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CONSUMER INNOVATIVENESS AND GLB: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Gays are often assumed to be innovators, but academic evidence for this assumption is lacking. Therefore, the objective of this paper was to test whether gays and heterosexuals really differ in innate and realized innovativeness, and whether the relations between the variables in an innovativeness model differ for both groups. An internet survey involving 833 respondents was carried out. MANOVA results revealed an important interaction effect between gender and sexual orientation. Gay men seem slightly more innovative than heterosexual men, but the opposite holds true for gay and heterosexual women. The innovativeness model did not differ for the four different groups (gay men, heterosexual men, gay women, heterosexual women).

INTRODUCTION

Many companies survive because of the development and the introduction of successful new products¹. According to Hultink and Schoormans (2004), 40 to 50 percent of the return and the profit of US and UK companies comes from products introduced on the market less than five years ago. However, new products often do not find their way to buyers: Hultink and Schoormans (2004) state that 30 to 50% of new products fail. The diffusion literature (e.g. Rogers, 2003) counts on innovative people to make a new product successful. When these innovative persons are known, a deliberate and efficient communication campaign can be developed and innovators can be targeted (Fell et al. 2003). But, who are innovative persons and how can they be effectively targeted? Marketers often try to reach and attract them via mass media communication and mass sampling, without much success though. Therefore, it would be interesting to find a subgroup within the society that is significantly more innovative than others. In this respect, several non-academic articles refer to the assumed innovativeness of gays, lesbians and bisexuals (GLB) (Kolko et al. 2003, Wilke 2000, Marketresearch.com 2000). GLB are supposed to be trendsetters and are called “the avant-garde of consumers” (Bilsen et al., 2000, p. 242). Kolko et al. (2003) state that “gays lead in the adoption of a whole host of emerging technologies and almost every online activity [...]” (p.2).

Nevertheless, to our knowledge, no academic research has been carried out measuring the innovativeness of GLB. Therefore, the purpose of this article was to investigate the innovativeness of both GLB and heterosexuals and to see whether empirical evidence can be found for the myth that GLB are more innovative and trendsetting than heterosexuals. Moreover, also the extent to which this innovativeness translates in new product trial was studied.

¹ Products are defined in a broad sense, referring to both physical goods and services.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Realised and innate innovativeness

Rogers (2003, p. 12) defines an innovation as “[...] an idea, practice or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption”. In this paper, innovations are limited to consumer goods and services experienced as new by individuals.

Rogers and Shoemaker (1971) refer to innovativeness as “the degree to which an individual is relatively earlier in adopting new ideas than the average member of his social system” (p. 27). This is a definition on the behavioral level of innovativeness and thereby observable. It is known as the diffusion process of a product (cf. Rogers, 2003) and also called ‘realised innovativeness’. However, Midgley and Dowling (1978) point out that innovativeness is a hypothetical construct and by definition not observable. ‘Realised innovativeness’, i.e. the acquisition of new products (which is measurable as part of the adoption process of a specific product) can be interpreted as a result of innovativeness. Midgley and Dowling (1978) call the latter construct ‘innate innovativeness’. It is situated on a higher, more abstract level than ‘realised innovativeness’ and is not linked with a specific innovation as is the case for ‘realised innovativeness’ (Steenkamp, et al., 1999). According to Midgley and Dowling (1978), ‘innate innovativeness’ should have an impact on ‘realised innovativeness’ of most products.

Model of consumer innovativeness

Midgley (1977) defines ‘innate innovativeness’ as “the degree to which an individual makes innovation decisions independently from the communicated experience of others” (p. 49). This definition implies a link between ‘innate innovativeness’ and the amount of communication needed and used before making a decision: the more innovative an individual, the less likely this person will use the communicated experiences of others before adopting the innovation. Innovative people tend to experience less influence of subjective norms than others within the society. This is also validated in research of Bearden, et al. (1986), but the correlation between independence of judgment and realized innovativeness is weak.

Hirschman (1980) developed a similar model as Midgley and Dowling. Hirschman also makes a distinction between an observable and an innate, unobservable part: realised innovativeness is influenced by *actualized novelty seeking*, which is the observable search for new information before acquiring an innovation. *Actualized novelty seeking* (ANS) is in its turn influenced by inherent novelty seeking or the wish to collect new information, called *consumer novelty seeking* (CNS) by Manning et al. (1995). They define CNS as “[...] the desire to seek out new product information” (p. 330). The independence of others, incorporated in the definition by Midgley (1977) is called *Consumer Independent Judgement Making* (CIJM) in the article of Manning, et al. (1995).

For an innovation, the diffusion process can go faster if both CNS and CIJM are high. If a person only knows something about the innovation (= CNS), without possessing CIJM (because that person needs subjective information from the social system), then (s)he will not be an innovative person. To conclude, two conditions must be satisfied before an individual can be called innovative: CNS and CIJM must feed the adoption process.

Another individual differences variable that is possibly related with innovativeness is the Desire for Unique Consumer Products (DUCP) (Lynn and Harris, 1997). Their DUCP scale measures how “consumers differ in the extent to which they hold as a personal goal the acquisition and possession of consumer goods, services, and experiences that few others possess” (p. 602). This Desire for Unique Consumer Products has a strong correlation with status and prestige, both of which are assumed to be antecedents of innovativeness (Rogers, 2003). As a consequence, DUCP is added to the model of Hirschman (1980) to come to the following model of consumer innovativeness:

