

Chapter 58

Exploring Female Hispanic Consumers' Adoption of Mobile Social Media in the U.S.

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ABSTRACT

U.S. Hispanic purchasing power is estimated to reach \$1.5 trillion by 2015. Because of this growing importance, there has been a surge of Hispanic consumer behavior research in recent years. Latinas account for 49.5 percent of the U.S. Hispanic population and increasingly become tech-savvy to adopt new mobile social networking technologies. In spite of their growing importance, there still lacks a thorough examination on factors affecting female Hispanic consumers' decision-making process related to mobile social media applications. This book chapter collected qualitative in-depth interview data that were interpreted from Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and TAM2 as theoretical lenses. Four major themes were identified: 1) family and peer influence; 2) perceived functional benefits of mobile social media; 3) Latinas as a primary decision-maker to adopt; 4) cultural and sub-cultural influence.

INTRODUCTION

Emerging Hispanic Female Consumer Market

The population of Hispanics has grown to 52 million in the United States (The Nielsen Company, 2013a). Hispanic purchasing power has grown from \$210 billion in 1990 to over \$957 billion in 2010, \$1.2 trillion in 2013, and estimated to reach \$1.5 trillion by 2015 (The Nielsen Company, 2013a; Rodriguez, 2015; Synovate, 2010; U.S. Census Bureau, 2011; Villarrel, 2014). The 2015 estimate is predicted to account for 11% of the total US purchasing power, according to the Selig Center (Villarrel, 2014). Hispanic women, also known as *Latinas*, are found to be the growth engine of the U.S. female population and are

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-5201-7.ch058

expected to represent 30% of the total female population in the U.S. by 2060 (The Nielsen Company, 2013a). Female Hispanic consumers account for 49.5 percent of the U.S. Hispanic population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Those who fall between 20 to 29 years old are 16.15%, while those whose age is above 65 years old are 6.7% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). *Latinas*, as a consumer segment with growth importance, are found to be more educated, connected, tech-savvy, independent, and with increasing economic power (The Nielsen Company, 2013a, b). In the Nielsen's report (2013a, b), *Latina Power Shift*, eighty-six percent of Latina women are found to make important household purchasing decisions, such as auto, home, and financial services (The Nielsen Company, 2013a, b). Related to the adoption of new technologies, the same Nielsen report found that 33% of home electronics and 38% of personal electronics are determined primarily by female Hispanic consumers alone (The Nielsen Company, 2013b).

Compared with White and Black ethnic groups, Hispanic consumers have similar adoption patterns of Internet and cell phone from 2009 to 2012 (Lopez, Gonzalez-Barrera, & Patten, 2013). According to Pew Internet Research Project (2014), 92% of Hispanic consumers own cell phone. Cell phone ownership among female Hispanic consumers is 88% (Pew Internet Research Project, 2014). Latinas who have adopted Internet technology are reported to be more likely to own their smartphone (77%), when compared with non-Hispanic white counterparts (55%) (The Nielsen Company, 2013b). Because of the tendency to adopt new communication technologies, 56% of female Hispanic consumers use social networking to share information while 44% of them use mobile apps in their smartphone devices (The Nielsen Company, 2013b).

BACKGROUND

The Convergence of Mobile and Social Media

Since its introduction in the late 20th century, mobile communications and social media have played an indispensable part in contemporary human experiences. According to a recent Pew Internet Research Project report (2014, January), 58% of American adults own a smartphone, while 90% of American adults have a cell phone. Many also own Wi-Fi enabled e-Readers (32%) and tablets (42%) (Pew Internet Research Project, 2014). Cell phone ownership is observably correlated with age, education level, and household income (Pew Internet Research Project, 2014). Those who are younger tend to own cell phone. Over 97% of those who are below 50 years old own cell phone, when compared with 81% of those above 50 years old (Pew Internet Research Project, 2014). Over 90% of those who receive college education and with a higher household income (\$50,000 above) tend to own cell phone (Pew Internet Research Project, 2014).

Social networking sites such as Facebook are developed as "a social utility that helps people communicate more efficiently with their friends, family and coworkers" (Facebook, 2004). With the popularity of mobile devices, social networking media have obtained their mobility by allowing users to check their social media applications anytime they prefer. Adding to the increasingly interconnected media eco-systems is the development of mobile social media as a new communication platform (Häsel, 2011). As Lee (2013) observes, the convergence of smartphone and social networking services (henceforth, SNSs) has enabled users to access their Facebook and other social media platforms anywhere and anytime, which is likely to increase overall usage. The latest report on digital, social and mobile media (We Are Social, 2015) confirms this diffusion trend at a global scale. The global penetration rate of mobile

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