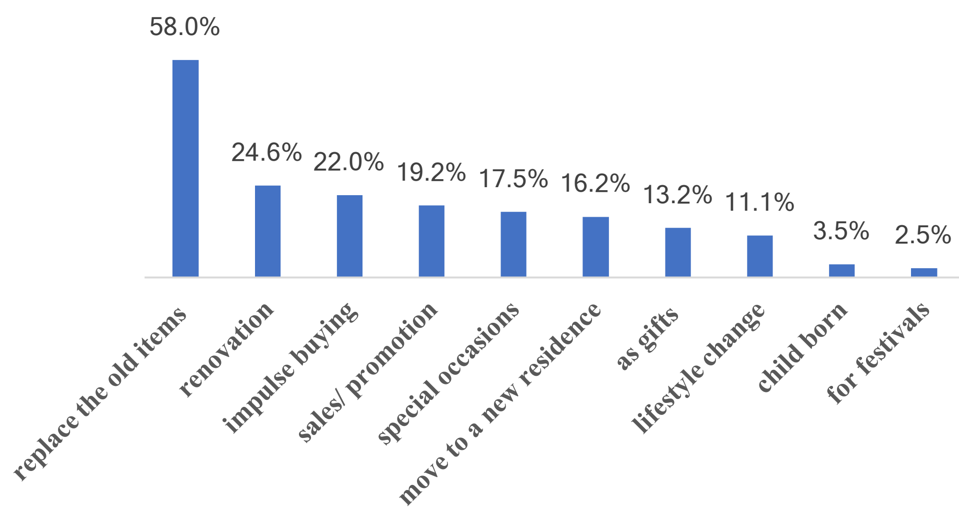


Figure 4.1 Reasons for the Last Purchase of Decorative Home textiles

To identify the general reasons for consumers to replace different decorative home textiles, three types of the products were discussed separately, including curtains/draperies, table cloths/runners and decorative pillows/throws.

As shown in Table 4.4, about 60% of the respondents were inclined to replace curtains/draperies when they showed signs of being worn, followed by 56.1% of the respondents who liked to change the items to coordinate with furniture and other decor. However, more than half of them disagreed with the statements of seasonal changes and keeping up with the current fashion trend as reasons for replacement.

Table 4.4 Reasons to Change Curtains/Draperies

Reason to change **curtains/ draperies**	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Seasonal changes	60.2%	18.0%	21.8%
Showing Signs of being worn	29.2%	11.6%	59.2%
Coordinating with furniture and other decors	21.6%	22.3%	56.1%
Keeping up with the current fashion trend	57.2%	22.8%	20.0%

For table cloths/runners (Table 4.5), more than half of the respondents were more likely to change the items in order to meet seasonal changes (61.2%) or just to coordinate with the interior environment (58.8%). While, about half of them did not replaced their table cloths/runners based on signs of being worn (56.4%) and current fashion trend (50.9%). Similar results were also found for decorative pillows/throws as shown in Table 4.6.

Table 4.5 Reasons to Change Table Cloth/Runners

Reason to change **table cloth/ runners**	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Seasonal changes	20.3%	18.5%	61.2%
Showing Signs of being worn	56.4%	20.0%	23.6%
Coordinating with furniture and other decors	19.7%	21.5%	58.8%
Keeping up with the current fashion trend	50.9%	24.8%	24.3%

Table 4.6 Reasons to Change Decorative Pillows/Throws

Reason to change **decorative pillows/throws**	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Seasonal changes.	37.7%	15.7%	46.6%
Showing Signs of being worn.	44.3%	15.7%	39.0%
Coordinating with furniture and other decors.	16.7%	18.5%	64.8%
Keeping up with the current fashion trend	49.6%	25.3%	25.1%

Among all the three types of decorative home textiles, most respondents showed unwillingness to change the items to follow fashion trends, but they preferred to replace items to coordinate with furniture and other decors. In contrast to apparel, which is highly driven by current fashion trends, home decoration purchases are usually made according to the principle of harmony, which is the sense that all the elements of the design fit together (Mastroeni, 2018). That is the correct way to make a person at ease within the home environment and create unity, thereby eliminating any feelings of disquiet. Compared to table cloths/runners and decorative pillows/throws, most of the respondents did not like to change curtains/draperies season by season. Instead, they preferred to replace those only when there are signs of being worn, indicating that these products are used for long-term.

4.2.2. Information Search

Once the need for decorative home textiles is recognized, consumers engage in information search to satisfy their needs. Among the 12 information sources (Table 4.7), the most preferred information source for consumers to search for decorative home textiles was online product reviews (M=3.43, SD=1.283), followed by product display in stores (M=3.36, SD=1.114), company websites (M=2.77, SD=1.250), Pinterest (M=2.73, SD=1.384), catalogues (M=2.70, SD=1.182), and family members (M=2.63, SD=1.147). Instagram was the least important source for consumers to conduct the information search (M=1.63, SD=0.873).

Table 4.7 Sources of Information Search toward Decorative Home Textiles

Information Sources	Mean	S.D.	Rank
Online product reviews	3.43	1.283	1
Product display in stores	3.36	1.114	2
Company websites	2.77	1.250	3
Pinterest	2.73	1.384	4
Catalogues	2.70	1.182	5
Family members	2.63	1.147	6
Friends/ Roommates	2.46	1.218	7
Magazines/Books	2.44	1.180	8
T.V.	2.14	1.065	9
Facebook	2.07	1.118	10
Salespersons	1.96	1.078	11
Instagram	1.63	0.873	12

The items were measured on a 5-point Likert Scale with 1 being not important and 5 being very important.

The results indicated the significance of online information sources such as online product reviews and company websites when gathering information about decorative home textiles. Online shopping is growing rapidly and becoming more important in consumers' lives (Farber, 2016). By searching products online, consumers are able to become educated regarding attributes related to the product. Also, as consumers can quickly and conveniently get access to relevant information such as online reviews, they can minimize purchase risks (Hankin, 2007). However, traditional physical retail stores still play an important role in consumers' purchase decision, especially for fashion products. In physical stores, consumers are directly provided with visual and tactile information, which cannot be provided in the online environment.

In terms of consumers' preferences with the choice of social media, Pinterest was preferred to a greater extent than Facebook and Instagram when they search information for decorative home textiles. According to the 2018 Pew Research study, a greater percentage of the U.S. adults are users of Facebook (68%) and Instagram (35%) than Pinterest (29%). However, these two social media platforms were not the first choice for consumers to conduct this search process. Unlike Facebook and Instagram, which are respectively used primarily for social networking and image sharing for personal experiences, Pinterest is an extremely visual platform for women to curate images of items they like and seek inspiration of beauty and home decoration (Chan, 2017). On this platform, consumers are more likely to discover shared contents that are inspiring and valuable for learning. Normally, the goal of Pinterest for companies is to generate website traffic by sharing visual contents for different products (Cormier, n.d.). In terms of personal sources, family members were more important than friends/roommates and salespersons when searching for decorative home textiles. This is likely due to the fact that home decoration may involve the whole family who lives in the same house, and any inconsistency of ideas for decoration may lead to internal conflicts between family members.

4.2.3. Evaluation of Alternatives

Once consumers gather enough information, evaluation of alternative occurs when they make comparisons and judge the different attributes of each product to assist in the final purchase. Table 4.8 illustrated some features of decorative home textiles that respondents might consider during conducting the purchase decision. The results indicated that color of the decorative home textiles was the most important criteria (M=4.20, SD=0.891), followed by comfort (M=4.15, SD=0.893), price (M=3.95, SD=1.065), durability (M=3.94, SD=0.925), ease of cleaning (M=3.93, SD=0.963), and style (M=3.86, SD=1.050). Brand name was the least important consideration for purchasing decorative home textiles (M=1.83, SD=1.141).