Insert Figure 1 about here

GLB and innovativeness

Academic research on the group of gays, lesbians, and bisexuals is scarce (Burnett, 2000). Delozier and Rodrigue (1996) state it as follows: “The very difficult

problem is that we have *very* little research on gays and their purchasing behaviour. We need more consumer research on this minority.” (p. 210). The first research investigating the consumer behaviour of GLB dates only from 1988 (Lund, 2002). The reason for this probably lies in the taboo ruling over this topic and the involving difficult data gathering. Another issue with this kind of research is the out-of-the-closet problem. Only those who are willing to identify themselves as GLB in questionnaires will be included, which creates a possible bias (Rudd 1996). Another possible problem discussed in research concerns the profitability of this segment. Fugate (1993) labels this segment as unprofitable because certain conditions for a profitable market segment are not fulfilled: he considers the GLB segment as not identifiable, accessible and large or stable enough. However, according to Peñaloza (1996), marketers do not have to identify a possible consumer in order to reach him/her. The GLB market has become more and more accessible because of the emerging specialized media (Smith, 1995). The subgroup of GLB is assumed to exist of 5 to 10% of the total population (Vincke and Stevens, 1999; Kinsey et al. 1948), and they are mostly concentrated in large cities. Peñaloza (1996) considers these figures as large enough to be a profitable market segment.

How innovative are GLB? Besides some assertions of companies and pseudo-scientific research in magazines, very little academic research refers to a more innovative attitude of GLB in comparison with heterosexuals. Nevertheless, in almost every study the different lifestyle of this community is described, which leads to the consideration of GLB as being a subculture. They seem to have certain symbolic style values, which they use to express their willingness to belong to the GLB community. This community wants to express a style, different from the common culture, with its own specific norms and values (Freitas et al. 1996). A respondent expressed it as follows: “Every now and then I like having certain things that are easily identifiable as being part of the community” (Freitas et al. 1996, p. 98). It can be seen as a signal system within the specific subculture (Rudd, 1996).

GLB mostly want to be part of their own GLB reference group. Hence they create an own identifiable, more unique look. A subcultural environment is created. Therefore innovations can help them to become visible in the anonymous world. According to Grewal et al. (2000), (visible) innovations are often a signal of the willingness to

participate in and belong to a specific reference group. As a consequence, it is possible that (visible) innovations are more important to GLB than to other people.

Some wonder whether the GLB community is capable of diffusing the innovation to the general public, being the final objective of the marketer of an innovation. According to Freitas et al. (1996), they do are capable: GLB are often seen as a diffuser of a style to the public. They are not separated from the rest of the world, the subculture borders are obviously not closed: almost all GLB mix with heterosexual people resulting in sharing their lifestyle and the new products used with the heterosexual people. Examples of such products used to be leather coats and Doc Martens shoes that were, before being widespread, typical GLB products. A young gay expresses it as follows: “They rip us off. If we look fabulous, they take it away from us. It is fine with me, because we will come up with a new one.” (Freitas, et al., 1996, p. 100). Also Rudd (1996) mentions the trendsetting characteristic of the homosexual subculture influencing other (heterosexual) cultures. According to homosexual students, the most innovative apparel styles were seen as most liberal, extrovert, impulsive, unreliable, irresponsible and most gay. A second study proved that significantly more homosexuals preferred this type of innovative/trendy apparel style than heterosexual men did. Gays lean toward a more image-sensitive and distinguishing presentation of themselves to others according to this research. Rudd (1996) concludes that gays are trendier, more creative and look out more for new manners to present themselves and to react against the outside, heterosexual, world.

According to Delozier and Rodrigue (1996), GLB attach more importance to social networks than heterosexuals do. As a consequence, they also believe that the GLB group could be used as diffusors of innovations. Figure 2 explains how the diffusion process could work.

Insert Figure 2 about here

Finally, it should be mentioned that previous studies mainly focussed on male gays (Freitas et al. 1996; Rudd 1996). The reason for this would be that lesbians are considered as less prosperous, less known and reachable (Freitas et al. 1996). Moreover,

Bowes (1996) argues that the needs of lesbians and gay men are completely different and these two groups should be distinctly investigated. The few studies that did investigate consumer behaviour, indeed found significant differences between gays and lesbians. For example, in Burnett's (2000) study on feelings about advertising and media of heterosexuals and homosexuals, gender appeared to be a significant moderating variable. Kolko et al. (2003) also refer to a study exploring ownership of new technological devices, in which the gay effect is different for men than for women: generally, gay men are responsible for the significant higher overall adoption rate, whereas lesbians do not significantly differ from heterosexual women.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES

Our research objectives are twofold. A first objective is to compare all variables in the proposed model of consumer innovativeness, i.e. the potential antecedent of innovativeness (Desire for Unique Consumer Products), the elements of 'innate innovativeness' (Consumer Novelty Seeking, Actualized Novelty Seeking and Consumer Independent Judgement Making), and the elements of 'realized innovativeness' (New Product Awareness and New Product Trial) between GLB and heterosexuals. Our second objective is to test the underlying relationships of the model for both GLB and heterosexuals to investigate whether the same relationships hold. Since previous studies make reference of differences between gays and lesbians (Freitas et al. 1996; Rudd 1996; Burnett 2000 and Kolko et al. 2003), gender was included as a moderating variable.

Expert interviews (Vincke 2001; Moelans 2001) with people very knowledgeable on the GLB culture, confirmed the conclusions drawn by Freitas et al. (1996): GLB want to distinguish themselves from heterosexuals to make it possible to identify each other. This identification seems necessary because of the anonymity in this subgroup, so a signal is needed to recognise each other. Unique consumer products can be of some help to achieve this. Therefore, it is hypothesized that GLB want to be more unique than heterosexual people.

H1: GLB have a higher DUCP than heterosexuals.

“Consequences of a higher degree of ‘Desire for Unique Consumer Products’ are a higher tendency to purchase and own rare, innovative, adapted,... products” (Lynn and Harris 1997, p. 604). Tian et al. (2001) draw the same conclusion. If GLB indeed have a higher DUCP than heterosexuals, they can be expected to be more innovative as well. Several enterprise-supported studies (Kolko et al. 2003, Wilke 2000, Marketresearch.com 2000) and a few academic studies (cf. Rudd 1996) stated that GLB are more innovative and trendsetting. Rudd also found that gays shop more often and like it much more than heterosexual men do. They see shopping as a method to collect information about new trends without necessary buying anything. This can be seen as an element of *Novelty Seeking*, which is an important part of innovativeness. However, the concept of innovativeness with GLB was never subject of research to our knowledge.

