

SEVICE THAT SELLS: EXAMINING WOMEN'S TENDENCY TO PURCHASE
APPEARANCE-ENHANCING PRODUCTS FROM
GAY MALE SALES ASSOCIATES

by

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Abstract

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The University of Texas at Arlington, 2017

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Previous findings indicate that heterosexual female customers are more comfortable working with gay male—relative to straight male or female—sales associates in retail departments where apparel and beauty products are sold. However, researchers have not tested whether women's comfort with gay male sales associates influences women's likelihood to purchase the products that are recommended by them. In the present studies, I tested whether women's increased comfort influences their likelihood to purchase from gay men, and I examined when this effect is most likely to occur. Specifically, I advanced the hypothesis that women are more likely to purchase from gay salesmen who recommend appearance-enhancing products that are used by women to attract potential mates. Study 1 revealed that women's heightened comfort and trust consulting with a gay male sales associate may be associated with women's increased intention to purchase from him. Study 2 experimentally demonstrated that women—but not men—are more likely to purchase appearance-enhancing products from gay male sales associates than from straight male or straight female sales associates. Study 3 replicated and extended these results by revealing that women's increased likelihood to purchase these products from gay men was evident in a context in which women

intended to attract a mate with the products. This set of findings not only aligns with previous psychological research examining women's relational trust in gay men, but it also provides practical implications for business research and managerial decisions in retail settings.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Research has found it crucial for large retailing companies to invest in forming trusting bonds between customers and sales employees to help drive consumption (i.e., relationship marketing) (Beatty, Mayer, Coleman, Reynolds, & Lee, 1996; Rosenbaum, 2006). This strategy focuses on the formation of intimacy between the customer and the sales associate to create “commercial friendships” so that the customers feel comfortable and appreciated when they are being told about a product of interest (Yim, Tse, & Chan, 2008). In fact, many customers who report having quality relationships with sales associates spend more on the goods and services that the company provides (Luxury Institute, 2012).

Whereas the traditional notion is that commercial friendships between customers and sales employees take time to develop after repeated in-store visits (Beatty et al., 1996), service researchers have demonstrated that some commercial friendships are more automatic, in which the customer instantly feels some sort of common ground and comfort with the sales associate (Rosenbaum, Walsh, & Wozniak, 2012). One customer-employee relationship that has garnered attention from researchers in this respect is the relationship between female customers and gay male sales associates (Rosenbaum, Russell-Bennett, & Drennan, 2015).

Previous research has suggested that female customers often prefer gay male sales associates to heterosexual female and male service providers and show more interest in the products that gay men are selling (Peretz, 1995). Marketing researchers have proposed that this phenomenon has its roots in the emotional closeness between gay salesmen and female customers, due to the absence of sexual interest and inter-female competition (Rosenbaum et al., 2015). Further, Rosenbaum and colleagues propose that the absence of these complicating factors between female customers and gay male sales associates should facilitate more pleasurable retail transactions, greater customer satisfaction, and a higher likelihood that the store will generate positive word-of-mouth.

Although research has made progress in understanding why women gravitate towards working with gay male sales associates, it remains unclear whether these close commercial friendships affect women's willingness to purchase certain products that are advertised by the sales associate. To address this gap, I advance the hypothesis that, due to the absence of sexual or competitive concerns in women's relationships with gay men, women who consult with gay male sales associates should be more likely to purchase their recommended products, particularly when the women intend to use those products to attract potential mates.

1.1 Women's Comfort and Trust in Gay Men

Previous literature has recognized that straight women exhibit a notable degree of closeness and rapport with gay men that is not found in most of their relationships with straight men or other straight women. For example, women report an increased level of trust and comfort when they are around gay men (Grigoriou, 2004), and show an increased willingness to engage in intimate conversations with them very early in their relationships (Hopcke & Rafaty, 1999).

My colleagues and I have hypothesized that women's heightened trust and relational intimacy with gay men may be due to gay men's absence of the ulterior mating motivations (AUMM) that frequently complicate women's relationships with heterosexual individuals (Russell, DelPriore, Butterfield, & Hill, 2013, Russell, Ta, Lewis, Babcock, & Ickes, 2017; Russell, Ickes, & Ta, under review). For example, women's relationships with straight men are often hampered by the awkwardness and discomfort created by straight men's often one-sided sexual attraction to women (Bleske-Rechek & Buss, 2001; Koenig, Kirkpatrick, & Ketelaar, 2007). Additionally, women's relationships with other women may be tainted with mistrust related to intrasexual competition—a context in which women use deceptive strategies to outcompete one another for desirable male suitors (Buss & Dedden, 1990; Fisher & Cox, 2010; Schmitt & Buss, 1996).

Considering the various threats that women encounter in their relationships with straight men and straight women, the AUMM hypothesis makes the general assertion that, despite being sexually attracted to the same sex (i.e., men), straight women and gay men are neither potential romantic partners nor mating competitors. Women who have such relationships with gay men are uniquely positioned to receive unbiased, mating-relevant advice (i.e., information on how to impress potential mates) from gay men that is not tainted with ulterior mating motives that stem from one-sided sexual interest or potential mating rivalry (Russell et al., 2013; Russell et al., 2017). Thus, one interesting implication of this hypothesis is that the increased level of comfort and trust between straight women and gay men may have a significant impact on the service exchanges between gay male sales associates and female customers.

1.2 Service Exchanges with Gay Salesmen in Retail Settings

Recently, researchers have put forth a theoretical framework that details the trust and social support that gay men and straight women often share with one another in retail stores (Rosenbaum et al., 2015). A key premise of the conceptual model is that “commercial friendships” between straight female customers and gay male sales associates develop from the absence of male-female sexual interest and female-female intrasexual rivalry over physical appearance during service exchanges. This model might be able to predict whether more trusting and intimate service exchanges between gay male sales associates and female customers occur in store departments where sexual interest and intrasexual rivalry are the most pronounced between female customers and heterosexual male and female sales associates.

Rosenbaum and colleagues’ proposed framework aligns closely with what the AUMM hypothesis predicts regarding women’s interactions with gay men. According to the hypothesis, women would be expected to turn to gay men when they are seeking unbiased mating-related advice (Russell et al., 2013), which often includes how to dress to impress potential mates (Grammar, Renninger & Fischer, 2004). Indeed, recent empirical work has demonstrated that women feel more comfortable working with gay—relative to straight—sales associates in

departments in which appearance-enhancing products are sold (e.g., dresses and cosmetics) and where sales associates are potentially able to physically touch or closely observe the female customer's body (Rosenbaum, Russell, & Russell-Bennett, 2017).

If, in fact, straight female customers feel an increased sense of comfort and trust working with gay male sales associates in departments that sell products that primarily function to enhance women's physical appearance to others (e.g., dresses and cosmetics), might we see evidence that women are also more willing to purchase such products from gay male sales associates than from straight male or straight female sales associates? I attempted to answer this question in the proposed research by testing whether women are more willing to purchase from gay male sales associates products that are intended to enhance their physical appearance. Because previous research suggests that women's commercial friendships with gay sales associates may facilitate greater product awareness and loyalty (Rosenbaum et al., 2015), it is likely that women's relational comfort and trust with gay male sales associates translates into a greater likelihood to purchase the products that they recommend.

1.3 The Current Research

Here, I report the results of three studies that were designed to investigate whether women are more likely to purchase appearance-enhancement products from gay male—relative to straight male and female—sales associates in retail stores. Given the previous empirical support for the AUMM hypothesis and research examining women's commercial friendships with gay men, I advanced a set of hypotheses which, taken together, predicted that women are more likely to purchase from gay male sales associates appearance-enhancing products that are used by women to attract potential mates. In Study 1, I examined (1) whether women's concerns about working with straight male and female sales associates predicted their comfort and trust working with gay male sales associates and (2) whether women's comfort and trust with gay men influenced their perceived intention to purchase products from them. In Study 2, I experimentally tested (1) whether women were likely to report having intentions to purchase

products from gay male sales associates and (2) whether this effect was contingent on the type of product that the sales associate recommended (i.e., products that can impact a woman's physical appearance versus products that cannot). In Study 3, I extended the findings from Study 2 by testing whether the increased likelihood to purchase attractiveness-enhancing products from gay male sales associates is contingent upon the buying objective (i.e., mating-related vs. non-mating-related) of the female customer.

Chapter 2

Study 1

The first aim of Study 1 was to test Rosenbaum and colleagues' (2015) conceptual framework that women's heightened concern about (a) being viewed in a sexual manner by straight male sales associates and (b) being in rivalry with straight female sales associates is related to their relational comfort and trust working with gay male sales associates in retail stores. The second aim was to determine whether this heightened perceived rapport with gay male sales associates is linked to women's perceived intention to purchase products from gay men that serve an appearance-enhancing function (e.g., women's apparel).

First, I predicted that, in retail stores that sell appearance-enhancing products (e.g., women's apparel), women who report more perceived worry about (1) being sexually targeted by straight male associates and (2) being in appearance-related rivalry with straight female sales associates would feel more comfortable working with gay male sales associates. Second, I predicted that this increased perception of comfort working with gay male sales associates would predict the perceived increased trust in their product recommendations. Third, because previous research has suggested that women's increased rapport with gay male sales associates may result in women's valuation of gay men's brand recommendations (Rosenbaum et al., 2015), I expected that women's trust in gay male sales associates would predict the women's intention to purchase their recommended products.

2.1 Method

2.1.1 *Participants*

Three hundred and ninety-eight undergraduate heterosexual women ($M_{\text{age}} = 20.45$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 3.34$) from Texas Christian University were recruited to participate in the study through the university's participant pool recruitment system (i.e., Sona Systems). All participants were awarded course credit for their participation. The sample was 76% Caucasian, 13% Hispanic,

4% African American, and 4% Asian. Three percent of the sample identified with other ethnicities.

2.1.2 Measures and Constructs

The survey questionnaire was composed of five sets of items that were each created to represent a construct of interest: (1) women's comfort working with gay male sales associates in women's apparel stores, (2) women's trust in gay male sales associates' recommendations in women's apparel stores, (3) women's purchase intent from gay male sales associates in women's apparel stores, (4) women's concern about being in appearance-related rivalry with straight female sales associates in women's apparel stores and (5) women's concern about being viewed in sexual manner by straight male sales associates in women's apparel stores. To prevent demand characteristics from operating across these items, I also created similar items that measured women's comfort, trust, and purchase intent from straight male and straight female sales associates. Although participants saw the items sets in the order I specified above, the order of the items within each construct set (e.g., comfort with a gay male sales associate vs. straight male sales associate vs. straight female sales associate) was randomized. Below, I provide a description of how each construct was measured.

2.1.2.1 Comfort Working with Gay Male Sales Associates

To measure women's comfort working with gay male (GM) sales associates, participants were asked indicate their level of agreement with the following items on 7-point Likert scales (endpoints: 1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) in the context of shopping at retail clothing stores: (1) "If I found out that I was working with a GM sales associate, I would feel more at ease," (2) "I would be more relaxed if a GM sales associate assisted me," (3) "I think that a GM sales associate would make me feel good as I try on different clothes," (4) "I would have more peace of mind if I worked with a GM sales associate."