Table 4.8 Purchase Criteria of Decorative Home Textiles

Purchase Criteria	Mean	S.D.	Rank
Color	4.20	0.891	1
Comfort	4.15	0.893	2
Price	3.95	1.065	3
Durability	3.94	0.925	4
Ease of Cleaning	3.93	0.963	5
Style	3.86	1.050	6
Fabric Texture	3.54	1.069	7
Fiber Contents	2.92	1.180	8
Country of Origin	2.04	1.135	9
Brand Name	1.83	1.141	10

The items were measured on a 5-point Likert Scale with 1 being not important and 5 being very important.

Similar to Lu (2014)'s study, which revealed four key attributes (comfort, quality such as durability and ease of cleaning, style, and price) that consumers consider most important when they purchase sportswear products, color was the most important factor when purchasing decorative home textiles. Due to its ability to give stronger visual impact compared to style, color can play a significant role in consumers' lives. It is not only one of the direct elements in the natural environment, but also the most basic language of design, which is meaningful to build people's social image and taste (Kunle, 2017). In the context of interior design, color is an effective tool to evoke emotions, and can influence the extent of comfort of home environment (Pomroy, 2017). Brand was the least important attribute for decorative home textiles. This finding was consistent with the previous research about home furnishings, which showed that buyers were undecided on home-furnishing brands, with only 8% of them knowing specific brands to search for (Nickell, 2013). In similar manner, Sloan (2007) found that more than 50% of consumers did not know what brand of furnishing products they had purchased after the point of purchase. These results indicate consumers' low level of brand awareness regarding home-furnishing products. Instead, they paid more attention to other attributes over brand during decision-making process.

4.2.4. Purchase Decision

After evaluating alternatives using different criteria, consumers make the actual purchase. In purchase decision stage, consumers choose the most preferred one from a chosen retail channel. Thus, shopping locations, purchase intentions, and online shopping attitude are relevant to their purchase decision.

In terms of shopping channels (Figure 4.2), mass merchandisers were the most frequently used retail format for consumers to purchase decorative home textiles, including Wal-Mart (63.3%) and Target (54.7%). Followed next were Amazon (52.2%) and Bed, Bath & Beyond (47.6%), which also had around half of the responses. The next group included Kohl's, T.J. Maxx, Ikea, JC Penney and Wayfair, with 20%-35% of the respondents' mentioning respectively. Other retailers with around or less than 10% mentioning included Macy's Tuesday Morning, Sears, Belk, Linen N Things, and the two TV shopping channels (QVC and HSN). Besides the retail channels listed below, there were other channels mentioned by the respondents as well, including Burlington Coat Factory, Costco, second hand shops, Kirkland's, Marshall's, Pottery Barn, and Pier One.

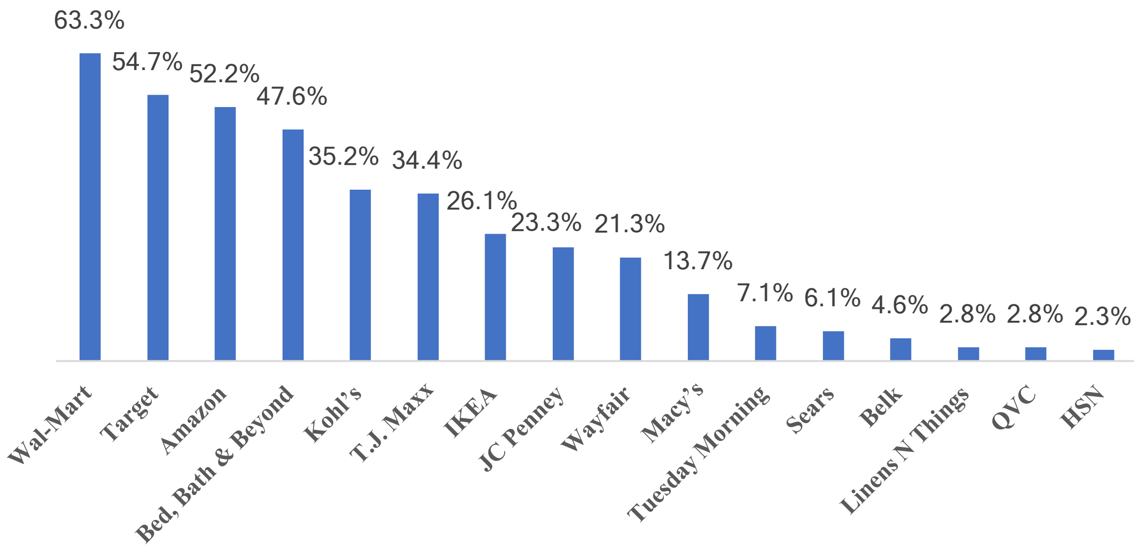


Figure 4.2 Shopping Channels of Decorative Home Textiles

In terms of consumers' intention to shop online and offline, the results (Table 4.9) showed that majority of the respondents (42.5%) disagreed with the statement 'I prefer to shop online than in stores for decorative home textiles'. That is, brick and mortar stores were still the major channel options for decorative home textiles. The inability to physically examine the products when shopping online may increase the risk perceptions associated with online shopping as consumers can not touch, feel and see the products before purchase. In addition, most of the respondents (46.4%) indicated that they like to purchase decorative home textiles even without specific needs, showing a hedonic shopping attitude, even if they showed low shopping frequency toward these products (Table 4.2).

Table 4.9 Shopping Intention of Decorative Home Textiles

Shopping Intention	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
I prefer to shop online than in stores for decorative home textiles.	42.5%	34.8%	22.7%
I like to shop for decorative home textiles even if I don't have specific need.	29.3%	24.3%	46.4%

Consumers' attitude toward online shopping for decorative home textiles was measured in two dimensions: perceived benefits and perceived risks. The results (Table 4.10) showed that the majority of the respondents agreed with some benefits of online shopping, including wider selections of products (73.6%), time saving (74.7%), and convenience (86.3%). However, only about one third (33.7%) of the respondents believed that the price is better for online retailers, with about half of the respondents held mixed feelings in terms of the belief that online retailers' prices are better than in-store retailers. In terms of perceived risks (Table 4.11), while only a small number of respondents had concerns about security (16.2%) and slow delivery (29.1%), more than half of the respondents (64.8%) did not like the lack of touch and feel of online shopping. Similarly, more than half of the respondents indicated their concerns of the product quality (52.7%) and other discrepancies between the actual received products and pictures seen online (64.8%). Along the same line, 63% of the respondents stated that they did not like to deal with the return process in case the products purchased online did not work.

Table 4.10 Perceived Benefits of Online Shopping

Perceived Benefits	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
There are wider selections of products online.	5.6%	20.8%	73.6%
Prices are better for products offered online.	15.7%	50.6%	33.7%
Online shopping is a good way for saving time and energy.	5.6%	19.7%	74.7%
It is a great advantage to be able to shop at any time of the day on the internet.	1.5%	12.2%	86.3%

Table 4.11 Perceived Risks of Online Shopping

Perceived Risks	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
I'm not comfortable with the security aspects of online shopping.	57.2%	26.6%	16.2%
I don't like the fact that consumers can't feel and touch the products online.	11.9%	23.3%	64.8%
Delivery of products purchased online may take a long time.	45.6%	25.3%	29.1%
I don't want to deal with the return process in case the products purchased online don't work.	14.7%	22.3%	63.0%
I am concerned of the quality of the products that I ordered online.	20.0%	27.3%	52.7%
I am concerned of the discrepancy between the actual products received and pictures I saw online.	12.9%	22.3%	64.8%

4.3. RQ2: How does consumers' buying behavior toward decorative home textiles vary among the three generational cohorts?

Descriptive analyses were employed to describe the shopping behavior toward home textiles for each of the three generations, including Millennials, Generation X, and Baby Boomers. One-way ANOVA with post-hoc analyses were used to test and identify the differences among the three generations in terms of the shopping behaviors toward decorative home textiles.