H2: GLB have a higher degree of innovativeness than heterosexuals

H2a: GLB have a higher degree of CNS than heterosexuals.

H2b: GLB have a higher degree of ANS than heterosexuals.

H2c: GLB have a higher degree of CIJM than heterosexuals.

On the basis of the consumer innovativeness model (Figure 1), it can be inferred that, if GLB are more innovative, they will know and have bought more products or services than heterosexuals know/have bought. Previous research has confirmed this relation (cf. Rogers, 2003), although this relation was often weak.

H3: GLB know more innovations than heterosexuals do.

H4: GLB buy more innovations than heterosexuals do.

If GLB buy innovations to be part of their subculture, they will buy these innovations as soon as they are aware of them. Our assumption is that heterosexuals will not have the same urge to buy (almost) every new product they know whereas homosexuals will have this tendency more in order to belong to their subculture.

H5: GLB have a higher ratio trial/awareness than heterosexuals have.

Finally, it is unclear whether the innovativeness in Figure 1 differs for heterosexuals and GLB. Since there are no indications that the relationships would be different for both subgroups, the following hypothesis is put forward:

H6: The relationships between the constructs in the consumer innovativeness model are the same for heterosexuals and GLB.

METHODOLOGY

Respondents

An internet survey was used because of its unoffensive (and therefore most anonymous looking) character. All Flemish associations (n=50) associated with FWH (=Federation Workgroups Homosexuality) were asked to publish a short note in their newsletters asking members to participate in the study. Once the questionnaire was on line, the associations mentioned it on their websites and provided a hyperlink to it. Heterosexual respondents were gathered via the internet as well to minimize selection bias. Several newsgroups and forums were used with an identical motivational text and hyperlink. The anonymous survey was on line during 5 weeks receiving 1108 visits which resulted in 833 useful questionnaires.

One third of the respondents were women (45% gay), two third were men (59% gay). 68% of the respondents were younger than 31. Only 3% was older than 50. 56% of all respondents had a college or university degree. The sample obviously is not representative for the general population of homosexuals and heterosexuals. This does not pose a problem, though, since the objective is to compare GLB and heterosexuals and both samples show a pretty similar demographic profile. Male and female heterosexuals do not significantly differ from male and female homosexuals with respect to age (resp. $\chi^2=2.056$, $p=.725$ and $\chi^2=2.415$, $p=.660$; $df=4$), place of residence (province) (resp. $\chi^2=8.382$, $p=.079$ and $\chi^2=4.688$, $p=.455$; $df=4$), education (resp. $\chi^2=9.544$, $p=.216$ and $\chi^2=3.825$, $p=.800$; $df=7$) or income (resp. $\chi^2=1.192$, $p=.879$ and $\chi^2=7.337$, $p=.291$; $df=7-6$). Concerning family situation, because homosexual couples with children are rather rare, the difference obviously was significant (resp. $\chi^2=53.89$ and 22.64 , both $p<.001$;

df=5). Although the previous findings are in contrast with those of some non-academic studies (Kolko et al. 2003, Wilke 2000, Marketresearch.com 2000), they are in line with the academic studies of Badgett (1998) and Carpenter (2005), who did not find a relationship between sexual orientation and education or income either. On the other hand, the gay men in the sample did leave the parental home earlier than heterosexual men did. Gay men live less on the countryside as well and prefer living in an urban area ($\chi^2=25.024$, $p<.001$; $df=2$). This is found in earlier research as well (e.g. Varnell 2001, Rudd 1996). Finally, lesbians leave home at a later age and are equally likely to live in urban areas than their heterosexual counterparts ($\chi^2=3.904$, $p=.142$; $df=2$).

Measures and procedure

The real objective of the study was covered up to avoid a social desirability bias. Therefore, respondents were told that the goal of the study was to measure consumer behaviour. In the first question respondents were asked to indicate for 34 products (e.g. digital camera, liquid butter, sun lotion as spray, vacuum cleaner without dust bag, MP3-player, new radio station, internet banking and buying,...) whether they knew the product/service (yes/no or unsure). Following Manning, et al. (1995), “unsure” was interpreted as a “no” answer. Respondents were also asked whether they had bought these innovations or not (trial). The list of 34 products was the result of a brainstorm session with ten undergraduate students. Some of the products that came up were withdrawn because not everybody could use it (e.g. innovations within female hygiene products), not everyone could buy it (luxury products, products specifically used by persons within certain age ranges) or products typically measuring fashion trends.

Next, the constructs depicted in the consumer innovativeness model were measured. Desire for Unique Consumer Products (DUCP, 8 items, $\alpha=.87$, Lynn and Harris 1996), Consumer Novelty Seeking (CNS, 8 items, $\alpha=.93$, Manning, et al. 1995) and Consumer Independent Judgement Making (CIJM, 6 items, $\alpha=.84$, Manning, et al. 1995) were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). The Actualized Novelty Seeking scale (ANS, $\alpha=.25$, Hirschman 1980) was measured by 5 items (number of newspapers and magazines subscriptions, number of books bought or hired last month, number of cinema visits and number of

information requests to sellers, friends or family last month). As a consequence of the low cronbach's alpha, the latter construct was left out of the analyses.

