

Research defines 'sport shopping'

23 November 2015, by Hannah Ashe



Two SF State business professors publish article on a newly identified type of consumer for whom shopping is akin to athletic competition.

The finish line is in sight, the rush of victory just past the cash register, the trophy flung hastily into a shopping cart.

For some, shopping is a pursuit akin to an [athletic competition](#), according to San Francisco State University professors Kathleen O'Donnell, associate dean of the School of Business, and Judi Strelbel, chair of the [marketing department](#). In new research just published online, the two define what it means to be a "sport shopper."

"This is somebody who takes great pride in their ability to get the thing they want at a discount," O'Donnell said. "It's not about spending the least. It's about saving the most."

O'Donnell is the lead author on an article published online Nov. 14 in the *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, with Strelbel and their Australian colleague Gary Mortimer of Queensland University as co-authors. The article, titled "The thrill of victory: women and sport shopping," will be published in print early in 2016.

O'Donnell and Strelbel define a sport shopper as someone who often can afford the items she buys at full price but who bargain hunts for the thrill of it. She is competitive and enjoys outsmarting the retail system. (O'Donnell is certain that there are male sport shoppers, but thus far the research has only produced females.)

"Even when she can easily afford to pay full price, there's no joy in that for the sport shopper," O'Donnell explained. "She takes a real joy from being able to find that thing at a great discount."

Also, like athletes recounting their achievements, the sport shopper can remember with great specificity the stories behind the bargain items in her closet, sometimes including the date of purchase, the price at which she bought the item and the price at which it would ordinarily retail.

Another similarity the SF State professors noticed between sport shoppers and athletes is the strategy behind each shopping endeavor. While a runner might train for a race, building up to the race's distance and mapping the route, a sport shopper will get to know the layout of a department store, observe merchandising patterns and plan a shopping trip based on how much time she has before going shopping.

O'Donnell contends the sport shopper is different from the bargain shopper in that the bargain shopper hunts for deals out of necessity, while the sport shopper does it for the "rush" of finding a good deal.

The School of Business faculty members believe their profile provides valuable insight for retailers who have not previously taken the sport shopper into account for their marketing efforts. They plan to look into this type of shopper further in future research.

More information: Kathleen A. O'Donnell et al. The thrill of victory: Women and sport shopping, *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*

(2016). [DOI: 10.1016/j.jretconser.2015.10.005](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2015.10.005)

Provided by San Francisco State University

APA citation: Research defines 'sport shopping' (2015, November 23) retrieved 23 September 2020 from <https://phys.org/news/2015-11-sport.html>

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