4.3.1. Need Recognition

In terms of shopping frequency (Figure 4.3), Baby Boomers tended to purchase decorative home textiles less frequently, with 61.6% of them prefer to shop once a year or less, compared to 33.6% of Gen X and 30.9% of Millennials. Also, most of the younger generations were more inclined to shop for decorative home textiles 2-3 times a year. The results demonstrated that Baby Boomers tend to purchase decorative home textiles less frequently than other generations. One reason behind the phenomenon could be due to the fact that fewer Baby Boomers consider shopping to be a relaxing experience (Wilson, 2017). Therefore, they are willing to pay more to get the higher quality products and services, which could in turn, help them avoid repeated consumption in a short period of time (Siren & Haustein, 2013). Meanwhile, younger generations, especially Millennials, have unstable employment and living status, which may indirectly increase the need for decorative home textiles.

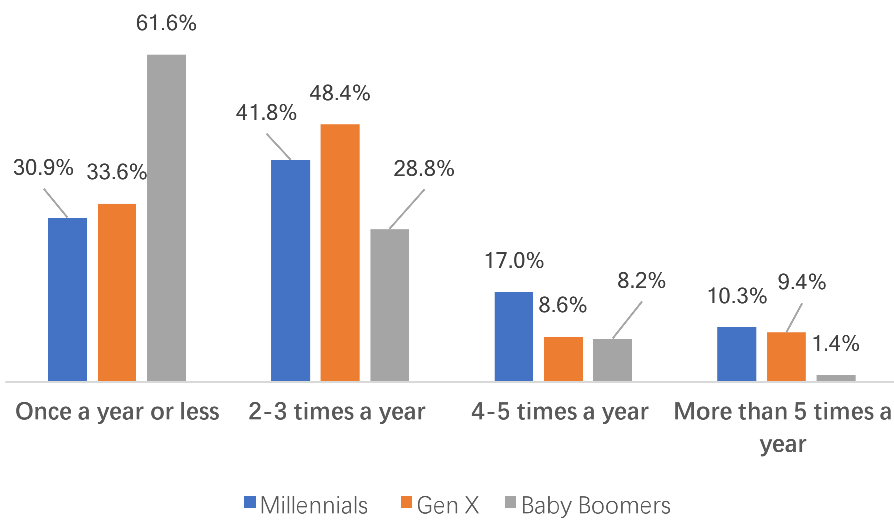


Figure 4.3 Shopping Frequency among Different Generations

Multiple one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine if there are significant differences among the three generational cohorts in terms of the reasons for changing decorative home textiles. As shown in Table 4.12, the extent to which they are motivated to change the decorative home textiles to keep up with the current fashion trend was significantly differ between the three generational cohorts for all identified home textiles, including curtains/draperies (P=0.032), table cloth/runners (P=0.047), and decorative pillows/throws (P=0.015). Additional post hoc analysis, shown in Appendix C, indicated that Millennials are more likely to replace all identified decorative home textiles in order to follow the current fashion trend than the two older generations. Consistent with these findings, previous research has shown that Millennials tend to be more fashion-oriented (Samala & Singh, 2018). Similar to fashion products, decorative home textiles are used for aesthetic purpose. Thus, aesthetic and trendy features have great potential to drive more consumption of related products from Millennial consumers than other generations. No other significant differences were found among the three generations in terms of their general reasons to replace the decorative home textiles.

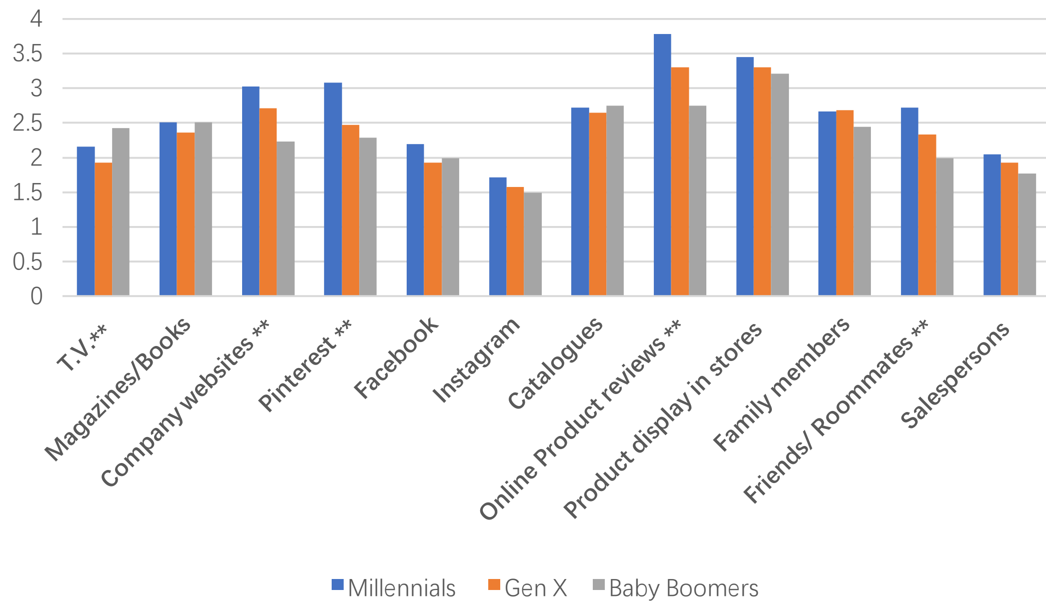
Table 4.12 Reasons to Change Decorative Home Textiles among Different Generations

Reason to change **curtains/ draperies**	Millennials	Gen X	Baby Boomers
Seasonal changes	2.46	2.35	2.14
Showing Signs of being worn	3.37	3.47	3.30
Coordinating with furniture and other decors	3.49	3.43	3.22
Keeping up with the current fashion trend *	2.48	2.37	2.05
Reason to change **Table cloth/runners**	Millennials	Gen X	Baby Boomers
Seasonal changes	3.43	3.62	3.62
Showing Signs of being worn	2.65	2.51	2.35
Coordinating with furniture and other decors	3.36	3.60	3.37
Keeping up with the current fashion trend *	2.64	2.55	2.23
Reason to change **decorative pillows/throws**	Millennials	Gen X	Baby Boomers
Seasonal changes	3.16	3.02	3.01
Showing Signs of being worn	2.99	2.98	2.82
Coordinating with furniture and other decors	3.58	3.70	3.53
Keeping up with the current fashion trend *	2.74	2.55	2.26

*: Influence is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
The items were measured on a 5-point Likert Scale with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree.

4.3.2. Information Search

For information searching, multiple one-way ANOVA was also used to explore if each generational cohort place different importance on different information sources when searching information regarding decorative home textiles. As shown in Figure 4.4, significant differences were revealed among the three generational cohorts in terms of TV commercials (P=0.006), company website (P=0.000), Pinterest (P=0.000), online product reviews (P=0.001), and Friends/Roommates (P=0.000). As shown Appendix D, Baby Boomers were more likely to use TV commercials than Gen X. Gen X and Millennial were more inclined to utilize online products reviews and company websites as information sources than Baby Boomers. Besides, in terms of friends/roommates and Pinterest, Millennials had more preference than Baby Boomers and Gen X.