Finally, respondents had to indicate their socio demographic characteristics (gender, age, income, and place of residence) and sexual inclination. The latter measure was based on research by the Kinsey Institute (Kinsey et al. 1948). They assume that people do not represent two discrete populations, heterosexual versus homosexual. On the contrary, sexual orientation is seen as a continuum. Therefore, a seven-point Heterosexual-Homosexual Rating Scale was used. The seven categories were afterwards recoded into a homosexual, bisexual and heterosexual group (cf. Table 1). Only the homosexual and heterosexual groups were used for further analysis because the bisexual group was too small (n=80).

Insert Table 1 about here

RESULTS

In view of the hypotheses, a MANOVA-analysis was conducted to test whether homosexuals and heterosexuals differed significantly in DUCP (H1), innovativeness (CNS and CIJM) (H2a and H2c), and adoption behaviour (awareness (H3), trial (H4) and trial/awareness ratio (H5)). Next, a structural equation model was used to verify whether the relations between these constructs differed when dealing with a gay population or a heterosexual population (H6).

Multivariate analysis of variance taking sexual orientation and gender as independent variables and DUCP, CNS, CIJM, awareness, trial and trial/awareness as dependent variables showed a significant main effect of both sexual orientation ($F=2.70$, $p=.014$) and gender ($F=12.04$, $p<.001$), as well as a significant interaction effect ($F=5.07$, $p<.001$) (see Table 2 and Figure 3).

Insert Table 2 and Figure 3 about here

Univariate analyses of variance indicate that sexual orientation was significant only for CIJM. GLB have a lower level of CIJM as compared to heterosexuals, rejecting H2c. As a consequence H1, H2a, H3, H4 and H5 have to be rejected as well. Gender was significant for DUCP, CNS and awareness. Most important, however, are the several interaction effects between sexual orientation and gender (see Table 3).

Insert Table 3 about here

a) Comparison between gays and heterosexual men

According to Table 3, there seem to be two significant differences. Gay men apparently want to be more unique in their consumption in comparison with heterosexual men. Another significant difference is trial of new products: gays bought innovations more often than did heterosexual men. Furthermore, gays tended to have a larger ANS (not reported in Table 3) than their heterosexual congener. Since this scale was not reliable, the items were analyzed separately. Gays appeared to buy significantly more magazines and went more often to the movies than heterosexual men did. Homosexuals and heterosexuals did not significantly differ on the other ANS items although the difference pointed in the direction predicted by hypothesis H2b. The other constructs did not show significant differences, although the differences point in the right direction predicted by H2b. To conclude, for male respondents, support was found only for H1 and H4.

b) Comparison between lesbians and heterosexual women

Opposite conclusions can be drawn for the women. Lesbians seem to be less innovative than heterosexual women. Both CNS and CIJM was significantly lower for lesbians than for heterosexual women. This means that lesbians are looking for novelties less and if they want to buy an innovation, they will be more dependent from others than heterosexual women. Although lesbians and heterosexual women did not differ concerning their knowledge about innovations, lesbians tried out significantly less innovations than heterosexual women. More specifically, heterosexual women had

bought 36% of the known 34 innovations incorporated in the study, while lesbians had only bought 29.9% of them. Summarized, none of the hypotheses could be confirmed for lesbians. On the contrary, lesbians appeared to be less innovative and tried out less innovations than heterosexual women did.

Finally, the sample was split into four groups (male heterosexuals, male homosexuals, female heterosexuals and female homosexuals) to test the innovativeness model on measurement and structural invariance for the four different groups using AMOS (H6). Because unidimensional scales were used and the focus was on the relations among the constructs (instead of on the constructs themselves), the items of each latent variable could be aggregated into three parcels as stipulated in Little et al. (2002). First, the measurement and structural model for the full sample was tested. The measurement model for the different constructs show a good composite reliability (DUCP=.74, CNS=.75 and CIJM=.74). The full structural model shows an acceptable fit (see unconstrained model in Table 4). Next, nested models were specified to test for measurement and structural invariance (Steenkamp and Baumgartner 1998, Weijters et al. 2005). The fit indices are shown in Table 4.

Insert Table 4 about here

Evaluating the chi square difference test (Jöreskog 1971), it appeared to be insignificant for each nested model. As a consequence, the invariance hypothesis stating that the model is the same for all four groups, can be accepted. This finding supports H6. The exact relationships between the constructs are depicted in Figure 4.

Insert Figure 4 about here

DISCUSSION

As suggested earlier, also the results of this study indicate that gay women react completely different from their heterosexual counterparts as far as innovativeness and adoption is concerned than gay men do. Bowes (1996) seems right when stating that gays and lesbians should always be investigated separately, a conclusion also drawn by Kolko et al. (2003) and Burnett (2000) (cf. supra).

As a general conclusion, gay men appear to search more for unique products than heterosexual men do resulting in a (small) product innovativeness advantage. This leads to a significantly higher purchase of new products. This effect of sexual orientation does not apply to the women in the sample: lesbians are significantly less innovative, since their CNS and CIJM are lower than female heterosexuals. This results in a lower adoption rate for lesbians in contrast with a higher adoption for heterosexual females. In sum, there appears to be an important interaction effect between sexual orientation and gender for four of the six constructs.

To find a plausible reason for this remarkable result, first, a closer look was taken on the differences between gay men and gay women. As mentioned before, the gays in this study lived more in urban areas than lesbians did and the lesbians lived more and longer with their parents than gay men did. Lesbians' income was also significantly lower than the income of gay men. The other socio demographic data did not result in a significant difference. When introducing income and urbanisation as a covariate, the interaction effects remained present though. Taking a closer look at how long gay people lived with their parents, Figure 5 shows that, when excluding the respondents living with their parents, the significant difference of trial in the relation sexual orientation-gender even became more pronounced. This was the case for all constructs, apart from CIJM. The significant difference of CIJM between heterosexual and homosexual women disappeared when living with the parents was taken into account. The overall conclusion that can be drawn, though, is that the differences between gay men and gay women with respect to income, urbanization or living with the parents or not, cannot explain the differences found in innovativeness.