2.1.2.2 Trust in Gay Male Sales Associates' Recommendations

Next, to assess women's relational trust with gay male sales associates, participants indicated their level of agreement with four items that measured whether women could see themselves trusting a gay male sales associate's product recommendations. These four items, also assessed on Likert scales, read: (1) "I think that GM sales associates know what they are talking about when they provide me with recommendations," (2) "I could see myself trusting a GM sales associate's recommendations," (3) "I could count on a GM to give me an unbiased opinion on what looks good on my body," and (4) "I believe that a GM sales associate would have my best interests in mind."

2.1.2.3 Purchase Intent from Gay Male Sales Associates

To evaluate women's intention to purchase products from gay male sales associates, participants indicated their level of agreement with the following three items: (1) "If a GM sales associate recommended a particular clothing item for me, I would consider adding it to my shopping bag to purchase," (2) "I would consider purchasing a clothing item if a GM sales associate told me that it looked good on me," and (3) "If a GM sales associate recommended a clothing item that I wasn't even looking for, I would consider purchasing the item as I headed to check out."

2.1.2.4 Concern about Being in Rivalry with Straight Female Sales Associates

Participants indicated their level of agreement with three items that measured women's concern about encountering appearance-related competitiveness with a straight female (SF) sales associate in a store that sold women's apparel: (1) "I would worry about feeling 'in competition' with a SF sales associate," (2) "I would worry about a SF sales associate being more attractive than I am," and (3) "I would worry about feeling a sense of rivalry with a SF sales associate."

2.1.2.5 Concern about Being Viewed Sexually by Straight Male Sales Associates

To assess women's concern about having a lack of privacy and being sexually viewed by straight male (SM) sales associates in stores that sold women's apparel, participants indicated their agreement with the following statements: (1) "I would worry about being looked at in a sexual manner with a SM sales associate," (2) "I would worry about not having enough privacy with a SM if I needed to try on different items," (3) "I would worry about a SM sales associate becoming sexually intrigued with me as he helps me."

2.1.3 Procedure

Participants completed the study online. Before beginning the study, the participants were told that they would be taking part in a study examining how they perceive themselves with different individuals in consumer settings. Then, participants completed the series of measures that I specified above. Lastly, participants were asked to (1) provide their current relationship status (i.e., "Are you single or are you in a relationship?") and to (2) indicate their level of agreement (assessed on a Likert scale) with an item that measured their perception of competition for mates in their environment (i.e., "I think that there is a lot of competition to find someone desirable to date.").

2.2 Results

2.2.1 Analysis Plan and Data Screening

To test whether the data fit the hypothesized model of Study 1, I first performed a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) on the five constructs specified above, and then I followed-up this analysis with structural equation modeling (SEM) in Mplus to test the hypothesized relationships between the five constructs. Prior to the analyses, however, the data were screened for acquiescent response bias (i.e., participants who consistently provided the same response across both positively and negatively scored items; Watson, 1992). The cases whose data that exhibited this pattern ($n = 33$) were screened out of the dataset. Thus, the data from 365 participants were retained for the data analyses, the results of which are reported below.

2.2.2 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

First, to test whether each of the measures that I created were reliable indicators of their respective constructs, a CFA was performed. In this analysis, I specified the *a priori* measurement model containing the five latent factors of (1) concern about being in rivalry, (2) concern about being sexually viewed, (3) comfort working with gay male sales associates, (4) trust in gay male sales associates' recommendations, and (5) purchase intention from gay male sales associates. This model was first examined in which all five of these factors could correlate with one another. In addition to using a chi-square test to assess model fit, I used the two-index strategy recommended by Hu and Bentler (1998; 1999) by examining the following incremental fit indexes: Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) and the Comparative Fit Index (CFI). Further, I examined the two stand-alone fit indices of standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA).

The analysis revealed that the *a priori* CFA model was a good fit to the data as evidenced by the fit indices and factor loadings. The CFI (.965) and TLI (.956) values were above the recommended cutoffs of .95 and .90, respectively (Hu & Bentler, 1998; 1999). Additionally, the SRMR value was .06, indicating that there was minimal residual variance in the model. The stand-alone fit index of RMSEA was also examined, and the value (.057) was negligibly different from the .05 value, which is recommended for most CFA models. Lastly, the chi-square value (237.03) divided to the degrees of freedom (109) yielded a value of 2.17, which also indicated good fit and minimal residual variance in the model.

Each of the measures loaded highly onto their corresponding latent factors. First, the three items that represented the *concern of being in rivalry* had factor loadings of .77, .93, and .89. Second, the three items that represented the *concern of being sexually viewed* had factor loadings of .91, .82, and .75. The four items that represented *comfort working with gay men* had factor loadings of .63, .87, .85, and .87. For the construct, *trust in gay male sales associates*,

the factor loadings were .82, .85, .71, and .73. Finally, the factor loadings for *purchase intention from gay male sales associates* were .87, .78, and .77.

2.2.2.1 Testing Alternative CFA Models

To ensure that the hypothesized *a priori* model (M1) was the best fit for the data, alternative CFA models were also tested. Specifically, the *a priori* model (containing the correlated factors) was compared to the following alternative models: first, a model in which all five factors were not allowed to correlate (M2), and second, a model in which all five factors were perfectly correlated with one another (i.e., a one factor model) (M3). Additionally, because the constructs of comfort and trust could, alternatively, represent one construct (i.e., rapport), the *a priori* model was also compared to a third model in which the two factors (comfort and trust) were perfectly correlated with one another, while the other factors could correlate with them equally (M4). See Table 2-1 for the comparison values.

The analyses revealed that each of the alternative models resulted in poorer fit compared to the *a priori* model (M1). Specifically, chi-square difference tests indicated that M1 was a significantly better fit for the data than M2, M3, and M4 (all $ps < .001$). Additionally, each of the fit indices (RMSEA, SRMR, CFI, TLI) declined for the alternative models, which provided further evidence that the *a priori* measurement model was the best representation of the latent constructs.

2.2.3 Structural Equation Modeling

Next, I tested the hypothesized, *a priori* model of Study 1 using SEM. My predictions were as follows: (1) women's concern about being sexually viewed by straight male sales associates and being in rivalry with straight female sales associates would predict their increased comfort working with gay male sales associates, (2) women's comfort working with gay male sales associates would predict their trust in their recommendations, and (3) women's trust in gay male sales associates would predict their intention to purchase products from them. Also, given that (a) women's perceptions of mating competition may influence the degree to

Table 2-1 *A priori* CFA model vs. alternative CFA models

CFA Models	Fit Indices					
	χ^2	<i>df</i>	CFI	TLI	SRMR	RMSEA
<i>A priori</i> correlated factors (M1)	237.026	109	0.965	0.956	0.056	0.057
Uncorrelated factors (M2)	577.119	119	0.874	0.856	0.21	0.103
Perfectly correlated factors (M3)	2123.71	119	0.45	0.371	0.169	0.215
2 Factor Model (M4) *	737.469	115	0.829	0.798	0.134	0.122

CFA Model Comparisons	Model Comparison Statistics		
	$\Delta\chi^2$	Δdf	Sig
M1 compared to M2	340.09	10	$p < .001$
M1 compared to M3	1886.68	10	$p < .001$
M1 compared to M4	342.014	6	$p < .001$

*Assuming the latent variables "Comfort" and "Trust" represent one overall construct.

which they see other women as rivals (de Jong, Forsgren, Sandvik, & Amundsen, 2012), and that (b) women who are in committed relationships may feel the most comfort working with gay men rather than a potentially sexually-interested straight salesman, I included women's perception of mating competition and relationship status in the model as moderators of the two latent variables (i.e., concern about being sexually viewed, and concern about being in rivalry) that predicted women's comfort working with gay male sales associates.

The overall fit of the model was good, as evidenced by the fit indices. Although the model resulted in a significant chi-square, $\chi^2(263) = 435.74$, $p < .001$, the RMSEA value was not significantly different from the recommended value of .05 (.04), and many of the other fit indices indicated good fit (CFI = .97, TLI = .96, SRMR = .07). Contrary to what was initially predicted, women's concern about being in rivalry with saleswomen or being sexually viewed by straight salesmen did not predict their perceived comfort working with gay male sales associates (both $p \geq .14$). However, the model revealed a significant interaction between women's concern of being in rivalry and their perceptions of mating competition, $\beta = .13$, $SE = .06$, $p = .02$. To probe the interaction, the relationship between rivalry and comfort was examined at low (-1 *SD*) and high (+1 *SD*) levels of mating competition. Simple slopes tests revealed that women's concern of being in rivalry predicted comfort only when women had a heightened perception of mating competition, $\beta = .20$, $SE = .07$, $p = .01$. At low levels of perceived mating competition, there was no relationship between women's concern about rivalry with female sales associates and their comfort working with gay men ($p = .33$).

The model also revealed a significant interaction between women's concerns about being sexually viewed by straight male sales associates and their relationship status, $\beta = .11$, $SE = .06$, $p = .05$. Simple slopes tests revealed that women's concern about working with straight salesmen predicted their increased comfort working with gay male sales associates only for women who reported that they were in committed relationships, $\beta = .22$, $SE = .09$, $p = .02$; this relationship was not observed for women who reported being single ($p = .23$).

Finally, confirming my other two predictions, women's perceived comfort working with gay male sales associates predicted their trust in their recommendations, $\beta = .57$, $SE = .04$, $p < .001$, and women's increased trust in gay men predicted their intention to purchase products from them, $\beta = .71$, $SE = .05$, $p < .001$.

2.2.3.1 Testing Alternative SEM Models

Three alternative SEM models were tested against the *a priori* SEM model (M1). Specifically, I compared the fit of M1 to (1) a model in which trust predicted comfort, and comfort predicted purchase intent (M2), (2) a model in which purchase intent predicted comfort, and comfort predicted trust (M3), and (3) a model in which purchase intent predicted trust, and trust predicted comfort (M4). See Table 2-2 for each model's fit indices in comparison to M1.

As evidenced by the chi-square model comparisons, M1 was a significantly better fitting model than either M2 or M3. This result supported my prediction that women's comfort working with gay men would precede their trust in their recommendations. However, contrary to what I expected, M4 did not significantly differ in fit compared to M1; in other words, M1 and M4 were both good fitting models for the data, suggesting that women's purchase intent from gay men may lead to them to trust their recommendations, and therefore, influence their perceived comfort working with gay men. However, it is important to note that although M4 rivaled M1 in fit, the significant interaction effects that were observed in M1 (i.e., women's relationship status X concern about being sexually viewed, and women's perceived mating competition X concern about being in rivalry) were not statistically significant in predicting women's purchase intent in M4.

Table 2-2 *A priori* SEM model vs. alternative SEM models

Fit Indices						
Models	χ^2	<i>df</i>	CFI	TLI	SRMR	RMSEA
Model 1 (M1)	435.737	263	0.966	0.961	0.073	0.047
Model 2 (M2)	546.194	264	0.945	0.937	0.09	0.054
Model 3 (M3)	549.399	264	0.944	0.937	0.093	0.054
Model 4 (M4)	436.414	264	0.966	0.962	0.075	0.042

Model Comparison Statistics			
SEM Comparisons	$\Delta\chi^2$	Δdf	Sig
M1 compared to M2	110.457	1	$p < .001$
M1 compared to M3	113.662	1	$p < .001$
M1 compared to M4	0.677	1	$p = .41$

Note: M1 represents the *a priori* model. M2, M3, and M4 represent the alternative models.