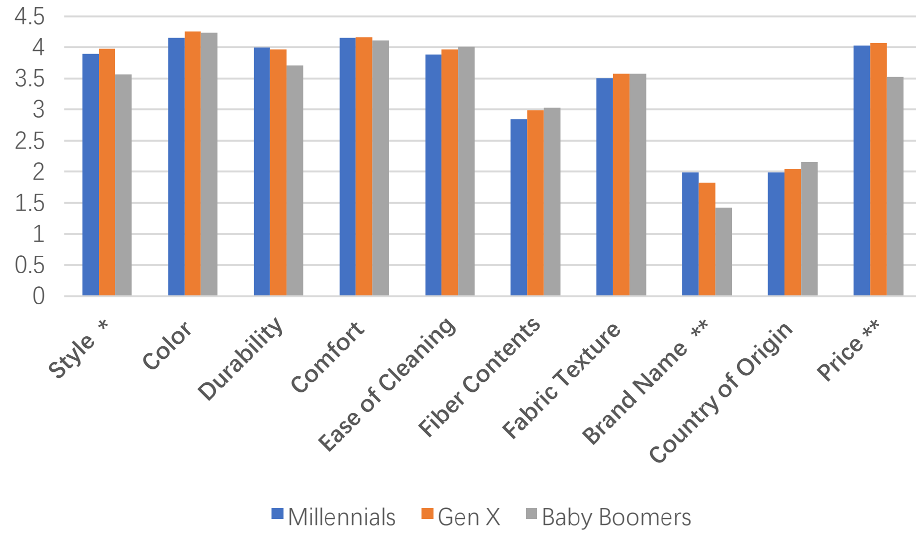
**: Influence is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
The items were measured on a 5-point Likert Scale with 1 being not important and 5 being very important

Figure 4.4 Information Sources among Different Generations

As the first generation who grew up with TV (Koeppel, n.d.), Baby Boomers highly utilized T.V. as the information source. A similar result was found by DMN3 (n.d.)'s study in that T.V. advertising is the ad channel with the largest influence on Baby Boomers. On the other hand, Millennials, who actively use online and social media, are the generation that seeks community and social connection (Arnold, 2017). Hence, they are willing to take part in opportunities that will connect them more with communities, especially if the connections can assist in the improvement of their values and beliefs. The results of this study were consistent with prior research in that online recommendations and product or vendor reviews were important sources for Millennials' actual purchase behavior (Mangold & Smith, 2012). Besides, Millennials are also highly affected and driven by opinions of friends and users in the virtual world, which can result in their active online behavior and information exchanges (Ordun, 2015). In the case of Gen X, their preference of information sources was moderate (i.e. company website, Pinterest, online product review, friends/family), showing a less extent of preferences compared to Millennials but greater than Baby Boomers with the exception of TV commercials, which was found to have the lowest preference comparing to other generations.

4.3.3. Evaluation of Alternatives

Figure 4.5 presents the means of importance placed on each purchase criterion for all three generations in the decorative home textile shopping context. The results of multiple one-way ANOVA showed significant differences among the three generations in terms of style (P=0.022), brand name (P=0.001), and price (P=0.001). From post-hoc analysis (Appendix E), Millennials and Gen X considered style and price more important than Baby Boomers. And brand was more important to Millennials than Baby Boomers.



*: Influence is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)
**: Influence is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
The items were measured on a 5-point Likert Scale with 1 being not important and 5 being very important

Figure 4.5 Purchase Criteria among Different Generations

For Baby Boomers, price is not the key factor for shopping. Instead, they are more loyal to products and services they value, and they are more willing to pay premium for them (Synchrony, 2015). In previous studies (i.e. Anić & Mihić, 2015; Kestenbaum, 2017), younger generations showed a high level of fashion and price consciousness, which can in turn, drive them to place greater importance on style and price in the decision-making process. In terms of brand name, Millennials have showed less loyalty toward brands in the previous studies, possibly stemming from their trend switching behavior and their constant exposure to high amounts of promotions and brands advertisements (Bush et al., 2004; Ordun, 2015). Despite their low brand loyalty, Millennials are more conscious of brand than older generations as expressing oneself through the use of brand is typically a thought process that Millennial consumers use in choosing products to define themselves (Noble et al., 2009). They use brands to find their identity and signify the value they appreciate most in their daily life, in order to signal status in their reference groups. Prior research also found that Millennial consumers' personality was associated with brand’s personality (Noble et al., 2009), which demonstrated the importance of brand for this generation.

4.3.4. Purchase Decision

Figure 4.6 presents consumers’ preference of shopping channels for the three generations toward decorative home textiles. In terms of mass merchandisers, about 70.6% of Millennials usually purchased decorative home textiles in Wal-Mart, compared to 61.3% of Gen X and 53.6% of Baby Boomers. Similarly, about 64.4% of Millennials purchased decorative home textiles in Target, followed by 49.2% of Gen X and 43.5% of Baby Boomers. In case of specialty stores, more than half of Baby Boomers (59.2%) liked to shop at Bed, Bath & Beyond, compared to 51.6% of Gen X and 42.8% of Millennials. However, Millennials (33.0%) showed a greater preference to go to IKEA for purchase than Gen X (22.6%) and Baby Boomers (15.9%). Online shopping channels, such as Wayfair and Amazon, were also more likely to be chosen by Millennials than Gen X and Baby Boomers. For off-price retailers, T.J Maxx was revealed as the most attractive retailer, with 42.3% of Millennials, 30.6% of Gen X, and 23.2% of Baby Boomers. There were minor differences between the three generations in case of TV shopping networks and department stores.

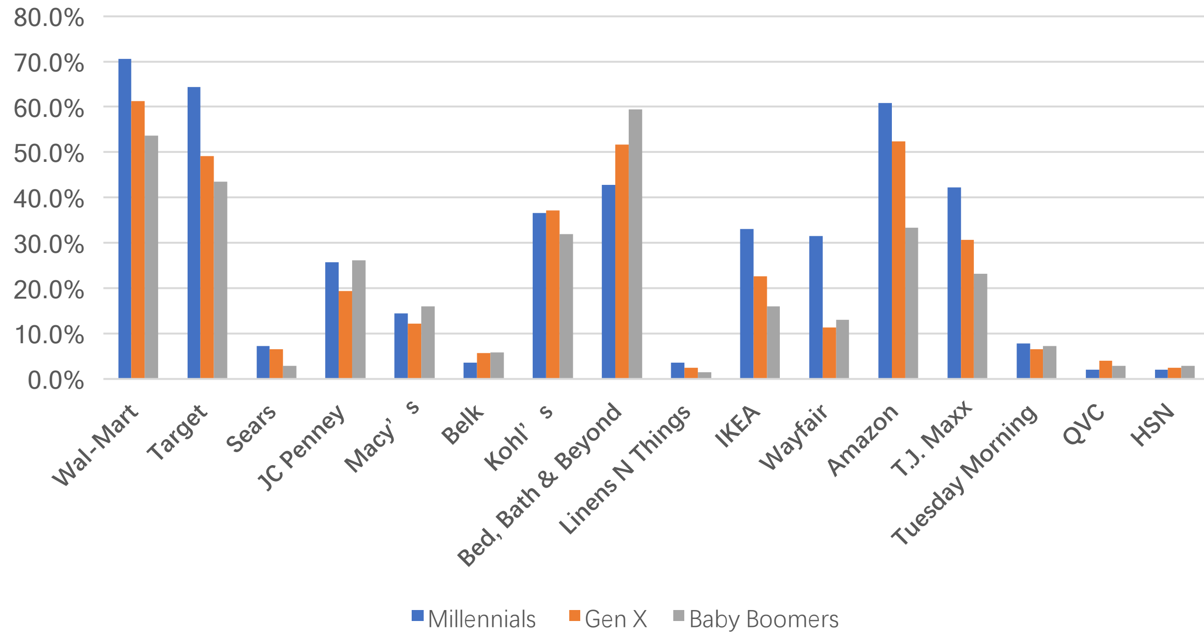


Figure 4.6 Shopping Channels among Different Generations

Since Millennials usually value price most over other attributes, and they tend to search for deals from different stores (Gasca, 2015), it is not surprising that Wal-Mart, Target, IKEA and T.J. Maxx are revealed as key retailers used by this generation to purchase decorative home textiles. Meanwhile, online shopping channels were also greatly preferred by Millennials, not only due to the fact of being digital natives, but also due to the convenience and flexibility of comparing prices from different retailers. In terms of specialty stores, Baby boomers, who value the quality of products and services more than price (Synchrony, 2015), showed the greatest preference toward Bed, Bath & Beyond than other shopping channels. Bed Bath & Beyond, which specializes in home goods, focuses on a 'better quality than department stores, with reasonable prices' strategy without spending on national licenses and brands (Smith, 2004). Quality and variety are the core strength of this company. In terms of TV shopping, none of the three generations liked to use QVC and HSN for purchasing decorative home textiles.