Insert Figure 5 about here

A three-way interaction between gender, sexual orientation and living with the parents or not, emerged for the dependent variables CNS ($F=4.837$, $p=.028$) and trial ($F=4.889$, $p=.027$). For example, heterosexual men living with their parents had tried more products than those not living at the parental home. For gay men, both groups scored the same. For heterosexual women it was the other way round because those living with their parents bought fewer innovations than those not living with the parents. Lesbian women did the contrary: those living with their parents bought significantly more innovative products than gay women who already had left the parental home. In this sense, lesbians appeared to display the behaviour of a typical heterosexual man.

Another potential explanatory variable could be the type of products investigated. Therefore, an additional study was set up to investigate the impact of certain product characteristics. Seven expert judges of a university marketing department who were unaware of the purpose of the study, rated each product on the 12-item Hedonic/Utilitarian scale from Voss et al. (2003), and the Private/Public and Necessity/Luxury dimensions from Bearden and Etzel (1982) (interjudge reliabilities ranged between .705 and .937). The first scale is two-dimensional: *“the first dimension is a hedonic dimension resulting from sensations derived from the experience of using products, and the second is a utilitarian dimension derived from functions performed by products”* (Voss et al., 2003) (Cronbach’s Alpha = .95, for both dimensions). The second scale is two-dimensional as well: the first dimension is a distinction between private and public products, i.e. the place of usage of an item that is of importance. The second dimension is an expression of the exclusivity of an item operationalized as the distinction between luxuries and necessities.

Univariate analyses of variance taking sexual orientation and gender as independent variables and level of hedonic, utilitarian, public and luxury product character as dependent variables, showed that gays and lesbians buy less utilitarian and more luxurious and public products than heterosexuals do ($F_{\text{utilitarian}}=12.851$, $p<.001$; $F_{\text{luxury}}=4.852$, $p=.028$; $F_{\text{public}}=4.057$, $p=.044$). In addition, products bought by male respondents are significantly more hedonic ($F= 9.480$, $p=.002$) and utilitarian ($F=20.632$,

$p < .001$) than products bought by women. However, none of the interaction effects appeared to be significant. On the basis of these results, the conclusion can be drawn that the type of products used in a study can partly determine the results of that study. It is clear that it is important for future research to take product category into account when investigating innovativeness of different target groups. Unfortunately, these results do not offer an explanation for the differences found between gay men and women in the present study. More research is called for to better understand the motivations and behaviour of both groups.

According to the model test, the major difference between figure 4 and figure 1 are the insignificant links between DUCP and CIJM on the one hand, and *New Product Trial* on the other. It has to be mentioned though, that the relationship between CIJM and trial, originally reported by Manning et al. (1995), was very weak in their study ($p = .06$, $r = .19$). Furthermore, Roehrich (2004) also drew the conclusion on the basis of research done by Hirschman (1980) and Le Louarn (1997) that “[...] autonomy in decision may probably be neither an antecedent nor a facet of innovativeness.” (p. 672). As a consequence, the current result do not deviate that much from previous findings as it might seem at first sight.

CONCLUSION

Some multinationals target GLB in their advertising. However, the multinationals doing so are rare and when advertising is targeted towards this segment, it is often with new products or innovations within the new technology sector (e.g. advertising for the newest tri-band mobile phones, new digital cameras, new type of cars,...). Why they do so, is a mystery, because (quantitative) research of innovativeness in GLB has rarely been carried out. In this study the construct of innovativeness was measured by means of two scales: on the one hand *consumer novelty seeking* (CNS) measuring to what extent people search for new consumer products and on the other hand *consumer independent judgement making* (CIJM) measuring the independence of people when taking buying decisions. A higher innovativeness is assumed to lead to a higher adoption rate: innovative people are supposed to buy new products faster and to possess more innovations on a certain point in time. This adoption is measured as well (knowledge and

trial of the new products). A possible antecedent for this innovativeness was found in previous research, namely *desire for unique consumer products* (DUCP). Analyses of the differences of these constructs according to sexual orientation indicated that gay men scored higher than heterosexual men on innovativeness, but the difference was not significant. Nevertheless, the need for unique consumer products (DUCP) was significantly higher for gays than for heterosexual men. That is probably why gay men do purchase new products significantly more often (trial) than heterosexual men do. However, knowledge of these new products was not significantly different between both groups. As far as women are concerned, lesbians were noticeably less innovative in comparison with heterosexual women. The first group was not seeking for new products that much (lower CNS) and were more dependent on others for buying decisions. Hence, trial for heterosexual women was significantly higher in comparison with lesbians.

Practical relevance from this study lies in the product communication of innovations. It seems that it is generally not more interesting for marketers to target their advertising for new products or services towards gays to have an efficient campaign. Gays will not buy the innovation faster than heterosexual men will do once they know about that innovation (trial/awareness). However, as their DUCP is significantly higher, products that radiate uniqueness as a product feature or express this in their communication, can possibly induce a faster adoption by gays. This preference for unique products is confirmed by the results of the explorative product research, where GLB preferred more luxurious and publicly consumed innovations (cfr. Grewal et al., 2000). This is already one condition fulfilled for a successful launching campaign for unique products. If gays indeed have a broad and diverse acquaintance group, then a second condition is fulfilled: less innovative persons, who need more subjective information from others, do come in contact faster with these new products. This can lead to a broader and faster diffusion of the innovation. This last condition still needs further research though.

It seems, from this research, that lesbians are not interesting for marketers promoting innovations. Hence, this study is another proof that men and women are different, also as far as the impact of sexual orientation is concerned. Therefore, it is suggested to certainly take gender into account in future studies.