2.2.3.2 Moderated Mediation Analysis

Finally, I predicted that women's concerns about working with straight male and straight female sales associates would be linked to their perceived intention to purchase products from gay male sales associates. To test this prediction, I conducted a moderated mediation analysis to test for the presence of two indirect effects in the *a priori* model (M1): (1) the concern about sexual motive on women's purchase intention from gay men via their increased comfort and trust in sequence, and (2) the concern about rivalry on women's purchase intention from gay men also via their increased comfort and trust in sequence. Further, I predicted that these indirect effects would each be conditional on a moderator: the first indirect effect would be conditional on women's perception of mating competition (low vs. high competition), which was predicted to moderate the relationship between women's concern about being in rivalry with saleswomen and their perceived comfort working with gay men, and the second indirect effect would be conditional on women's relationship status (single vs. mated), which was predicted to moderate the relationship between women's concern about being viewed sexually by straight salesmen and their perceived comfort working with gay men.

The moderated mediation analysis was conducted using the residual centering approach, which allows the latent interactions to be derived from the observed covariation pattern among all possible indicators of the interaction (Little, Bovaird, & Widaman, 2006). Additionally, the conditional indirect effects were calculated using 5,000 bootstrap resamples. The bootstrapping approach was selected because it relies on resampling to determine the appropriate standard error to test for statistical significance (Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

As predicted, there was a significant indirect effect of the mated women's anxiety about being sexually viewed by straight male sales associates on their purchase intentions from gay male sales associates via women's perceived comfort and trust in gay men, $\beta = .07$, $SE = .04$, 95% CI [.003, .165]. However, there was no such indirect effect among the single women, 95% CI [-.02, .09].

Additionally, the indirect effect of women's anxiety about being in rivalry with saleswomen on their purchase intentions from gay male sales associates was also examined via women's perceived comfort and trust in gay men in sequence. Specifically, this indirect effect was examined at high (+1 *SD*), average (mean), and low levels (-1 *SD*) of women's perception of mating competition, which was tested as a moderator on the relationship between women's anxiety about being in rivalry with saleswomen and women's perceived comfort working with gay salesmen. For women who perceived there to be high levels of perceived mating competition, a significant indirect effect was observed, $\beta = .07$, $SE = .04$, 95% CI [.011, .203]; women's perceived concern about being in rivalry with saleswomen predicted their purchase intent from gay salesmen through the two mediators in sequence: women's perceived comfort with gay men and women's trust in gay men's recommendations. However, there was no significant indirect effect at mean levels of perceived mating competition, 95% CI [-.021, .110], or at low levels of perceived mating competition, 95% CI [-.098, .057] (see Figure 2-1).

2.3 Discussion

The results from Study 1 were consistent with the prediction that women's heightened comfort working with gay men is linked to women's increased trust in their recommendations, which, ultimately, predicted women's increased intention to purchase products from gay men. Although I did not find the main effects of women's concerns about being viewed sexually by straight male sales associates and being in rivalry with straight female sales associates on their perceived comfort working with gay men, I did find that these links were each conditional on a moderating factor. First, women's anxiety about being in rivalry with female sales associates predicted their increased comfort working with gay men only when women perceived there to be more competition for mates. Second, women's anxiety about being sexually viewed by a straight male sales associate was related to their comfort working with gay men among women who reported to be in committed relationships, but *not* among women who reported themselves to be single.

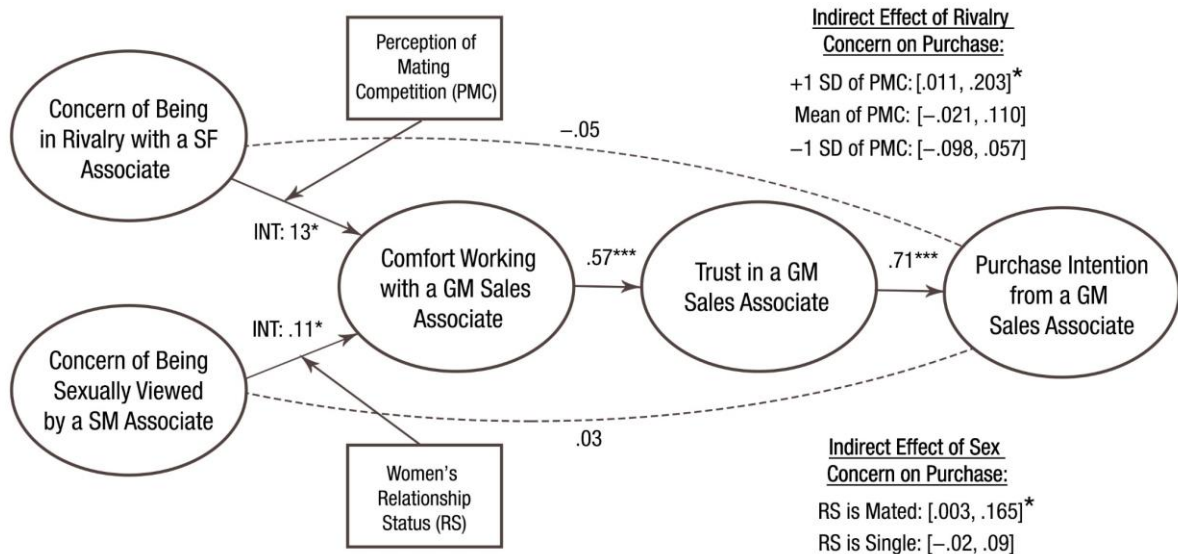


Figure 2-1 Full structural model illustrating the two indirect effects of (1) women's concern of being in rivalry with SF sales associates and (2) women's concern of being sexually viewed by a SM Associate on their perceived purchase intention from gay male sales associates. *Note:* Values beside paths represent standardized beta coefficients. Coefficients beside dashed lines represent the direct effects. INT = interaction effect * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

The first conditional link aligns with the previously known finding that women are more cautious about other women's intentions under heightened mating threat and likely turn to gay men for trustworthy support (Russell et al., 2017). Women who have such perceptions may feel more comfortable working with gay salesmen because they feel less worried about receiving information that might be intended to undermine their attractiveness to a potential mate. On the other hand, women who perceive an abundance of mating opportunities in their environment may not feel threatened working with a saleswoman who is potentially more physically attractive than they are. The second conditional link is consistent with the interpretation that women are more comfortable around gay men due to the absence of sexual attraction. Women who are off

the “mating market” (i.e., women in committed relationships) may benefit from working with gay men so that they can avoid the awkwardness or guilt about being sexually pursued by straight salesmen. On the other hand, women who are single—and are potentially looking for mates—may not benefit from gay men’s lack of sexual interest in the same way that mated women do.

Finally, although the results from Study 1 supported Rosenbaum and colleagues’ (2015) proposed model that women’s comfort working with gay men leads to their purchase intent via increased trust (the *a priori* model), there was one unexpected finding. Specifically, the *a priori* model was rivaled by the third alternative model (M4), which suggested that women’s purchase intent from a gay man predicts their trust in his recommendations, which then influences their comfort level. It is possible that when women are satisfied with the items that they purchase from gay men, they begin to trust gay men’s recommendations. This increased trust may, therefore, influence women’s comfort working with them in retail stores.

If, in fact, this is the proposed pathway of the third alternative model, it would be reasonable to assume that women’s two concerns (i.e., being viewed sexually and being in potential rivalry) working with heterosexual associates possess indirect links to their perceived comfort working with gay men via women’s purchase intention from gay men and women’s trust in gay men. However, the data do not support this link; although two conditional indirect effects were observed in the *a priori* model, the alternative model did not produce these effects via the alternate sequence of mediators (i.e., women’s purchase intent from gay men and women’s trust in gay men). Thus, I would argue that the *a priori* SEM model has better *theoretical* fit to the data relative to the third alternative model.

Chapter 3

Study 2

Although Study 1 provided preliminary evidence that women's concerns about working with heterosexual sales associates (i.e., unwanted sexual interest, appearance-related rivalry under heightened competition) are linked to their perceived intentions to purchase products from gay male sales associates, it remains unclear (1) whether women are more likely to purchase products recommended by gay male—relative straight male or straight female—sales associates and (2) whether women's increased intention to purchase from gay men is specific to appearance-enhancing products (e.g., women's apparel) or is generalizable to other products that are typically found in retail department stores.

I created a second study to address these limitations. Specifically, Study 2 was designed to test whether women are more likely to purchase specific types of products from gay male sales associates than from heterosexual sales associates. The study was designed such that participants were randomly assigned to imagine interacting with a sales associate who was either a straight woman, a straight man, or a gay man. Participants were then presented with specific products that were recommended by the sales associate and were asked how likely they would be to purchase these products from the associate.

Because previous research findings suggest that women prefer to work with gay male sales associates than with heterosexual sales associates in departments that sell products that have an appearance-enhancing function (e.g., dress and cosmetic items) (Rosenbaum et al., 2017), I hypothesized that women preference to work with gay men in these departments would translate into an increased likelihood to also purchase products that they recommend. Specifically, I predicted that women would be more likely to perceive themselves purchasing products that function to enhance their physical appearance (e.g., dress, shoes, and lipstick) from a gay male sales associate than from a straight male or female sales associate. Additionally, given that Rosenbaum et al. (2017) did not find evidence that women prefer to

work with gay men (vs. straight men) in departments that do not sell appearance-enhancing products (e.g., luggage departments), I predicted that women's increased likelihood to purchase products from gay men would *not* be evident when women receive recommendations for products that do not function to enhance their physical appearance (e.g., kitchen blender, luggage, and vacuum).

Further, because I hypothesized that women are more comfortable working with gay male sales associates than straight men are, and women, more than men, prioritize appearance enhancement to attract potential mates (Feingold, 1990, 1991; Waynforth & Dunbar, 1995), I predicted that the increased tendency to purchase appearance-enhancing products from gay men would be driven by heterosexual female participants, but *not* by heterosexual male participants.

3.1 Method

3.1.1 Participants

Four hundred and forty-five heterosexual participants (244 women, 201 men; $M_{\text{age}} = 24.23$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 4.72$) were recruited from both the University of Texas at Arlington's participant pool recruitment system (i.e., SONA Systems) and Amazon MTurk. The participants who were recruited from the university were awarded course credit while the participants who were recruited from Amazon MTurk were awarded \$0.50 for their participation. The sample was 49% Caucasian, 13% Hispanic, 7% African American, and 15% Asian. Sixteen percent of the sample identified with other ethnicities.

3.1.2 Materials

3.1.2.1 Target Stimuli

Three different conditions were generated using two different target sales associate photographs, and each photograph was imbedded into a fictitious, computer-generated 'LinkedIn' profile. Participants viewed their assigned target's LinkedIn profile, which contained (1) the photographic image of the individual, (2) the target's employment information (e.g.,

“works at Macy’s”), and (3) a professional organization that the target belonged to. However, the target’s sex and sexual orientation varied across three conditions: one profile belonged to a straight female sales associate, one to a straight male sales associate, and another to a gay male sales associate. The gender of the target was manipulated using a professional headshot photograph of a man and a woman. However, to manipulate the sexual orientation of the target, the professional organization on each profile provided an indication of the target’s sexual orientation. For example, the gay male’s LinkedIn profile indicated that he is a member of “Dallas Gay Business Professionals,” whereas the profiles of the straight male and straight female indicated that they are part of “Dallas Business Professionals.” This manipulation of sexual orientation has been used in past research to create different experimental conditions for professional resumes (Everly, Unzueta, & Shih, 2015; Horvath & Ryan, 2003).