Table 4.13 presents the shopping intention toward decorative home textiles for the three generations. The results of multiple one-way ANOVA revealed that online shopping preference (P=0.006) was significantly different between the three generations. Based on the post hoc analyses (Appendix F), Millennials were more likely to shop online for decorative home textiles than Baby Boomers. However, in terms of online shopping attitudes (Table 4.14), Millennials perceived more risks than other two generations, with P-value of 0.027. A possible reason might be that as Millennials are highly involved in the online shopping behavior, and their perceived risks might not be strong enough to influence their intention toward this channel.

Table 4.13 Shopping Intention among Different Generations

Shopping Intention	Millennials	Gen X	Baby Boomers
I prefer to shop online than in stores for decorative home textiles. **	2.85	2.67	2.48
I like to shop for decorative home textiles even if I don't have specific need.	3.22	3.09	3.00

**: Influence is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
The items were measured on a 5-point Likert Scale with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree

Table 4.14 Online Shopping Attitude among Different Generations

Online Shopping Attitude	Millennials	Gen X	Baby Boomers
Perceived Benefits	3.82	3.91	3.72
Perceived Risks *	3.43	3.14	3.20

*: Influence is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)
The items were measured on a 5-point Likert Scale with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree

4.4. RQ3: How will personality traits (price consciousness and fashion consciousness) influence consumers' buying behavior toward decorative home textiles?

In this part, correlation analyses were used to test the relationships between evaluation of alternatives and price consciousness and fashion consciousness respectively.

4.4.1. Influence of Price Consciousness on Evaluation of Alternatives

Results (Table 4.15) from the correlation analysis showed positive relationships between price consciousness and durability, comfort, ease of cleaning, and price, respectively. Among each correlated attribute, price (Correlation=0.390) showed the strongest positive relationship with price consciousness.

Obviously, consumers with high level of price consciousness care more about price than other attributes, as explained in the previous research (Lichtenstein et al., 1993). In general, price conscious consumers pay more attention to the price of certain products and carefully weigh the potential benefits of the purchase against the cost of the good (Wakefield & Inman, 2003). Furthermore, price conscious consumers also placed a greater emphasis on quality (durability, comfort, ease of cleaning) of decorative home textiles, indicating the importance of utilitarian attributes to those consumers. They are more likely to buy the items with low-price tags and relatively higher quality.

Table 4.15 Relationship between Price Consciousness and Purchase Criteria

	Style	Color	Durability	Comfort	Ease of Cleaning	Fiber Contents	Fabric Texture	Brand Name	Country of Origin	Price
Correlation	0.091	0.055	0.146**	0.167**	0.103*	0.080	0.029	-0.014	0.001	0.390**
P-value	0.071	0.280	0.004	0.001	0.040	0.114	0.560	0.786	0.995	0.000

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

4.4.2. Influence of Fashion Consciousness on Evaluation of Alternatives

Results (Table 4.16) from the correlation analysis indicated positive relationships between fashion consciousness and style, color, fabric texture, and brand name respectively. Price was negatively correlated with fashion consciousness. Also, style had the largest correlation coefficient of 0.358.

The results were consistent with the findings of previous studies in that consumers with high level of fashion consciousness pay more attention to the fashion-related attributes in the purchase decision stage since they are more sensitive to physical attractiveness and image (Wan, Yuon & Fang, 2001). Fashion conscious consumers tend to be more interested in clothing, as it is a form of non-verbal communication that can reflect wearer's identity. Similar to fashion products, decorative home textiles are used for aesthetic purpose, which leads fashion conscious consumers to place a greater importance on style, color, and fabric texture. Brand, as the way of expressing one's personal identity and self-image (Munteanu & Pagalea, 2014), was also highlighted by those consumers. In addition, this study indicated that price had a negative relationship with fashion consciousness, which was indirectly confirmed by previous studies in that fashion conscious consumers tended to shop at high-quality stores, buy more expensive brands and spend more on fashion products (Wan, Yuon & Fang, 2001; Mulyanegara, 2011). That is, when consumers are highly fashion conscious, they put less importance on price in their decision-making process when shopping for decorative home textiles.

Table 4.16 Relationship between Fashion Consciousness and Purchase Criteria

	Style	Color	Durability	Comfort	Ease of Cleaning	Fiber Contents	Fabric Texture	Brand Name	Country of Origin	Price
Correlation	0.358**	0.232**	0.033	-0.040	0.050	0.023	0.146**	0.340**	0.071	-0.141**
P-value	0.000	0.000	0.553	0.622	0.320	0.610	0.004	0.000	0.121	0.004

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

With the booming economy, consumers today pay great attention to improving their home environment. The U.S. home-furnishing industry is constantly evolving, and home textiles, as a sub-category of home furnishings, also is continuing to grow. The purpose of the study was to gain insight into the U.S. home textile industry, as well as to explore female consumers' buying behavior toward decorative home textiles based on the Consumer Decision-Making Process Model. Specifically, this study was designed with the following purposes: 1) to explore general female consumers' buying behavior toward decorative home textiles; 2) to compare consumers' decorative home textiles shopping behaviors among different generational cohorts; and 3) to investigate the influence of two relevant personality traits, price consciousness and fashion consciousness, on consumers' shopping behavior toward decorative home textiles. A survey based on 395 of respondents provided great insight of the home textile industry.

5.1. Need Recognition

In the initial step of the decision-making process, results showed that most of the respondents did not purchased decorative home textiles frequently (1-3 times a year). In terms of the last purchase, replacement of the old items (58%) were the top reason, followed by renovation (24.6%), impulse buying (22.0%), and sales/promotion (19.2%). In general, consumers did not like to follow the fashion trend as the reason for replacement of decorative home textiles, however, they indicated that coordinating with the interior environment was a primary reason. In the case of decorative pillows/throws and table cloth/runners, consumers were more likely to replace these items to meet the seasonal changes. For curtains/draperies, most consumers did not change them unless the products showed signs of being worn. In terms of generations, Millennials purchased decorative home textiles more frequently than other generations, and they were more inclined to replace these items because of changes in fashion trends.

Replacing an old item was claimed to be the leading reason for the last purchase of decorative home textiles, which indicated a low level of consumer engagement. However, there were still other reasons for consumption, such as renovation, sales promotion, impulsive buying, etc. Consumers are willing to buy those items, but they might need to be motivated. Retailers could consider encouraging more engagement, such as offering rewards on birthday or holidays or even creating new events, such as Wayfair did with 'Way Day'. In terms of curtains/draperies, consumers will not change them frequently. Therefore, quality will be considered more important than other attributes. As for table cloth/runners and decorative pillows/throws, consumers prefer to replace them when the season changes. The implication can be based on the seasonal products optimization, such as offering different color schemes to match the season or using warmer materials to withstand the cold weather. Furthermore, Millennials have more needs for decorative home textiles, and they are more fashion-dominated. Therefore, adding more fashion elements into the products would be a good approach to reach those consumers.