Research limitations

Independence judgement making (CIJM) was measured by means of a standard scale. This scale does not distinguish between independence among heterosexuals on the one hand and independence among GLB on the other hand. This could be of importance for subgroups, such as GLB. Members of a subgroup are influenced probably more by co-members (here: GLB) than by outsiders (here: heterosexuals). GLB who have other GLB in mind when answering those CIJM-questions probably have a lower score on this scale as compared to those having heterosexuals in mind. The reason for this is the need for being different from heterosexual people. Tian and McKenzie (2001) tested this for non-specific and specific referents and obtained a correlation between both groups of .92 or .93. So it seems that “[...] *use of a general referent did not lead to greater variability in perceptions of the referent across items or across respondents than did the use of specific referents*” (p. 174). However, to our knowledge this has not been tested for GLB yet. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the standard deviation of CIJM in the current study is not larger for GLBs in comparison with heterosexuals. So, probably the use of the traditional CIJM scale has not caused a severe problem.

Another limitation concerns the selection of respondents of ‘hidden’ populations. Obviously, an entire ad-random sample is impossible (Rudd, 1996; Vincke and Stevens, 1999). To minimize this problem, different homosexual organizations were contacted and asked for their cooperation. However, homosexuals who do not visit the websites of these organizations were probably not reached.

Finally, every study measuring awareness and trial on the basis of a list of products suffers from the specificity of these products. Including different products in the list, could lead to different results. For example, gays and lesbians both prefer luxurious and publicly consumed products/services to a larger extent than heterosexuals do. In case the list of products contains more of this type of innovations, then the differences between heterosexuals and homosexuals are more pronounced: male gays will differ more from male heterosexuals, while lesbians will probably diverge towards the trial of female heterosexuals. So, it is possible that the products in the list used are the reason why hypothesis 5 was rejected, because the products did not match the male gay style, and therefore could not be used as a possible association to others within the subgroup of

gays. The list used in the current study excluded very expensive products to make sure that everyone could afford it. This decision has as a consequence that several luxurious products were excluded. Also fashion-related items were excluded. If both the very luxurious and very fashionable products had been included, the differences between gays and heterosexuals might have been more pronounced than is the case right now.

Future research

There is room for improvement concerning the measurement of the innovativeness concept. The question still remains whether CIJM is or is not related with innovativeness and why “[...] innovativeness seems to be able to tap on average only about 10% of innovative behaviour” (Roehrich 2004, p.676).

Moreover, it is not clear yet why innovativeness and the adoption rate between gays and lesbians differs so much. It would be interesting to set up additional studies to investigate in depth what the reasons behind this different behaviour are.

Also, research into many other marketing aspects of the GLB target group are asked for. Some questions that remain: are GLB more brand conscious and/or more brand loyal? Do GLB have another spending pattern than heterosexual people? Do GLB follow a different decision making process or use different decision criteria? Are GLB more fashion addicts? Etc. Finally, little is known about the size and diversity of the social network of GLB, which is relevant to estimate the diffusion potential of unique innovations towards the less innovative population.

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TABLE 1

**Recoding of the Heterosexual-Homosexual Rating scale into a Hetero, Bisexual and
Gay Group**

| Redistribution | Hetero | Hetero, incidentally gay | Hetero, more than incidentally gay | Bi | Gay, More than incidentally hetero | Gay, incidentally hetero | Gay |
|-----------------|--------|--------------------------------|---|-------|---|--------------------------------|--------|
| Before recoding | 31.6 % | 4.7 % | 2.8 % | 2.7 % | 4.2 % | 16.0 % | 38.1 % |
| After recoding | | 36.3 % | | 9.7 % | | 54.1 % | |

TABLE 2**Impact of sexual orientation and gender on innovativeness: MANOVA results**

| Dependent variables | F Sexual orientation (SO) | F Gender (G) | F (SO x G) |
|---------------------|---------------------------|--------------|------------|
| Multivariate | 2.701* | 12.039*** | 5.073*** |
| DUCP | 0.991 | 7.578** | 2.675 |
| CNS | 1.301 | 40.722*** | 9.622** |
| CIJM | 6.093* | 1.649 | 9.613** |
| Awareness | 0.316 | 12.668*** | 0.002 |
| Trial | 1.120 | 0.079 | 11.736** |
| Trial/Awareness | 2.694 | 0.957 | 13.650*** |

(*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001)

TABLE 3

Means and standard deviations of DUCP, CNS, CIJM, Awareness, Trial and Trial/Awareness for both heterosexuals and homosexuals, split according to gender

| Gender | Dependent variables | F-value | Sexual orientation | |
|--------|---------------------|-----------|--------------------|--------------|
| | | | Heterosexual | Homosexual |
| Male | DUCP | 8.354** | 2.89 (.86) | 3.11 (.82) |
| | CNS | 2.295 | 2.74 (.88) | 2.87 (.94) |
| | CIJM | .786 | 2.59 (.83) | 2.66 (.85) |
| | Awareness | .104 | 25.15 (4.01) | 25.28 (4.19) |
| | Trial | 4.527* | 8.18 (3.76) | 9.05 (4.46) |
| | Trial/Awareness | 3.348 | .33 (.14) | .35 (.15) |
| Female | DUCP | .017 | 2.89 (.75) | 2.88 (.78) |
| | CNS | 9.199** | 2.55 (.96) | 2.19 (.79) |
| | CIJM | 13.507*** | 2.71 (.94) | 2.30 (.73) |
| | Awareness | .309 | 26.24 (3.73) | 26.54 (4.21) |
| | Trial | 9.932** | 9.59 (3.70) | 7.92 (3.88) |
| | Trial/Awareness | 10.985** | .36 (.13) | .30 (.13) |

(*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001)