For the two photographs that I selected as the male and female targets, both individuals in the photograph appeared to look professional, appeared to be the same age, and were equally physically attractive. However, to ensure that the male and female stimuli did not vary on these dimensions, an independent sample of judges ($n = 37$) rated the targets on (1) their perceived age, (2) their perceived professionalism on a Likert-type scale (endpoints: 1 = very unprofessional, 7 = very professional), and (3) their physical attractiveness on a Likert-type scale (endpoints: 1 = very unattractive, 7 = very attractive). Three paired-samples t -tests were then performed to compare the ratings of the two targets. The analysis revealed that the male and female targets did not vary in perceived age ($p = .58$, $M_{\text{male}} = 28.65$, $M_{\text{female}} = 28.27$), perceived professionalism ($p = .91$, $M_{\text{male}} = 5.81$, $M_{\text{female}} = 5.84$), or physical attractiveness ($p = .57$; $M_{\text{male}} = 5.22$, $M_{\text{female}} = 5.05$).

3.1.2.2 Product Stimuli

Nine different product photographs were selected that served as the sales associate’s recommended products. Three of these products were chosen because they have potential to positively impact the physical appearance of a female buyer (i.e., a woman’s dress, a pair of

women's high-heeled shoes, and a tube of lipstick). These items served as the "appearance-enhancing" products. Because male buyers do not purchase dresses or use lipstick to enhance their physical appearance, three alternative yet similar functioning items were selected for male participants to evaluate (i.e., a men's polo shirt, a pair of men's dress shoes, and a tube of men's facial cream). This specific methodology to create product stimuli for men has also been used successfully in past research examining consumer preferences between men and women (Hill, Rodeheffer, Griskevicius, Durante, & White, 2012). The final three product stimuli (i.e., a kitchen blender, a piece of luggage, a vacuum cleaner) were selected because each of the products were unlikely to positively impact a female or male buyer's physical appearance, but they were products that also could easily be found in retail department stores. These items served as the non-appearance-enhancing (control) items.

3.1.2.2.1 Controlling for Product Function and Desirability

First, to ensure that the appearance-enhancing products (e.g., lipstick, shoes, men's facial cream) were perceived to be used to enhance both a male and female buyer's physical appearance compared to the control items (e.g., luggage bag, kitchen blender), another group of independent judges ($n = 38$) rated whether each male product and control product would be used by a man to enhance his physical appearance, and whether each female product and control product would be used by a woman to enhance her physical appearance. As expected, the female appearance-enhancing products were rated as more likely to be used to enhance a woman's physical appearance ($M = 5.32$, $SD = 0.89$) compared to the control products ($M = 3.04$, $SD = 1.18$), $t(37) = 11.03$, $p < .001$. Similarly, the male appearance-enhancing products were rated as more likely to be used to enhance a man's physical appearance ($M = 5.21$, $SD = 0.63$) compared to the control products, $t(37) = 10.65$, $p < .001$. The ratings of the male and female appearance-enhancing products did not differ significantly from one another ($p = .30$), suggesting that the male products and the female products were equally as likely to enhance the physical appearance of potential buyers.

Second, because each of the products' general desirability to buyers may influence the likelihood that they are purchased, I found it important to control for this feature of each product and only use products that were neither extremely desirable nor extremely undesirable (i.e., products that were perceived to be "average") to buyers. For this reason, each judge rated each products desirability on a 7-point scale (endpoints: 1 = very undesirable, 7 = very desirable) to ensure that each of the products were rated at or around the scale's midpoint (4). An analysis of the pre-ratings revealed that all nine of the products did not significantly differ from the midpoint value of the scale (all p s \geq .12). Additionally, the mean desirability rating of the three appearance-enhancing products for women did not differ from the mean desirability of the three control products ($p = .90$), the male appearance-enhancing products did not differ from the control products ($p = .33$), and the desirability of the male products and female products did not differ from one another ($p = .99$).

Finally, regardless of the product type, all photographs were all converted to black-and-white images to minimize the potential influence of the color in participants' evaluations.

3.1.3 Design and Procedure

The design of this experiment was a 2 (participant gender: male vs. female) X 3 (target: straight female vs. straight male vs. gay male) X 2 (product: appearance-enhancing vs. control) between-subjects factorial design. Participants completed the study online and were told that they would be participating in an experiment examining their expected buyer behavior in retail department stores.

When the participants logged on to complete the experiment, they were informed that they would be viewing the LinkedIn profile of a sales associate who resides in the Dallas/Fort Worth Area. To bolster the believability of this cover story, the participants were instructed to wait for 10 to 20 seconds until a sales associate's LinkedIn profile was "pulled at random" from the Internet. Unbeknownst to the participants, however, they instead were being randomly assigned to view one of the three target stimuli conditions (i.e., the fictitious profiles belonging to

either a straight female, straight male, or gay male sales associate). After the participants viewed their assigned target's LinkedIn profile, the participants were asked to imagine themselves in a Macy's department store needing to buy the three appearance-enhancing items (female participants: dress, women's heels, and lipstick; male participants: polo shirt, men's dress shoes, and facial cream) or the three control items (blender, luggage bag, and vacuum). Then, they were asked to imagine a situation in which they were being assisted by their assigned sales associate.

Participants were then presented with a scenario in which they were instructed to imagine picking out items that they would add to their shopping cart to purchase. As part of the procedure, participants were presented with three different sets of four similar products to choose from. For example, women who were assigned to view appearance-enhancing products were presented with four different dresses and were instructed to select the dress that they would like to add to their shopping cart to purchase. The female participants in this condition repeated this task by also selecting from four different high-heeled shoes and four different tubes of lipstick. Men also completed this task but instead of viewing dresses or lipstick, they viewed and selected from a set of four polo shirts, men's dress shoes, and men's facial creams. Participants who were assigned to the control product condition viewed three sets of control products (i.e., four kitchen blenders, four luggage bags, and four vacuum cleaners) and then were instructed to select one item from each of the sets.¹

After participants selected an item from each of the three product sets to add to their shopping cart, they were presented with another scenario asking them to imagine that the sales associate from the LinkedIn profile ("Taylor") evaluated their options and provided feedback. For example, the scenario read: *"Imagine that Taylor assists you and examines the items that you*

¹ The four items that the women first viewed and selected from were also pre-rated on perceived desirability by the same sample of judges ($n = 38$). An analysis of the pre-ratings revealed that each of these items were perceived to be "average" and did not significantly differ from the mid-point of the rating scale (all $p = ns$).

have just selected. Then, imagine that Taylor tells you: "Your choices seem great, but I have some suggestions that you should consider buying instead. I have them in the back..."

Participants were then presented with each of the three appearance-enhancing or control products with a recommendation from Taylor. For example, the participants who viewed the image of the dress also imagined Taylor endorsing the dress product (e.g., "I think that you should buy this dress instead. It is a similar price to the item that you chose originally, and it would look great on you..."). Then, on a Likert-type scale, the participants were asked how likely they would be (1 = very unlikely, 7 = very likely) to purchase the dress that Taylor recommended instead of the original dress choice that they had earlier included in their shopping cart.

Finally, at the end of the experiment, the participants were asked to report the sexual orientation of the sales associate that they imagined interacting with. Because it is common for a subset of research participants to not attend to a manipulation of an experimental variable (Oppenheimer, Meyvis, Davidenko, 2009), this item was used as the manipulation check for the study. The data from the participants who failed to correctly report the sexual orientation of their assigned sales associate were excluded from the analysis ($n = 46$).

3.2 Results

First, I computed two composite scores for the participants' likelihood to purchase the control products ($\alpha = .69$) and the appearance-enhancing products ($\alpha = .60$) by averaging their responses for the three items in each category. Then, I performed a 2 X 2 X 3 between-subjects factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA) to examine whether the participant's likelihood to purchase products varied as a function of (1) the gender of the participant (male vs. female), (2) the type of product (control vs. appearance-enhancing), and (3) the sales associate (straight woman vs. straight man vs. gay man). As expected, the results of the ANOVA revealed a significant three-way interaction between the three independent variables, $F(2, 387) = 3.71, p = .025, \eta_p^2 = .02$.

For women, I first examined whether there was a main effect of the sales associate target on women's likelihood to purchase the recommended products. The analysis revealed that there were no significant differences between the three sales associate targets across both of the control and appearance-enhancing products, $F(2, 387) = 2.60, p = .076$.²

Next, I examined the following for the effect of each gender: the simple effect of the sales associate target within each product type. The results revealed a significant difference in their likelihood to purchase appearance-enhancing products from the three sales associates, $F(2, 387) = 5.27, p = .006, \eta_p^2 = .03$. Pairwise comparisons (Bonferroni correction) revealed that, as predicted, women who received recommendations from a gay male sales associate were more likely to purchase the recommended products ($M = 4.13, SE = 0.22$) than women who received the same recommendations from a straight male sales associate ($M = 3.17, SE = 0.22$), $p = .008, d = .77$, or from a straight female sales associate ($M = 3.33, SE = 0.22$), $p = .034, d = .67$ (see Figure 3-1). In contrast, women did not differ in their perceived likelihood to purchase from a gay man, straight man, or straight woman when they received recommendations to purchase products that did not function to enhance their physical appearance; there was no significant effect of the control product type on women's differential likelihood to purchase from the three sales associates, $F(2, 387) = 1.48, ns$.³

Straight male participants, on the other hand, exhibited a different pattern. There were no significant differences in men's likelihood to purchase appearance-enhancing products [$F(2,$

² Because this difference could be considered "marginally significant" (Pritschet, Powell, & Horne, 2016), I examined the pairwise comparisons (LSD, $p < .05$) between the sales associate targets. Although women were more likely to purchase products from a gay man than from a straight woman ($p = .027$), this difference was not observed between the gay male and straight female nor between the straight female and straight male sales associate conditions ($p \geq .13$).

³ In addition to examining the pairwise comparisons within the levels of the sales associate target, I also tested whether there was a significant difference between the two levels of product type for the gay male sales associate target condition. The analysis revealed a marginal significant difference ($p = .064$) with a small-to-moderate effect size ($d = .47$), indicating that women had a slight preference for purchasing appearance-enhancing—relative to control—products from gay men.

387) = 1.23, $p = .294$] or control products [$F(2, 387) = .32, p = .729$] from the three sales associates. Interestingly, however, when comparing the simple effect of product type within each level of sales associate, men who were advised by a straight female sales associate were more likely to purchase appearance enhancing products from her ($M = 4.41, SE = 0.25$) relative to the control products ($M = 3.66, SE = 0.25$), $F(1, 387) = 4.60, p = .033, \eta_p^2 = .01$. However, this difference was not observed for men who were advised by either a straight male sales associate ($p = .188$) or a gay male sales associate ($p = .448$).