5.2. Information Search

In general, online product reviews, product display in stores, company websites, and Pinterest were the four most important sources for consumers to search for information related to decorative home textiles. While it is a common knowledge to make quality websites, which are clean, well-organized, easy to navigate and motivate visitors to purchase products, the results suggested that it is even more important for companies to encourage more products reviews from consumers since it not only lends credibility to the products, but also offers feedback about the problems to assist in creating better services and products for the consumers. In terms of social media, Pinterest stood out as more influential than other platforms in consumers' information search for decorative home textiles. While it is important to maintain other social media accounts, such as Facebook or Instagram, companies need to pay more attention in leveraging their products presence on Pinterest to their benefits. Physical store displays still held an important position in consumers' information search for decorative home textiles, for which touch and feel are very important expectations for consumers. Therefore, a visually appealing and well-planned retail store layout is necessary for retailers to attract consumers' attention and maximize the sales for each square foot of the allocated selling space within the store.

Furthermore, differences were observed among the three generations. First, Baby Boomers had a relatively heavier reliance on T.V. commercials to gather information about decorative home textiles, which should be noticed by retailers who want to target these consumers. Secondly, Millennials were more inclined to utilize online product reviews and company websites as information sources than their Baby Boomer counterparts. Additionally, Millennials indicated a stronger reliance on Friends and Pinterest for product information. This finding was consistent with existing literature, which suggests that Millennials are highly involved online and on social media and, they have a greater need for peer acceptance, connecting with their peers, fitting in and social networking (Dickey & Sullivan, 2007). This information is valuable to marketers in knowing how Millennial consumers conduct the searching process, which in turn helps companies to build the right marketing campaign that drives the execution and ultimately a significant return on the marketing investment. Thirdly. Gen X was similar to Millennials regarding the importance of online product reviews and company websites toward decorative home textiles.

5.3. Evaluation of Alternatives

In general, color, comfort, price, durability, ease of cleaning and style were considered as the six most important attributes for decorative home textiles. Firstly, color and style, reflecting the aesthetic perspectives of the products, always play an important role in consumers' shopping for fashion and other decorative products. However, color, with the strong visual impact, was more influential than style in the context of decorative home textiles. In order to stimulate the consumption, marketers need to figure out how to balance the different aesthetic attributes, such as style, color, texture, fabric patterns, etc. Secondly, consumers indicated a strong preference toward the utilitarian value of the products, including comfort, price, durability and ease of cleaning. In order to draw in higher spenders, retailers may expand in-store assistance to better understand shoppers' specific needs for quality and acceptable price range. Surprisingly, brand was not considered as important for consumers to purchase decorative home textiles. This result was supported by a previous study, which suggested that consumers do not have as much brand recognition with home-furnishing products as with other items such as apparel (Kinley & Brandon, 2015). However, retailers and manufacturers still need to consider ways to keep their brands top-of-mind and highlight points of difference, since brand is the way how consumers perceive the company and how the company promotes recognition. Primarily, the advantage of branding is to streamline consumers' purchase by allowing decisions to be made faster and increasing their confidence levels while connecting with familiar brands (Seitz, Razzouk & Wells, 2010).

Differences were identified among the three generations in terms of their preferred attributes toward decorative home textiles. Specifically, Millennials and Gen X considered style and price more important than Baby Boomers. And brand was more important to Millennials than Baby

Boomers. Therefore, in general, younger generations cared more about aesthetic elements and price while shopping for fashion and decorative items.

Results of this study also suggested significant influence of two personality traits on consumers' preferred attributes for decorative home textiles. Specifically, results showed that fashion conscious consumers paid more attention to the appearance of products and other aesthetic elements, such as style, color, fabric texture and brand. At the same time, fashion consciousness had a negative relationship with the importance of price. For price conscious consumers, they paid more attention to the utilitarian value of the products, in terms of price, comfort, durability and ease of cleaning. Thus, it is necessary for retailers and manufacturers to keep their target consumers' personality traits in mind in their product development and marketing endeavors.

5.4. Purchase Decision

5.4.1. Physical Stores

Regarding physical stores, the most shopped retailers for decorative home textiles were value-based, with mass merchandiser and other bargain-based retailers topping the list, such as Wal-Mart, Target and T.J. Maxx. Specialty home textile retailer, Bed, Bath & Beyond, was also one of the top retailers. Millennials, who are the generation with a high level of price consciousness and fashion consciousness, also preferred mass merchandisers and bargain-based stores over other channels due to the reasons of convenience and cheapness, while the opposite held true for older generations who value quality more than other attributes. This might also be due to the situation that younger consumers are more likely to rent houses, and they do not tend to buy home textiles for long-term usage. Thus, they may feel that it is suitable to shop in discount stores. However, most of the older generations owned their houses and they had more preference to shop in traditional outlets (such as department stores and specialty stores) for more high-quality products. Besides, Millennials also care about the shopping experience, which is the weakness of mass merchandisers, with no frills experience and areas where consumers are encouraged to be creative or engage in the space (Capstone, 2012). Therefore, the improvement of shopping experiences, such as updating the interior environment or showcasing different lifestyle showrooms, is the approach of market campaigns that could be used to stimulate involvement of this generation and make traditional stores more competitive.

5.4.2. Online Shopping

According to the results of online shopping intention for decorative home textiles, consumers were more than two times as likely to shop for those items in-store rather than online, due to the need to see and feel the product before buying. Meanwhile, considering the potential risks such as inability to feel the products, inconvenience of return processes, quality of products and discrepancy between reality and internet, online shopping has not become that prevalent for decorative home textiles. In term of information search, the results showed that online product reviews and company websites were two important elements for consumers to conduct the searching process, which means consumers like to search online for decorative home textiles due to the convenience and variety of products. However, the final purchase will usually be processed offline. In order to provide better service and shopping experience, retailers need to strongly consider using both of online and offline channels to boost the consumption.

5.5. Limitations and Future Studies

Despite the meaningful implications drawn from this study, several limitations and improvements were identified. First, the respondents to the survey for the study were female consumers. Male consumers may display a very different shopping behavior toward decorative home textiles. Even if female consumers are more likely to be primary purchasers of decorative home textiles than male consumers, male consumers cannot be ignored considering their population size.

The second limitation lies in the nature of online survey, to which participants may not pay their full attention when completing the questionnaire. Meanwhile, unlike other research methods such as interviews, online surveys depend on the respondents to be honest about their basic demographic information. This can also create inaccuracy in the results.

Third, the method of this study was exploratory and served as a preliminary attempt on the subject. So only a few selected independent variables were considered as initial attempts. As a starting point, future research could extend and refine this research to explore other variables that would more accurately predict consumer buying behavior toward decorative home textiles. Also, each variable could be made more detailed, such as the specific style that consumers prefer for certain products, more selection of retail channels, etc.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Survey Instrument

Thank you for participating in this survey. It will take you about 5-7 minutes to finish the questionnaire. You must be 18 years of age or older to participate. Through this survey, we are interested in learning consumers' shopping behavior toward home textiles, particularly decorative home textiles. Your participation is completely voluntary. Your completion of the survey implies your consent for the researchers to use the information you provided for research purpose.

If you have any questions about this survey, please contact us by email: yxu11@ncsu.edu.

In this survey, **decorative home textiles** refer to home textiles mainly used for decorative purposes, including **curtains/draperies, decorative pillows/throws,** and **table cloth/runners.**

If you are 18 years of age or older, purchased decorative home textiles before, and agree to participate in this study, please select 'yes' below in order to proceed on to the survey. Otherwise, please select 'no'.

a. Yes. (   )
b. No. (   )

Part I

1. **How often do you buy decorative home textiles?**

   a. Once a year or less ( );
   b. 2-3 times a year ( );
   c. 4-5 times a year ( );
   d. more than 5 times a year ( ).