TABLE 4**Fit indices for nested models testing measurement and structural invariance**

| Model | χ^2 | df | p | χ^2 diff | df diff | p diff | χ^2 /df | TLI | CFI | RMSEA |
|---------------------------|----------|-----|------|------------------|------------|-----------|--------------|------|------|-------|
| Unconstrained | 363.10 | 164 | .000 | | | | 2.214 | .939 | .955 | .041 |
| Measurement weights | 395.11 | 188 | .000 | 32.02 | 24 | .126 | 2.102 | .945 | .953 | .039 |
| Structural weights | 408.64 | 197 | .000 | 13.53 | 9 | .140 | 2.074 | .946 | .952 | .038 |
| Structural covariances | 410.75 | 200 | .000 | 2.12 | 3 | .548 | 2.054 | .947 | .952 | .038 |

FIGURE 1

Consumer innovativeness model (based on Manning et al., 1995)

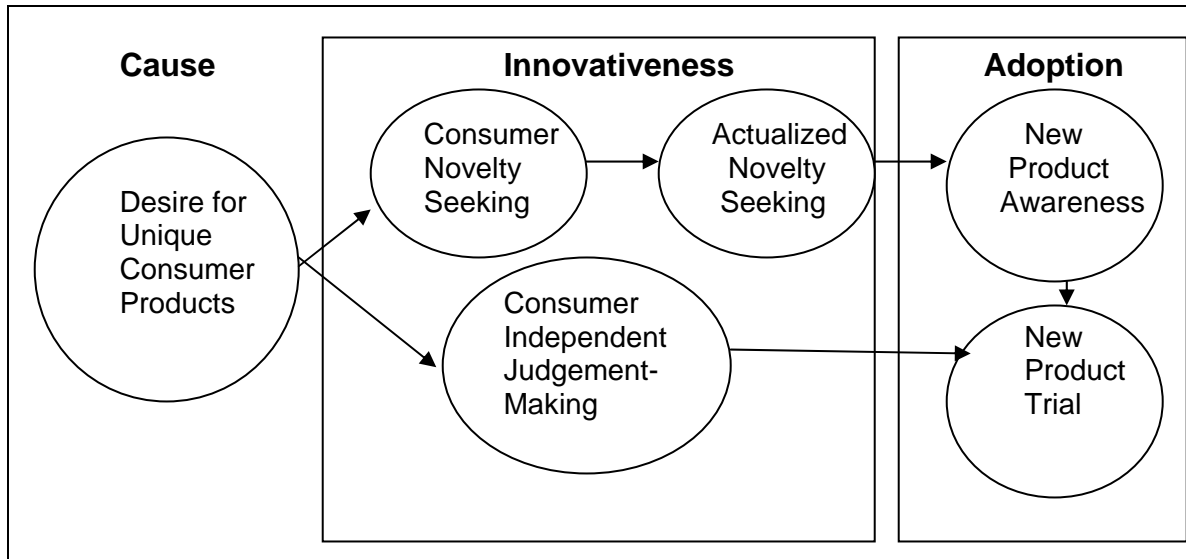


FIGURE 2

The GLB community as diffusers of innovations

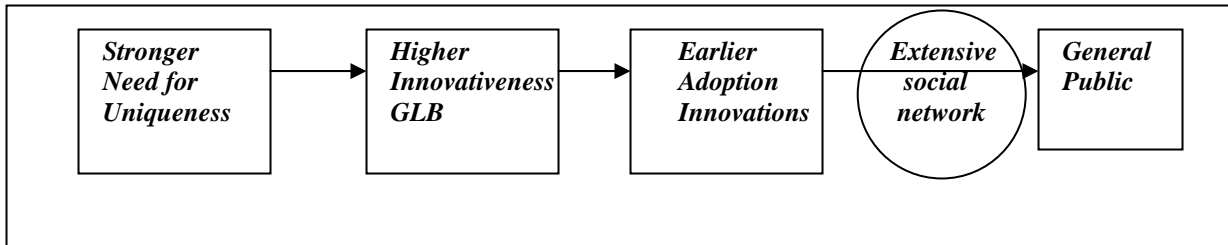


FIGURE 3

Interaction between gender and sexual orientation for DUCP, CNS, CIJM and trial/awareness