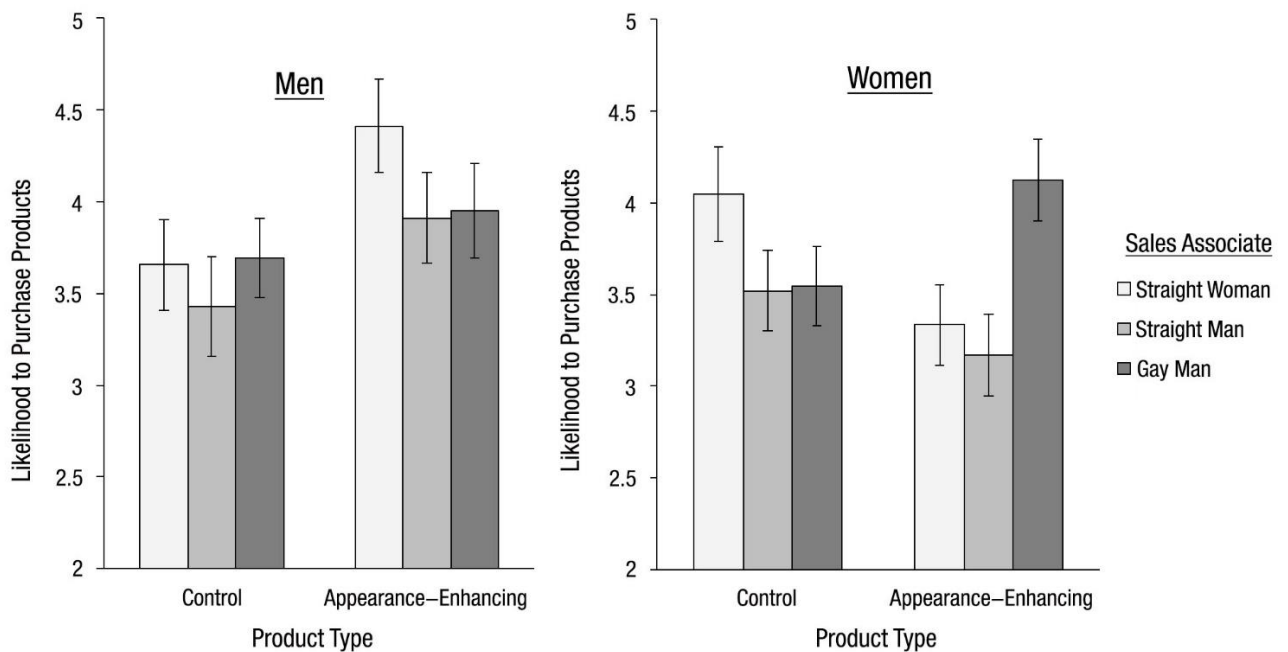


Figure 3-1 Men's and women's likelihood to purchase products from the sales associates as a function of product type and the sales associate target who the participants imagined interacting with (Study 2). *Note:* Error bars represent +/- 1 SE. Full scale runs from 1 to 7.

3.3 Discussion

The findings from Study 2 supported my prediction that women are more likely to purchase products that function to enhance their physical appearance from a gay male sales associate than from a straight male or female sales associate. However, when women were shown products that were unlikely to enhance their physical appearance (e.g., luggage), there were no differences in their likelihood to purchase from the three different sales associates. This finding not only aligns with the previously discovered finding that women are more likely to work with gay salesmen in store departments that sell appearance-enhancing products (e.g., dress and cosmetics departments) (Rosenbaum et. al., 2017) but is also consistent with the hypothesis that gay men's absence of sexual and competitive intentions in these departments contributes to women's increased likelihood to buy the products that gay men recommend. The absence of these intentions should enable women to view the advice of the gay men as more objective and less subject to bias.

Additionally, the findings from Study 2 provided evidence that this effect is specific to women; when men were presented with the two different product types, they did not exhibit a similar inclination to purchase appearance-enhancing products from gay male sales associates. There was one interesting nuance for the straight men in this study, however. Although there were no significant differences in men's purchase likelihood when the different sales associates were compared, there was a significant difference in men's likelihood to purchase from the straight female sales associate when the different product types were compared. Specifically, the men were more likely to purchase products from a woman if those products functioned to enhance the men's physical appearance (relative to the products that could not).

There are two potential interpretations for this finding. First, given the evidence that straight men are, on average, more sexually opportunistic than women are (Clark & Hatfield, 1989; Li & Kenrick, 2006; Koenig et al., 2007), a straight man who receives clothing advice and assistance from an attractive saleswoman may see more benefit working with her in a more

intimate capacity (e.g., asking her to help him try on different clothing items), and may, therefore, be more receptive to her product suggestions. Second, it is possible that because straight men are receiving clothing advice from heterosexual women—the very people who they are looking to attract as potential mates—straight men may be more likely to trust and purchase a saleswoman’s clothing suggestion versus her suggestion for a non-appearance-enhancing product. Future research that intends to examine straight men’s psychology in the context of retail department stores should discriminatively test between these two plausible alternatives.

Chapter 4

Study 3

The results of Study 2 were consistent with the hypothesis that women are more likely to purchase appearance-enhancing products from gay male sales associates than from straight male or straight female sales associates. However, the reasoning behind women's increased likelihood to purchase such products from gay male sales associates can be extended further. And when it is, it leads to a nuanced set of predictions about the contexts in which the observed effect is most likely to occur in retail stores.

Marketing researchers have suggested that the buyers' likelihood to purchase certain products in retail stores is highly dependent on their specific situation (Choi, Lee, & Taylor, 2016; Wakefield & Inman, 2003). Female customers, for instance, may shop for clothing and beauty products for a variety of reasons and special occasions (e.g., weddings, job interviews, dinner parties). As part of the customer service process, female customers are typically encouraged to inform the sales associates how they intend to use the products so that the customers can be given appropriate recommendations (Sharma & Levy, 1995). However, might there be contexts in which female customers feel more comfortable disclosing this information with gay men than with straight women or straight men? In Study 3, I tested the hypothesis that women are more likely to purchase a gay man's product recommendation when the goal behind women's purchase is to attract a desirable mate.

Previous research has revealed that, in mating-relevant contexts, women may fall victim to the exploitative tactics initiated by sexually-interested straight men and to the competitive tactics initiated by envious straight women (Russell, Babcock, Lewis, Ta, & Ickes, in press). For this reason, women learn to be sensitive to the quality of the advice provided by a straight male or straight female sales associate when they are looking to attract a desirable mate. For example, female customers may experience discomfort consulting with a female sales associate in such a context because they may perceive themselves to be in rivalry with the

sales associate, especially if they are in direct competition for the same mates. Women may also be uncomfortable receiving information from straight male sales associates because heterosexual salesmen—who may be sexually attracted to the female customer—may have their own sexual interests in mind and intentionally recommend products to the female customers that are either too revealing or too modest and plain to attract other men. On the other hand, because gay male sales associates are not seen as either sexually interested in women or in competition with them for the same mates (Russell et al., 2017), female customers should feel more comfortable working with gay men in such a context, and therefore, be more likely to trust and purchase their product suggestions.

When female customers consult with sales associates in buying products for non-mating-related occasions, however, there are no apparent reasons why female customers should feel less comfortable working with heterosexual—relative to gay male—sales associates. For instance, a female shopper who is shopping for an outfit to wear to a family event would have equal reason to trust the opinion of a gay male and straight female sales associate due to the absence of mating motives that may elicit feelings of intrasexual rivalry.

My specific predictions for Study 3 were as follows. I predicted that women would be more likely to purchase appearance-enhancing products from a gay man when the product is intended to be used for a mating-related objective (i.e., wanting to look nice for attractive men), but *not* for a non-mating-related objective (i.e., wanting to look nice for parents and relatives). Additionally, in parallel with the findings that were obtained in Study 1, I predicted that this effect would be mediated by two factors in sequence: (a) women's increased comfort working with a gay male sales associate relative to a straight female or straight male sales associate, and (b) women's increased trust in a gay male sales associate's product recommendations relative to their trust in a straight male or straight female sales associate's product recommendations.

4.1 Method

4.1.1 Participants

Two hundred and seventy undergraduate heterosexual women ($M_{age} = 20.26$, $SD_{age} = 4.15$) were recruited from the University of Texas at Arlington's SONA systems subject pool. All participants were awarded course credit for their participation. The sample was 28% Caucasian, 31% Hispanic, 19% African American, and 14% Asian. Eight percent of the sample identified with other ethnicities.

4.1.2 Materials

4.1.2.1 Buying-Objective Vignettes

Two priming vignettes were created that served as the two buying-objective conditions for the study. The first buying-objective vignette asked participants to imagine themselves in a situation where they needed to purchase an outfit to wear to a public party downtown where attractive single men would be in attendance. This priming vignette served as the mating-related objective. The second buying-objective vignette, which introduced the non-mating-related objective, asked participants to imagine themselves in a situation where they needed to purchase an outfit to wear to a party at their parent's house where their parents and relatives would be in attendance. See Appendix A for the full texts of the priming vignettes.

4.1.2.2 Target Stimuli

The same target stimuli that were used in Study 2 were also used for Study 3.

4.1.2.3 Product Stimuli

Like Study 2, the same categories of appearance-enhancing products (a dress, high-heeled shoes, a tube of lipstick) were used as the product stimuli for Study 3. However, given the salience of the two different buyer objectives in Study 3, it is possible that certain appearance-enhancing products for women may be more appropriate to wear for one occasion over another. For instance, female buyers may be less likely to purchase and wear a 'more revealing' outfit when they intend to go to a party with family members than when they intend to

go downtown to attract a potential mate. Thus, I found it important to select products stimuli that were not only average in perceived desirability but also versatile across different occasions. An independent group of female judges ($n = 18$) rated the appearance-enhancing products by indicating their agreement to the following statements as they viewed each product: (1) "I think that this item could be worn to go out," and (2) "I think that this item could be worn to a family party." A paired samples t -test revealed that the products did not significantly differ on these measures, $t(16) = .74$, $p = .47$, indicating that the product stimuli were perceived to be functionally versatile across contexts.

4.1.3 Design and Procedure

The design of this experiment was a 2 (buyer objective: mating vs. non-mating) X 3 (target sales associate: straight female vs. straight male vs. gay male) between-subjects factorial design. Participants completed the study online. When they logged online to complete the experiment, they were told the same cover story used in Study 2. After the participants provided their consent to participate, they were randomly assigned to one of the three target stimuli conditions that depicted the target's LinkedIn profile.

After participants viewed the target's LinkedIn profile, the female participants were randomly assigned by the computer to one of the two buying objective conditions. Participants were instructed to imagine themselves either (1) needing to buy new outfit to wear to a party downtown with single attractive men in attendance (mating objective), or (2) needing a new outfit to wear to a party at their parent's house with their family and relatives (non-mating objective). To further prime the buyer objective, participants were asked to write about their thoughts and feelings about the upcoming party for a period of 3 minutes.

Next, participants were asked to imagine themselves in a Macy's department store with their assigned sales associate (i.e., Taylor) to buy the three appearance-enhancing products to complete their outfit for the party (i.e., a dress, a pair of high-heeled shoes, and a tube of lipstick). Participants were then presented with three items that were designed to assess their

perceived comfort-level working with Taylor under their assigned buyer objective. Specifically, these items read: (1) “I would have peace of mind working with Taylor to prepare for the party,” (2) “I believe Taylor would make me feel good as he/she helps me try different items,” and (3) “I could see myself being more relaxed having Taylor help me decide what to wear for the party.”