2. **When did you make the last purchase for decorative home textiles?**

   a. last month ( );
   b. 1-3 months ago ( );
   c. 3-6 months ago ( );
   d. 6-12 months ago ( );
   e. 1-2 years ago ( );
   f. more than 2 years ago( ).

3. **Please indicate the reasons for your last purchase of decorative home textiles?** (Select all that apply).
   a. Replace the old items ( );
   b. Move to a new residence ( );
   c. Renovation ( );
   d. Lifestyle Change ( );
   e. Sales/promotion ( );
   f. Special occasions ( );
   g. Child born ( );
   h. As gifts ( );
   i. For festivals ( );
   j. Impulse buying ( );
   k. Other reasons______.

4. **Please indicate your agreement on the following statements regarding the reasons for you to change/replace decorative home textiles.**

(1) For curtains/draperies

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
C1. I usually change the curtains/draperies when the season changes.	1	2	3	4	5
C2. Usually I will not change the curtains/draperies until they show	1	2	3	4	5

signs of being worn.					
C3. I often update the curtains/draperies to coordinate with my furniture and other decors.	1	2	3	4	5
C4. I usually change the curtains/draperies to keep up with the current fashion trend.	1	2	3	4	5

(2) For table cloth/runners

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
T1. I usually change the table cloth/runners when the season changes.	1	2	3	4	5
T2. Usually I will not change the table cloth/runners until they show signs of being worn.	1	2	3	4	5
T3. I often update the table cloth/runners to coordinate with my furniture and other decors.	1	2	3	4	5
T4. I usually change the table cloth/runners to keep up with the current fashion trend.	1	2	3	4	5

(3) For decorative pillows/throws

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
P1. I usually change the decorative pillows/throws to match the seasonal changes.	1	2	3	4	5
P2. Usually I will not change the decorative pillows/throws until they	1	2	3	4	5

show signs of being worn.					
P3. I often update the decorative pillows/throws to coordinate with my furniture and other decors.	1	2	3	4	5
P4. I usually change the decorative pillows/throws to keep up with the current fashion trend.	1	2	3	4	5

5. **Below is a list of potential sources for product information. Please indicate the importance of each source on your information search for decorative home textiles**

(1) General Sources

	Not Important	Fairly Important	Important	Quite Important	Very Important
T.V. commercials	1	2	3	4	5
Magazines/Books	1	2	3	4	5
Company websites	1	2	3	4	5
Pinterest	1	2	3	4	5
Facebook	1	2	3	4	5
Instagram	1	2	3	4	5
Catalogues	1	2	3	4	5
Online product reviews	1	2	3	4	5

(2) Physical Stores

	Not Important	Fairly Important	Important	Quite Important	Very Important
Product display in stores	1	2	3	4	5

(3) Personal Sources

	Not Important	Fairly Important	Important	Quite Important	Very Important
Family members	1	2	3	4	5
Friends/ Roommates	1	2	3	4	5
Salespersons	1	2	3	4	5

6. **Please indicate the importance of the following attributes in your purchase decision regarding decorative home textiles.**

(1) Product Attributes

	Not Important	Fairly Important	Important	Quite Important	Very Important
Style	1	2	3	4	5
Color	1	2	3	4	5
Durability	1	2	3	4	5
Comfort	1	2	3	4	5
Ease of Cleaning	1	2	3	4	5
Fiber Contents	1	2	3	4	5
Fabric Texture	1	2	3	4	5

(2) Brand Attributes

	Not Important	Fairly Important	Important	Quite Important	Very Important
Brand Name	1	2	3	4	5
Country of Origin	1	2	3	4	5
Price	1	2	3	4	5

7. **Where do you usually buy decorative home textiles? (Select all that apply)**

(1) Discount stores
a. Wal-Mart ( ); b. Target ( );
(2) Department stores
c. Sears ( ); d. JC Penney ( ); e. Macy's ( ); f. Belk ( ); g. Kohl's ( );
(3). Specialty stores
h. Bed Bath & Beyond ( ); i. Linens N Things ( ); j. IKEA ( );
(4) Online retailers
k. Wayfair ( ); l. Amazon ( );
(5) Off price retailers
m. T.J. Maxx ( ); n. Tuesday Morning ( );
(6) TV shopping
o. QVC ( ); p. HSN ( );
(7) Others________

8. **Please indicate your agreement on the following statements regarding your shopping intention toward decorative home textiles.**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

PI1. I prefer to shop online for decorative home textiles over in stores.	1	2	3	4	5
PI2. I like to shop for decorative home textiles even if I don't have any specific need.	1	2	3	4	5

9. **Please indicate your agreement on the following statements regarding online shopping for decorative home textiles.**

(1) Perceived Benefits

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
PB1. There are wider selections of products online.	1	2	3	4	5
PB2. Prices are better for products offered online.	1	2	3	4	5
PB3. Online shopping is a good way for saving time and energy.	1	2	3	4	5
PB4. It is a great advantage to be able to shop at any time of the day on the internet.	1	2	3	4	5

(2) Perceived Risks

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
PR1. I'm not comfortable with the security aspects of online shopping.	1	2	3	4	5
PR2. I don't like the fact that consumers can't feel and touch the products online.	1	2	3	4	5
PR3. I'm concerned that delivery of products purchased online takes a long time.	1	2	3	4	5

PR4. I don’t want to deal with the return process in case the products purchased online didn’t work.	1	2	3	4	5
PR5. I am concerned of the quality of products ordered online.	1	2	3	4	5
PR6. I am concerned of the potential discrepancy between the actual products received and pictures shown online.	1	2	3	4	5

Part II

10. Please indicate your agreement on the following statements on a 5-point scale.

(Price Consciousness)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
PC1. I am willing to make extra efforts to find lower prices.	1	2	3	4	5
PC2. I will shop at more than one store to take advantages of low prices.	1	2	3	4	5
PC3. I would always shop at more than one store to find low prices.	1	2	3	4	5
PC4. The money saved by finding lower prices is usually worth the time and effort.	1	2	3	4	5
PC5. The time it takes to find lower prices is usually worth the effort.	1	2	3	4	5

11. Please indicate your agreement on the following statements on a 5-point scale.

(Fashion Consciousness)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
FC1. I usually have one or more outfits of the very newest style.	1	2	3	4	5

FC2. I keep my wardrobe up-to-date with the changing style.	1	2	3	4	5
FC3. Fashionable and attractive styling is very important to me.	1	2	3	4	5
FC4. To get variety, I shop different stores and choose different brands.	1	2	3	4	5
FC5. It is fun to buy something new and exciting.	1	2	3	4	5

Part III

12. What is your age?

a. 21-25 b. 26-30 c. 31-35
d. 36-40 e. 41-45 f. 46-50
g. 51-55 h. 56-60 i. 61-65

13. What is your marital status?

a. Single
b. Married
c. Widowed
d. Separated/divorced
e. Others

14. Please check the category that indicates your household income before taxes last year.

a. Less than $15,000
b. $15,000-$29,999
c. $30,000-$39,999
d. $40,000-$49,999
e. $50,000-$69,999
f. $70,000-$99,999
g. $100,000 to $149,999
h. $150,000 to $199,999
i. $200,000 and more.