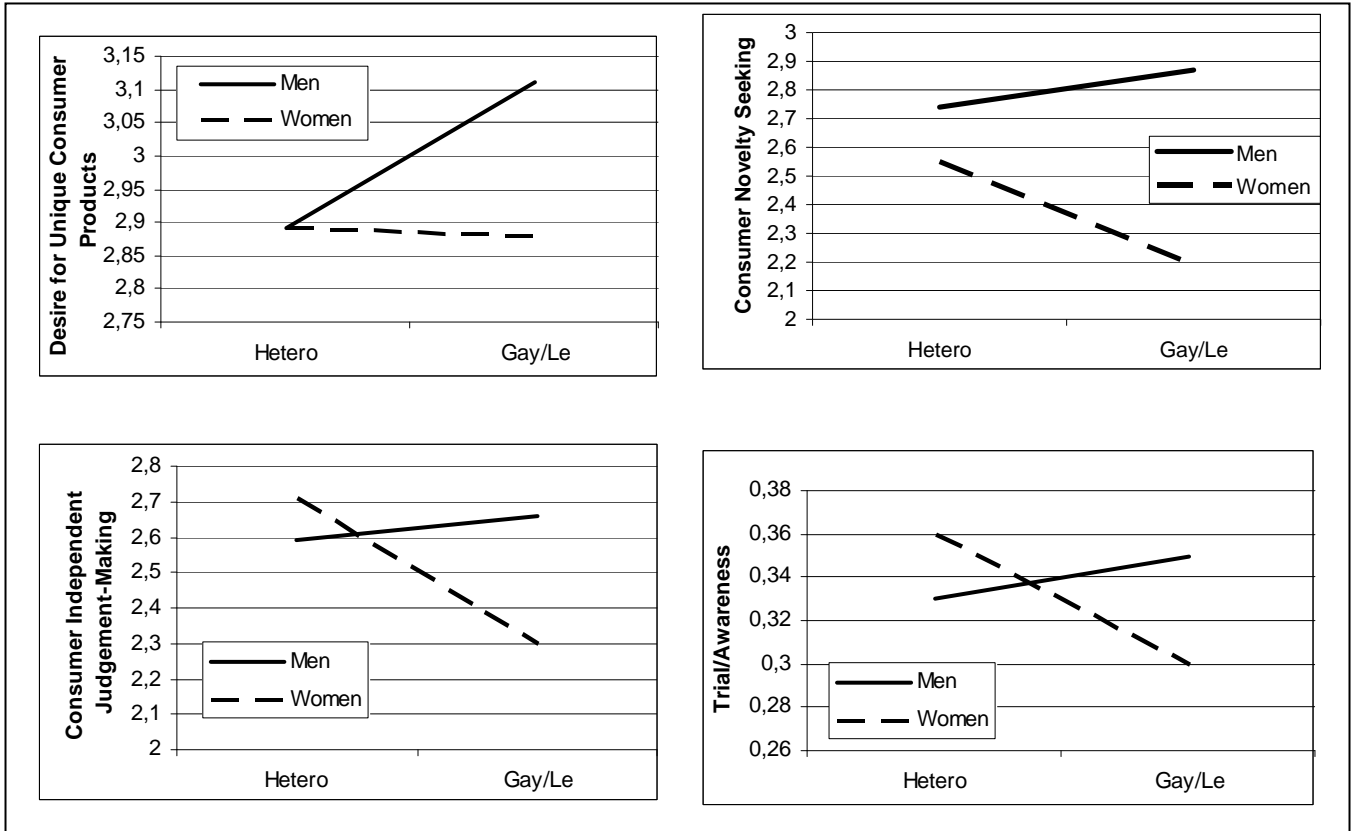
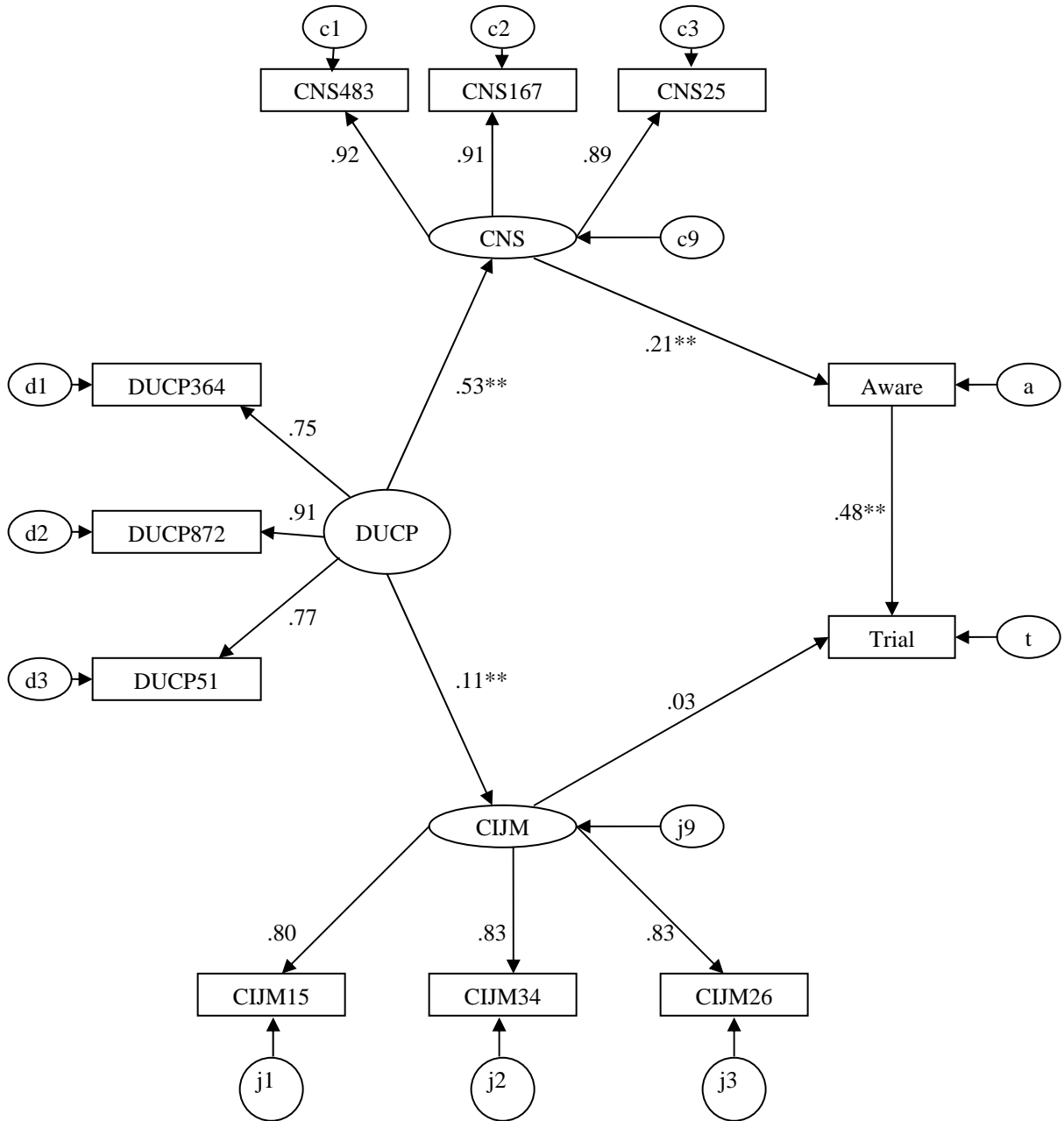


FIGURE 4

Results Structural Equation Modeling



(** p<.01, * p<.05)

FIGURE 5

Comparison trial including and excluding respondents living with parents