Participants were then presented with a scenario in which they were instructed to imagine picking out items that they would add to their shopping cart to purchase. Similar to the procedure of Study 2, the participants were shown three different sets of four similar products: four dresses, four high-heeled shoes, and four tubes of lipstick. Participants were instructed to select the item from each set that they would like to add to their shopping cart to purchase.

Next, the participants were presented with another scenario asking them to imagine that the sales associate from the LinkedIn profile (“Taylor”) had evaluated their options and told them that they should consider her or her recommendations (e.g., “*Your options seem great, but I have some suggestions that you should consider buying for the party instead...*”). On the next screen, participants were presented with the product stimuli and the instructions that asked the participants to imagine Taylor endorsing the product (e.g., “I think that you should buy this dress instead for the party. It would look great on you...”). After participants read this prompt for each of the three products recommended by Taylor, they were asked two different questions. First, they were asked how likely they would be to trust Taylor’s product recommendation. Second, they were asked how likely they would be to purchase the newly recommended product instead of their original choice. These items were assessed on 7-point Likert-type scales ranging from 1 (very unlikely) to 7 (very likely).

Finally, participants were asked to report the sexual orientation of the sales associate that they imagined interacting with to serve as the manipulation check for Study 3. Participants who failed to correctly report the sexual orientation of their assigned sales associate were excluded from the analysis ($n = 39$).

4.2 Results

Prior to the analyses, I created three composite variables: (1) the average of the three items measuring women's perceived comfort working with the sales associate ($\alpha = .85$), (2) the average of the participant's trust in the sales associate's recommendations for each of the three appearance-enhancing products ($\alpha = .78$), and (3) the average of the participant's expected likelihood to purchase each of these three products ($\alpha = .60$). I then conducted a 2 X 3 between-subjects factorial ANOVA to test the effects of the sex and sexual orientation of the sales associate (straight woman vs. straight man vs. gay man), and the buyer objective (non-mating vs. mating) on the participants' reported likelihood to purchase the recommended products.

Replicating the findings from Study 2, the ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of the sales associate's sex and sexual orientation, $F(2, 225) = 9.74, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .08$. Post-hoc comparison tests (Bonferroni correction) revealed that women were more likely to purchase appearance-enhancing products from the gay male sales associate ($M = 4.15, SE = .14$) than from either the straight male ($M = 3.50, SE = .16, p = .01$), or the straight female sales associate ($M = 3.26, SE = .15, p < .001$). There was no significant difference between the straight female sales associate and the straight male sales associate conditions ($p = .71$)

However, the ANOVA also revealed a two-way interaction between the sales associate condition and the buyer objective, $F(2, 225) = 3.23, p = .042, \eta_p^2 = .03$. To probe the interaction, I conducted a simple effects analysis that assessed the effect of the target sales associate within each level of buyer objective. As predicted, women differed in their likelihood to purchase from the three sales associates when they imagined needing the products for a *mating-related* purpose, $F(2, 225) = 12.29, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .10$. Pairwise comparisons (Bonferroni correction) showed that the women who imagined using the products for a mating-related goal were more likely to purchase the appearance-enhancing products from the gay male sales associate ($M = 4.51, SE = .21$) than from either the straight male sales associate ($M = 3.53, SE = .21, p =$

.003, $d = .82$, or the straight female sales associate ($M = 3.10$, $SE = .20$), $p < .001$, $d = 1.16$. In contrast, women did not differ in their likelihood of purchasing the recommended products from a gay male, straight male, straight female sales associate when the products were intended for a non-mating-related purpose, $F(2, 225) = .89$, $p = .41$ (see Figure 4-1).

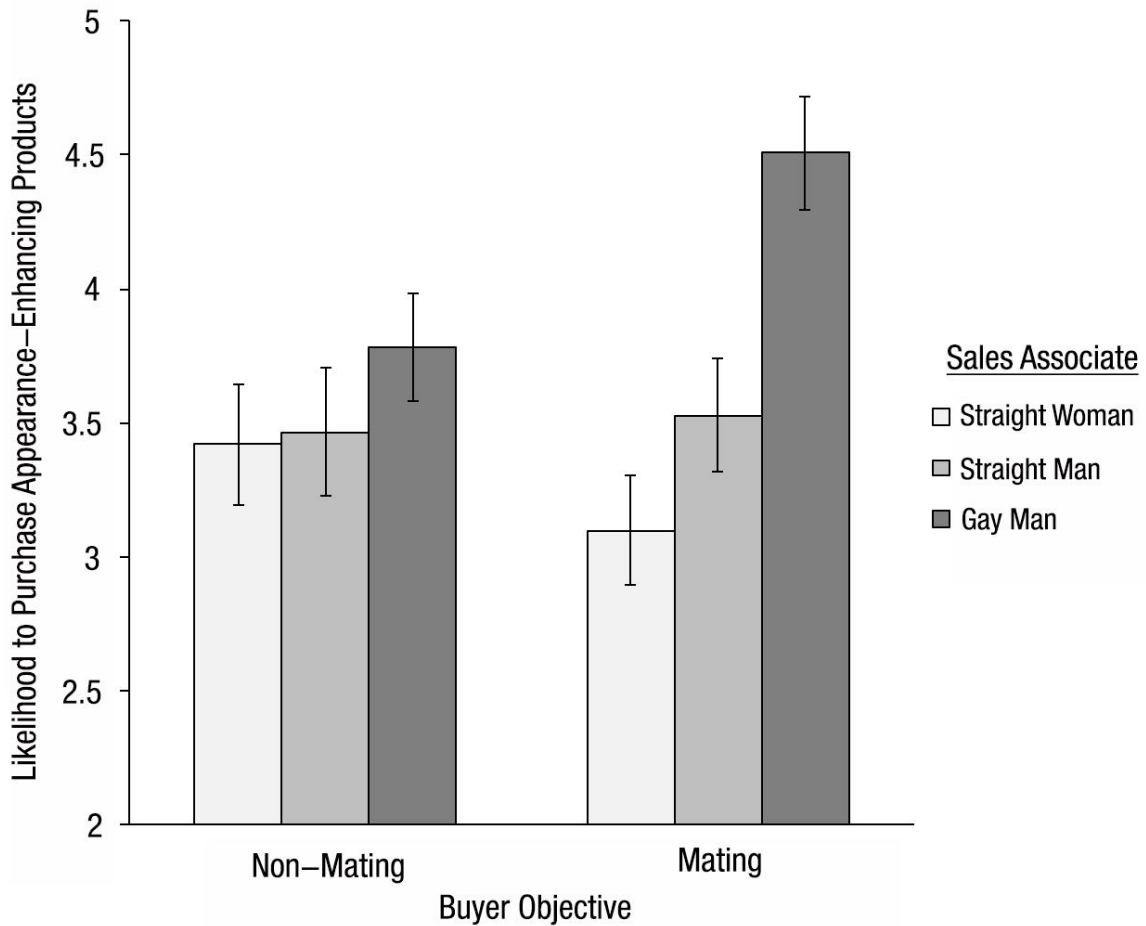


Figure 4-1 Women's likelihood to purchase products from the sales associate as a function of the buyer objective and the sales associate target that the participants imagined interacting with. *Note:* Error bars represent +/- 1 SE. Full scale runs from 1 to 7.

4.2.1 Moderated Serial Mediation Analysis

In parallel with what was predicted in Study 1, I hypothesized that women's increased likelihood to purchase appearance-enhancing products from gay men would be due to the psychological process of feeling more comfortable with gay men and perceiving more trust in their product recommendations. However, I hypothesized that this process mechanism would have its roots in women needing to purchase products for a mating-related purpose. Specifically, I predicted that (1) women's comfort working with gay male sales associates (versus straight male or female sales associates) would be moderated by the buyer objective, and that (2) women's increased comfort with gay (relative to heterosexual) sales associates would influence the women's trust in the sales associate's recommendations, and that (3) women's increased trust in the associate's recommendation would predict their likelihood to purchase the recommended products from them.

To test these predictions, I performed a moderated serial mediation analysis (5,000 bootstrap resamples) in Mplus where the independent variable (target sales associate) was dummy coded. I tested for the presence of two indirect effects: (1) women's likelihood to purchase products from a straight female versus gay male sales associate via women's comfort and trust with them, and (2) women's likelihood to purchase products from a straight male vs. gay male sales associate via the same mediators in sequence. Further, I predicted that these indirect effects would be conditional; specifically, I predicted that they would occur for women who imagined needing the products for a mating-related purpose, but *not* for women who imagined needing the products for a non-mating-related purpose.

The model was initially run with the straight female condition being the reference group (coded as 0). There was a significant main effect of buyer objective, $\beta = -.23$, $SE = .11$, $p = .04$, indicating that participants were, on average, less comfortable working with a sales associate when they were needing the products to attract a mate. However, a significant interaction was revealed between the buyer objective and the dummy coded variable representing the gay male

condition on women's comfort, $\beta = .36$, $SE = .11$, $p = .001$. Simple slopes tests revealed that participants perceived themselves to be more comfortable working with a gay man than with a straight woman when the participants had a mating-related objective, $\beta = .37$, $SE = .10$, $p < .001$; however, there was no significant difference when participants had a buyer objective that was unrelated to mating ($p = .39$).

When the straight male condition was coded as the reference category (0), a second interaction effect emerged between the buyer objective and the dummy coded variable representing the gay male condition, $\beta = .25$, $SE = .12$, $p = .032$. Simple slopes tests revealed that the participant's perceived comfort-level was higher when they imagined working with a gay man than with a straight man when searching for products that were intended to help women attract a mate $\beta = .38$, $SE = .10$, $p < .001$. No difference emerged when participants were primed with the non-mating related objective ($p = .61$). Further, the interaction effect was not observed when the straight male and the straight female sales associate conditions were compared with one another ($p = .36$). See Figure 4-2 for these moderation effects.

Next, I examined the subsequent paths in the model in addition to the indirect effects that I predicted. Replicating the pattern of findings from Study 1, women's increased comfort working with the sales associate predicted their increased trust in his or her product recommendations, $\beta = .49$, $SE = .06$, $p < .001$. Women's increased trust in the sales associate also predicted their reported likelihood to purchase the product, $\beta = .74$, $SE = .05$, $p < .001$. As predicted, when I examined the purchase likelihood difference between the gay male versus the straight female sales associate conditions, there was a significant indirect effect of the sales associate condition on women's purchase likelihood under the mating objective, $\beta = .10$, $SE = .03$, 95% CI [.04, .17]. In other words, when the participants imagined purchasing the products with the intention to attract a mate, the participant's increased likelihood to purchase the recommended products from a gay man (vs. a straight woman) was a result of their increased perceived comfort working with him and their increased perceived trust in his recommendations.