15. What is your current housing status?

a. Rent
b. Own, paying mortgage

c. Own, no mortgage
d. Staying with parents/family members

16. Please select the best that describes your education.

a. Less than high school
b. High school graduate
c. Some college, no degree
d. Associate's degree
e. Bachelor's degree
f. Graduate and above

17. What is your employment status?

a. Students
b. Unemployed
c. Part time employed
d. Full time employed

18. Which of the following best describes the community you live in?

a. Urban
b. Suburban
c. Rural

Appendix B: IRB Form for Approval of Surveying

Dear rong zhang:

Date: December 18, 2018
IRB Protocol 15446 has been assigned Exempt status
Title: Consumer Buying Behavior toward Decorative Home textiles in the U.S.
PI: Xu, Yingjiao

The research proposal named above has received administrative review and has been approved as exempt from the policy as outlined in the Code of Federal Regulations (Exemption: 46.101. Exempt b.2). Provided that the only participation of the subjects is as described in the proposal narrative, this project is exempt from further review. This approval does not expire, but any changes must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation.

1. This committee complies with requirements found in Title 45 part 46 of The Code of Federal Regulations. For NCSU projects, the Assurance Number is: FWA00003429.
2. Any changes to the protocol and supporting documents must be submitted and approved by the IRB prior to implementation.
3. If any unanticipated problems or adverse events occur, they must be reported to the IRB office within 5 business days by completing and submitting the unanticipated problem form on the IRB website: http://research.ncsu.edu/sparcs/compliance/irb/submission-guidance/.
4. Any unapproved departure from your approved IRB protocol results in non-compliance. Please find information regarding non-compliance here: http://research.ncsu.edu/sparcs-docs/irb/non-compliance_faq_sheet.pdf.

Please let us know if you have any questions.

Jennie Ofstein
NC State IRB Office
919.515.8754 (email is best)

Appendix C: Post Hoc Analysis toward Generational Cohort regarding Need Recognition

Dependent Variable			Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Q4. I usually change the curtains/draperies to keep up with the current fashion trend.	Millennials	Gen X	.112	.133	.678	-.20	.43
		Baby Boomers	.425*	.161	.023	.05	.80
	Gen X	Millennials	-.112	.133	.678	-.43	.20
		Baby Boomers	.312	.172	.165	-.09	.72
	Baby Boomers	Millennials	-.425*	.161	.023	-.80	-.05
		Gen X	-.312	.172	.165	-.72	.09
Q4. I usually change the table cloth/runners to keep up with the current fashion trend.	Millennials	Gen X	.092	.136	.776	-.23	.41
		Baby Boomers	.406*	.164	.036	.02	.79
	Gen X	Millennials	-.092	.136	.776	-.41	.23
		Baby Boomers	.314	.175	.174	-.10	.73
	baby boomers	Millennials	-.406*	.164	.036	-.79	-.02
		Gen X	-.314	.175	.174	-.73	.10
Q4. I usually change the decorative pillows/throws to keep up with the current fashion trend.	Millennials	Gen X	.182	.137	.378	-.14	.50
		Baby Boomers	.477*	.165	.011	.09	.87
	Gen X	Millennials	-.182	.137	.378	-.50	.14
		Baby Boomers	.294	.176	.219	-.12	.71
	Baby Boomers	Millennials	-.477*	.165	.011	-.87	-.09
		Gen X	-.294	.176	.219	-.71	.12

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Appendix D: Post Hoc Analysis toward Generational Cohort regarding Information Search

Dependent Variable			Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Q5. T.V commercials	Millennials	Gen X	.235	.120	.126	-.05	.52
		Baby Boomers	-.260	.145	.175	-.60	.08
	Gen X	Millennials	-.235	.120	.126	-.52	.05
		Baby Boomers	.495*	.155	.004	-.86	-.13
	Baby Boomers	Millennials	.260	.145	.175	-.08	.60
		Gen X	.495*	.155	.004	.13	.86
Q5. Company websites	Millennials	Gen X	.305	.139	.073	-.02	.63
		Baby Boomers	.783*	.167	.000	.39	1.18
	Gen X	Millennials	-.305	.139	.073	-.63	.02
		Baby Boomers	.478*	.179	.021	.06	.90
	baby boomers	Millennials	-.783*	.167	.000	-1.18	-.39
		Gen X	-.478*	.179	.021	-.90	-.06
Q5. Pinterest	Millennials	Gen X	.609*	.153	.000	.25	.97
		Baby Boomers	.790*	.185	.000	.36	1.22
	Gen X	Millennials	-.609*	.153	.000	-.97	-.25
		Baby Boomers	.181	.197	.629	-.28	.65
	Baby Boomers	Millennials	-.790*	.185	.000	-1.22	-.36
		Gen X	-.181	.197	.629	-.65	.28
Q5. Online product review	Millennials	Gen X	.481*	.140	.002	.15	.81
		Baby Boomers	1.025*	.168	.000	.63	1.42
	Gen X	Millennials	-.481*	.140	.002	-.81	-.15
		Baby Boomers	.543*	.180	.008	.12	.97
	baby boomers	Millennials	-.1.025*	.168	.000	-1.42	-.63
		Gen X	-.543*	.180	.008	-.97	-.12
Q5. Friends /Roommates	Millennials	Gen X	.394*	.135	.011	.08	.71
		Baby Boomers	.735*	.163	.000	.35	1.12
	Gen X	Millennials	-.394*	.135	.011	-.71	-.08
		Baby Boomers	.342	.174	.123	-.07	.75
	Baby Boomers	Millennials	-.735*	.163	.000	-.1.12	-.35
		Gen X	-.342	.174	.123	-.75	.07

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Appendix E: Post Hoc Analysis toward Generational Cohort regarding Evaluation of Alternatives

Dependent Variable			Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Q6. Style	Millennials	Gen X	-.090	.119	.729	-.37	.19
		Baby Boomers	.375*	.143	.043	.08	.80
	Gen X	Millennials	.040	.119	.729	-.19	.37
		Baby Boomers	.415*	.153	.019	.06	.77
	Baby Boomers	Millennials	-.375*	.143	.043	-.80	-.08
		Gen X	-.415*	.153	.019	-.77	-.06
Q6. Brand Name	Millennials	Gen X	.204	.128	.361	-.12	.48
		Baby Boomers	.570*	.154	.001	.21	.93
	Gen X	Millennials	-.204	.128	.361	-.48	.13
		Baby Boomers	.366	.165	.082	-.08	.69
	baby boomers	Millennials	-.570*	.154	.001	-.93	-.21
		Gen X	-.366	.165	.082	-.69	.08
Q6. Price	Millennials	Gen X	-.029	.119	.968	-.31	.25
		Baby Boomers	.521*	.144	.001	.18	.86
	Gen X	Millennials	.029	.119	.968	-.25	.31
		Baby Boomers	.550*	.154	.001	.19	.91
	Baby Boomers	Millennials	-.521*	.144	.001	-.86	-.18
		Gen X	-.550*	.154	.001	-.91	-.19

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Appendix F: Post Hoc Analysis toward Generational Cohort regarding Purchase Decision

Dependent Variable			Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Q8. I prefer to shop online for decorative home textiles over in stores	Millennials	Gen X	.173	.116	.293	-.10	.45
		Baby Boomers	.366*	.140	.025	.04	.69
	Gen X	Millennials	-.173	.116	.293	-.45	.10
		Baby Boomers	.192	.149	.402	-.16	.54
	Baby Boomers	Millennials	-.366*	.140	.025	-.69	-.04
		Gen X	-.192	.149	.402	-.54	.16
Q9. Perceived Risks_Average	Millennials	Gen X	.257*	.081	.005	.06	.45
		Baby Boomers	.162	.098	.222	-.07	.39
	Gen X	Millennials	-.257*	.081	.005	-.45	-.06
		Baby Boomers	-.094	.105	.644	-.34	.15
	Baby Boomers	Millennials	-.163	.098	.222	-.39	.07
		Gen X	.094	.105	.644	-.15	.34

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.