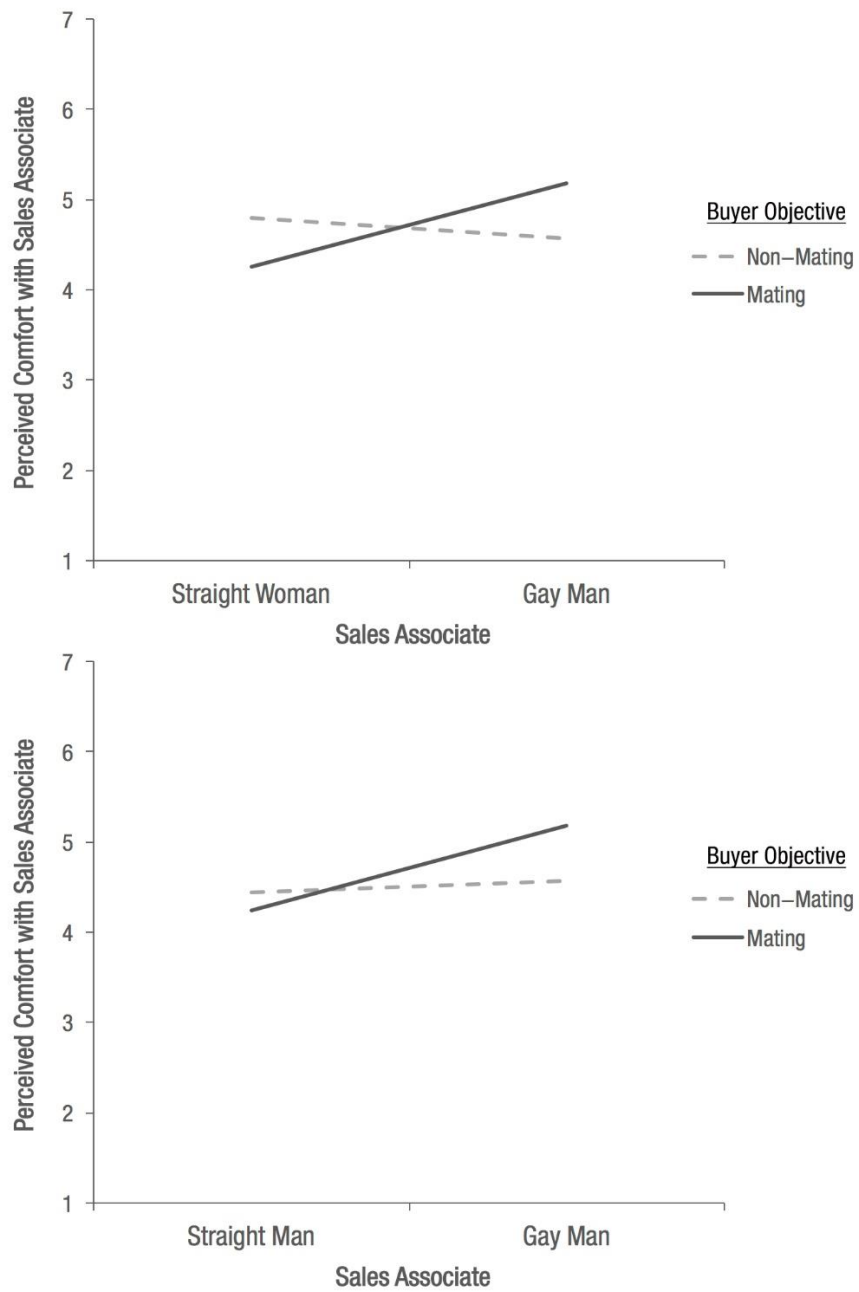


Figure 4-2 Women’s perceived comfort working with the sales associate (straight woman vs. gay man; straight man vs. gay man) as a function of the sales associate target and the woman’s buyer objective.

Additionally, when the gay male and straight male sales associate conditions were compared, another indirect effect was observed on women's purchase likelihood when women were primed with the mating objective, $\beta = .11$, $SE = .03$, 95% CI [.06, .18]; when the participants imagined purchasing the products with the intention to attract a mate, the participants increased likelihood to purchase the recommended products from a gay man (vs. a straight man) was a result of the same two mediators in sequence: their perceived comfort working with the man and their perceived trust in his recommendations. See Figure 4-3 for an illustration of the path model.

Next, I tested whether these indirect effects were also observed for women who imagined purchasing the products for a non-mating-related purpose. As I expected, the indirect effect of the first sales associate condition comparison (straight man vs. gay man) on women's reported purchase likelihood was not significant in the non-mating buying condition, 95% CI [.25, -.07]. Interestingly, however, the indirect effect of the second sales associate condition comparison (straight woman vs. gay man) was significant, $\beta = -.17$, $SE = .08$, 95% CI [-.35, -.02]; when women imagined needing to purchase the products for a non-mating purpose, women who reported an increased likelihood to purchase from the straight female sales associate (vs. gay male sales associate) also reported having increased perceived comfort working with her and having increased perceived trust in her product recommendations.

4.3 Discussion

The findings from Study 3 not only replicated the pattern of results from Study 2, but they also supported the hypothesis that women's likelihood to purchase products from gay male sales associates is specific to the mating domain: women were more likely to purchase appearance-enhancing products from a gay man than from a straight man or woman when they imagined purchasing the products for a mating-related—but not a non-mating related—purpose.

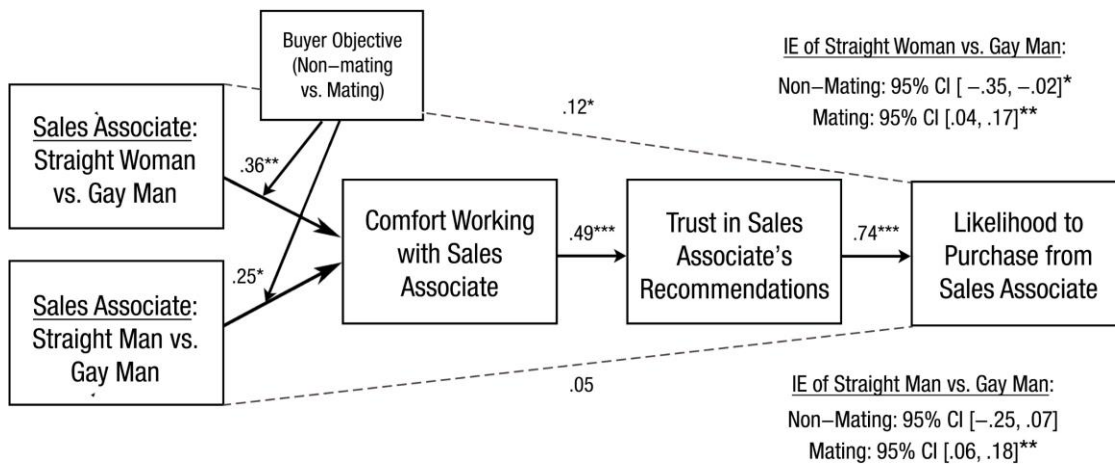


Figure 4-3 Path analysis illustrating the indirect effect of the target sales associate (straight woman vs. gay man, straight man vs. gay man) on their purchase likelihood through women's comfort working with the sales associate and their trust in the sales associate's recommendations. *Note:* Values beside paths represent standardized beta coefficients. Coefficients beside the dashed lines represent the direct effects. IE = indirect effect. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Additionally, consistent with the findings from Study 1, Study 3 provided evidence that women's increased likelihood to purchase appearance-enhancing products from a gay male sales associate was due to women's heightened comfort and trust with the sales associate. However, this pathway was contingent on the women's buyer objective: when women imagined shopping for products intended to help them attract a mate, women who imagined working with a gay male (vs. a straight male or a straight female) sales associate perceived themselves as feeling more comfortable. This increased comfort with the gay male sales associate predicted their increased trust in the sales associate's product recommendations, which ultimately influenced their reported likelihood to purchase the products recommended by the sales associate. When women imagined purchasing the products for a *non-mating*-related purpose,

however, the same serial mediation pathway was not observed when the straight male and gay male sales associate conditions were compared.

Interestingly, women who imagined themselves working with a straight female sales associate under the non-mating objective perceived themselves to be more comfortable, which influenced women's increased trust in the sales associate and women's likelihood to purchase from the sales associate, respectively. This unforeseen result could have been due to the nature of the non-mating objective prime. Specifically, women were asked to imagine themselves in a situation where they needed an outfit to wear to a family party with their parents and relatives. It is possible that women are more comfortable working with a female sales associate when they are shopping for family events, given that women are typically perceived to be more family oriented than men are (Ferriman, Lubinski, & Benbow, 2009; Parker, 2015). Thus, female customers may perceive saleswomen to have more expertise in such contexts, and accordingly, may be more comfortable considering their product recommendations.

Finally, although women's likelihood to purchase from a gay (vs. straight) man was fully mediated by women's comfort and trust in sequence, women's likelihood to purchase from a gay man versus a straight woman was only partially mediated by these factors. In other words, even after controlling for the two sequential mediators (i.e., women's comfort and trust) that were hypothesized to account for women's increased purchase likelihood from a gay man (vs. a straight woman), the women's purchase likelihood was still greater in the gay male sales associate condition than in the straight female sales associate condition. Why? Aside from the benefit (i.e., absence of competitive mating threat) that women are hypothesized to receive from working with gay male sales associates, it is possible that women receive another important benefit that also influences their purchase intent from gay male (vs. straight female) sales associates. For example, previous research has suggested that women value the opinions of gay men because they can give women an idea about what would look good to men (Navvab, 2013; Rosenbaum et al., 2015). From the perspective of a female customer, acquiring such

knowledge from a 'male perspective' might be extremely beneficial to the customer's decision to purchase an item that is intended to attract a potential mate. Thus, future research should examine whether women's valuation of information from the male perspective acts as an alternative mediating path to women's purchase intent from gay male (vs. straight female) sales associates.

Chapter 5

General Discussion

In recent years, marketing and service researchers have noted that female customers are more comfortable working with gay male sales associates in retail settings (Rosenbaum et al., 2015; Rosenbaum et al., 2017). However, from a managerial standpoint, this research has not provided a clear answer to the question of whether these closer and more intimate commercial friendships between gay salesmen and female customers translate into higher sales in retail stores that employ gay male sales associates.

To fill this gap in the literature, I conducted three studies that tested the hypothesis that women's increased feelings of comfort and trust working with gay (relative to heterosexual) sales associates would influence the perceived likelihood that heterosexual women would purchase certain types of products that the sales associate recommends. Based on this hypothesis and insight guided by an evolutionary social psychological perspective, I predicted that (1) women's concern about feeling viewed sexually by straight salesmen and being in potential competition with straight saleswomen would influence their purchase intention from gay men via their increased comfort and trust working with them in the store (Study 1); (2) women would be more likely to purchase products that function to enhance their physical appearance from gay male sales associates than from straight male or straight female sales associates (Study 2); and (3) women's tendency to purchase appearance-enhancing products from gay men would be specific to situations in which female buyers are looking to attract a potential mate (Study 3). Overall, the patterns of data from the three studies supported my general hypothesis and extend the findings of previous marketing and service studies suggesting that women may, indeed, be more likely to purchase appearance-enhancing products from gay male sales associates compared to straight male or straight female sales associates in retail stores.

The current studies also provide evidence of the psychological processes that occur during women's interactions with gay male sales associates. In Study 1 and Study 3, I found evidence that this process begins with women feeling more comfortable consulting with gay men compared to heterosexual male and female sales associates. Next, women's increased feelings of comfort influence their perceived trust in the sales associate's product recommendations. Then, women's increased trust in the sales associate's recommendations affects the reported likelihood that women will purchase the products that the sales associate recommends. Importantly, I found converging evidence that this pathway to women's purchase intent is driven by mating-related factors, such that women who may perceive themselves to be more susceptible to one-sided sexual interest or mating competition reported more perceived comfort working with gay male sales associates.

More specifically, Study 1 examined two mating-relevant individual difference variables (i.e., women's relationship status and women's perceptions of mating competition) that were hypothesized to activate women's anxieties about working with straight men and other straight women, but *not* with gay men. I found that women who had higher perceptions of mating competition in combination with having higher anxiety being in intrasexual rivalry with female sales associates were, as predicted, more comfortable consulting with gay salesmen. Additionally, I found that mated women who had higher anxiety of being viewed sexually by straight salesmen reported being more comfortable consulting with gay men. Then, in Study 3, I experimentally manipulated women's buyer objective so that it was either mating-related or non-mating-related. I predicted that the mating-related—but *not* the non-mating related—objective would moderate women's differential comfort with each sales associate. This prediction was confirmed: the mating-related factor amplified the degree to which the women felt comfortable consulting with a gay salesman versus a straight salesman or a straight saleswoman. Further, the results of both studies revealed that these mating-related factors were responsible for driving women's purchase intent from gay male sales associates.

Collectively, these findings are consistent with my previous research showing that women's comfort and trust in gay men is most pronounced in mating-relevant domains (Russell et al., 2017; Russell et al., in press, Russell, Ickes, & Ta, under review). However, they also add a nuanced view to relationship marketing by combining psychological research examining women's relational trust in gay men with a marketing research framework. Although an alternative account might argue that women's tendency to purchase from gay male sales associates is the result of a stereotype that gay men are more fashionable and stylish compared to straight men (Morrison & Bearden, 2007), the data I present here suggest that women's tendency to purchase from gay men serves a deeper and more cognitively adaptive function: increasing the benefits of receiving unbiased, mating-related advice from gay men, while minimizing the costs of receiving advice that could potentially be tainted with the sexual or competitive motives of straight men and other straight women.

Provided this view, one could speculate whether women are seeking the benefit of receiving "good" advice from gay male sales associates, or whether women are avoiding the "bad" advice from heterosexual sales associates. I would argue that both psychological processes may be at work. Given the evidence from Study 2 showing that women were more likely to purchase appearance-enhancing products than control products from gay men, women may gravitate towards working with gay men in clothing or beauty departments for the unique benefit of receiving "good" advice from a male's perspective. However, because the data from Study 2 also revealed that women's average likelihood to purchase appearance-enhancing products from heterosexual associates was below the scale's midpoint (i.e., a "4" on a 1 to 7 scale)—an indication that they were unlikely to purchase from these associates, women may also be avoiding the advice that heterosexual associates provide due to women's increased concern being sexually or competitively deceived by them.

It is important to note that I am *not* arguing that it is common for sales associates to possess sexual or competitive motives toward their female customers (after all, many sales

associates are motivated to behave pro-socially toward their customers with the primary goal of increasing their sales performance; George & Bettenhausen, 1990). Rather, I assert that because women are likely aware of the sexual and competitive mating threats that they can potentially fall victim to (Krems, Neuberg, Filip-Crawford, & Kenrick, 2015; Russell et al., in press) women's decreased likelihood to purchase products from heterosexual sales associates versus gay male sales associates may reflect what has been termed an error management strategy (see, Haselton & Buss, 2000). Even though women's risk of receiving cynically manipulative advice from heterosexual sales associates is minimal, women who possess mating-relevant goals may still err on the side of placing less trust in the product recommendations provided by straight male and straight female sales associates compared to gay male sales associates.

5.1 Applied Implications for Marketers

The findings from the current research also possess useful practical implications that marketers and applied psychologists should consider. Given the evidence that women may be more likely to purchase appearance-enhancing products from gay male sales associates for mating-related purposes, it may be advantageous for marketers to position gay male sales employees to work and manage special sales events in women's department stores. For example, gay male sales associates could be trained to sell a new lines of beauty products to women by positioning the products as being "perfect for attracting that special someone." Similarly, marketers could feature gay male sales associates in photo or video advertising in which the sales associate is portrayed as recommending a new beauty or clothing product for women who are looking for men to date. The adoption of such marketing tactics could, in turn, stimulate and encourage the hiring of gay men in retail stores, which may also counter the increased discrimination that gay men face in the workplace (Hebl, Foster, Mannix, & Dovidio, 2002; Horvath & Ryan, 2003).

5.2 Limitations and Future Directions

Although the present studies provide the first correlational and experimental evidence that women are more likely to perceive themselves purchasing appearance-enhancing products from gay male sales associates than from straight male and female sales associates, additional research needs to be conducted to examine whether women's increased intention to purchase from gay men translates into more actual purchases in retail stores. In other words, do women purchase appearance-enhancing products from gay male sales associates in retail stores, and are these women spending more money as they continue to consult with these sales associates over time? Answering such questions could influence retail marketing and managerial decisions in stores that sell women's clothing or beauty products.

It is also important to determine whether the present findings are specific to college-aged heterosexual women or are generalizable to other age groups of women. It is possible that older generations of women who are married or approaching menopause would not be concerned about attracting a mate, and therefore, would not have a strong preference to consult with a gay male sales associate instead of a straight female associate, for example. However, it is also possible that working with female sales employees can raise other types of concerns for older women—for example, body-image self-consciousness. In line with this idea, Rosenbaum and colleagues (2017) reported that women who are older with heavier body figures are more comfortable consulting with gay men compared to younger and thinner female sales associates in retail departments that sell apparel. Although the intention to attract a mate with specific mating-related products may not apply to older generations of women, older women seem to prefer working with (and, potentially, purchasing from) gay men so that they can avoid feeling directly compared to younger and thinner saleswomen.

It is also possible that this concern of being compared to another woman may reflect a more general pattern among women who shop in retail clothing stores. Regardless of age, if female shoppers of varying levels of attractiveness and weight are approached and assisted by

a significantly more attractive and thinner female sales associate, then it is likely that heavier and less attractive female shoppers will feel more self-conscious and apprehensive working with the attractive sales associate—who may be able to fit into more desirable clothing items while her customer may not be able to. Indeed, previous research has revealed that women tend to compare themselves to idealized images of women and exhibit lower satisfaction with their own body type (Richins, 1991). Thus, future research should explore whether these implicit social comparisons operate to steer female shoppers away from working with saleswomen and toward working with gay salesmen.

Future research should also examine whether the effects observed in Study 2 and Study 3 generalize to every type of female shopper—even those who do not need assistance in a retail store. For example, would a female customer be more likely to purchase a gay salesman's product suggestion if the female customer already has something in mind that she wants to purchase? This question is important to consider because it suggests that there may be individual difference variables at play that predict whether women are likely to purchase from one sales associate over another. It is possible that the female shoppers who enter a store with little knowledge or expertise about the type of product that they want are the ones who are most likely need a sales associate's recommendation and, accordingly, are more likely to ask for recommendations from gay men versus straight men or other straight women. Service researchers should therefore test whether a woman's perceived knowledge of the product has any impact on their likelihood to work with gay male sales associates and, ultimately, their likelihood to purchase the products that the sales associates recommend.

Finally, future research should further examine the directionality of the relationship between women's comfort with gay men and their likelihood to purchase their recommended products. Although the results from Study 1 provide evidence of the hypothesized pathway from women's comfort with gay men to their purchase intent (i.e., increased comfort → increased trust → increased purchase intent), I was not able to rule out the possibility that this process

could occur in the reverse direction (i.e., increased purchase intent → increased trust → increased comfort). That is, it is possible that when women purchase products from gay men, they may first develop trust for the sales associate's recommendations, and then feel more comfortable working with him in future purchase transactions. However, it is also possible that this process is bidirectional, such that women's increased feelings of comfort with a gay male sales associate may facilitate greater purchase transactions from the sales associate, which in turn, increase the customer's comfort working with the sales associate in future purchase transactions. Indeed, Rosenbaum (2009) has suggested that service exchanges between customers and sales staff is a mutual and reciprocal process: customers who receive information and emotional support from a service provider are more likely to purchase, which in turn motivates the service provider to offer even better service and support for their customers. In any case, the results of the current research provide strong and consistent evidence for a link between women's relational comfort and trust with gay male sales associates and their increased purchase intent from them.

5.3 Conclusions

In the past few years, my colleagues and I have provided convergent evidence that women's heightened level of trust and comfort with gay men is rooted in gay men's absence of competitive or sexual motives toward women (Russell et al., 2013; Russell et al., 2017, Russell et al., in press, Russell et al., under review). Marketing and service researchers have recently extrapolated these ideas to better understand why female customers gravitate toward working with gay male sales associates in retail stores (Rosenbaum et al., 2015; Rosenbaum et al., 2017). The current research integrates and extends both lines of work by examining *why* and *when* women are more likely to purchase specific types of retail products from gay male sales employees. Collectively, the present findings make a strong preliminary case that women are more likely to purchase certain types of products from gay male sales associates, and that women's motivation for doing so is rooted in their increased interpersonal comfort, which is

likely derived from the absence of sexual interest and competition in their commercial friendships with gay men. These findings should have useful practical implications for business research and for managerial decisions involving the hiring and placement of gay sales employees.

Appendix A: Buying Objectives for Study 3

Mating-Related Objective

Vignette 1:

Imagine that you are single, and you've received an invitation to attend a public party downtown. You received word that a couple of attractive guys that you know will be attending this party, so you are looking forward to the evening and hoping to look nice.

Please take a couple of minutes to write about your ideal expectations for the evening (For example: How would you be feeling? What could you see yourself saying? What could you see yourself doing?)

Vignette 2:

Imagine that you let Taylor know that you are looking for a dress, a pair of shoes, and lipstick. When Taylor asks you what the occasion is for these items, you tell Taylor that you are attending a party downtown, and you are hoping to look nice for some good-looking single men.

Non-Mating-Related Objective

Vignette 1:

Imagine that you've received an invitation to attend a party at your parent's house. You know that your parents and a few of your older relatives will be there, so you are looking forward to the evening and hoping to look nice for your family.

Please take a couple of minutes to write about your ideal expectations for the evening (For example: How would you be feeling? What could you see yourself saying? What could you see yourself doing?)

Vignette 2:

Imagine that you let Taylor know that you are looking for a dress, a pair of shoes, and lipstick. When Taylor asks you what the occasion is for these items, you tell Taylor that you are attending a party at your parent's house, and you are hoping to look nice for your parents and older relatives.

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Biographical Information

Eric Russell received his Bachelor of Science degree from Texas Christian University where he majored in Psychology and minored in Nutrition. Following graduation from TCU, he worked as a visiting researcher at the University of Texas (UT) at Austin in the research lab of Dr. David Buss. Eric then entered graduate school at UT Arlington and worked in the research lab of Dr. William Ickes. During his time at UT Arlington, Eric led and developed a program of research that explored close friendships between straight women and gay men from an evolutionary perspective. Over the years, his research has been cited by more than 15 researchers in the field and has given rise to inter-institution collaborations investigating other types of gay-straight friendships. In addition to this research, Eric highly enjoys applied statistics and many types of research methodology. While in graduate school, he gained applied research experience interning at Facebook headquarters doing User Experience (UX) Research. After graduating with his doctorate in Experimental Psychology, Eric happily accepted a full-time job offer with Facebook in Menlo Park, California.