

EXPERIENTIAL RETAILING GOAL?
KEEP YOU SHOPPING!

by Lori-Anne Williams

New faculty member Juanjuan Wu exudes enthusiasm for her work in retail merchandising. Raised in China, Wu received her M.A. from Donghua University in Shanghai. She became a fashion journalist and editor, working for Metropolis, one of the hottest fashion magazines in China, and also wrote for many other popular fashion magazines and national newspapers, such as Shanghai Style, Fashion, China Fashion Weekly, and Shanghai Fashion Times. She later became marketing director for 5th Street Jeans, promoting the product to the media and developing brand marketing plans and strategies.



JUANJUAN WU



GO RED FOR WOMEN STOREFRONT, UPTOWN

In experiential retailing, the focus is the experience of the shopper—assuming that a comfortable and engaged shopper will stay in the store for a longer period of time and make more visits and bigger purchases.

Wu explains that the way a store is laid out, and the way merchandise is displayed alter the way a shopper perceives his or her experience. “Small adjustments make a big difference,” said Wu, explaining that vertical displays engage the shopper in one place, whereas horizontal displays—which ask the customer to move along the display to take it all in—are less effective.

“The change in retailing is really about a change in lifestyle and human behavior,” said Wu. Merchandising used to be targeted to women who probably didn’t work outside the home, and who had

time to shop. Now the clock is ticking for shoppers, who want to get in, get what’s on their list, and get out. Experiential retailers such as Ikea strive to provide thought-out complete solutions for these busy shoppers. They also try to offer simple solutions to complex shopping problems (Saturn’s “no haggle no hassle” policy is an example). Some retailers go out of their way to create an amazing experience—such as REI’s climbing wall.

In today’s retail environment, the store itself is as important as the merchandise inside. Juanjuan Wu is studying the trend. “The goal is to create an experience which is personal, enjoyable, inspiring, stimulating, and memorable, as an added value to the merchandise shoppers purchase and the service they receive,” Wu noted. “The goal is to keep you shopping.”

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CELEBRATING DR. WILLIAMS

by Char Klarquist

The department and college recently celebrated the career and retirement of Dr. Gloria Williams, who has contributed to the outreach, research, and teaching missions of the University of Minnesota for more than three decades. Williams’ research interests remain firmly founded in the interdisciplinary field of home economics, including how knowledge in a discipline

or field of study is structured; the relationship between conceptualization, theory-building, and varied research methods; and social change in the arena of practice. Her post-retirement plans include writing two books: *The History of Clothing Studies in Higher Education* and *A Handbook of Clothing Studies*.



GLORIA WILLIAMS, PH.D.

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COLLEGE OF DESIGN UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

KEEPING THE CUSTOMER
IN MIND

by Suzy Frisch



KIM JOHNSON, PH.D.

Kim Johnson, Ph.D., leads the retail merchandising program the way successful retailers would—by keeping the customer in mind. For Johnson, that customer is the student who needs a strong background in all aspects of retailing before graduation. So when the Department of Design, Housing, and Apparel became part of the new College of Design three years ago, Johnson took the opportunity to strengthen the retail program.

Johnson worked with colleagues at the University of Minnesota and other schools, as well as retail professionals, to determine the most useful coursework for students. The result is a program where students develop both their design and retail business skills, an unusual combination. Many schools offer retail business degrees and others offer the design aspect, but bringing the two together has made Minnesota a singular destination for aspiring retail professionals.

“The key is to understand how design impacts the bottom line,” Johnson said. “Retailing is business and our students get a solid grounding in business. But we are also in the College of Design and we capitalize on the opportunity for students to understand how good design makes for a successful business.”

All retail merchandising majors are given opportunities both theoretical and hands-on, to understand the concepts, theories, and value of design. Majors in both the apparel and non-apparel tracks are required to take a core series of design courses to help them develop a critical eye and their own creativity. Faculty members work with area businesses to provide students with real-world experience. Some examples include designing store windows for retailers located in Calhoun Square (an upscale retail complex in Minneapolis) and in-store displays for local toy store Creative Kidstuff. Students must draw on their own creativity, as well as their understanding of consumer motivation and the principles of good business, to create the final product.

Retail merchandising students also have the opportunity to learn and travel. Recent study trip destinations include New York, London, Paris, Toronto, and Seoul. Writing is emphasized across the curriculum. Students synthesize their design coursework with several core business courses to ensure their complete preparation for future careers. Because the program is located in Minnesota, a major retailing market with several large retail companies headquartered here, students have a wealth of internship opportunities as well.

With a variety of products to offer through courses, internships, and study abroad, the retail merchandising program is very appealing to prospective students—and they are the ultimate customers for Kim Johnson and her colleagues.

retail
merchandising

Welcome to Network, a newsletter bringing you up to date. This issue features an update on the retail merchandising program, a quick view of key faculty, interviews with just-graduated and practitioners turned graduate students. You’ll get a great view of what we are all about—now! Please send your email address to dhainfo@umn.edu for future issues!



RETAIL MERCHANDISING STUDENTS, NEW YORK CITY

RETAIL'S ROLE IN SUSTAINABILITY

by Judy Arginteanu

Hye-Young Kim joined DHA's retail merchandising program in August 2008, but it hasn't taken her long to make her contribution to CDe's focus on sustainability.

Young, a faculty member at Washington State University before coming to the University of Minnesota, has published widely, with particular emphasis on consumer loyalty. Now she is applying that expertise to the growing trend of sustainable retailing. It's a many-layered trend; like the more general notion of sustainability, sustainable retailing is a term that can be fluid at best. Often, it's used to imply that the effort in question is "environmentally friendly"—from selling organic cotton products to managing online bill payment systems to save paper. But, asks Kim, if the organic cotton shirt is made in a highly polluting factory, does it still count as "eco-friendly"?

Moreover, some proponents are pushing the definition even further. "Right now, some industry experts and researchers suggest the framework for sustainable retailing should be extended by embracing more social and economic impacts," Kim noted. For example, she says, suppose you have a shirt made of organic cotton from a low-emissions factory, but it was produced in a sweatshop. Should it then be called "sustainable"? "It's a complicated issue, and we need to look at it as a whole, not in a fragmented manner," she said.

She plans to design a research project about consumers' perceptions and responses to retailers' green efforts, seeking to identify what factors help or hinder the decision to buy green products in a store setting.

Again, it's not a simple issue: "While many consumers care about the environment, they consider other factors when buying products. For example, most consumers do not buy clothing just because it's environmentally friendly." Retailers may have to confront consumer beliefs that organic clothing products are, for example, very expensive or less colorful or less stylish.

And while consumers increasingly seek to be good eco-citizens, she said it's up to retailers to make such opportunities easier and more available.

Kim also wants to generate useful ideas on how retailers can influence changes in production processes and consumption patterns and exert pressure on manufacturers in favor of "truly sustainable" consumer choices. She hopes to publish the results in industry journals, but is also considering outreach activities for consumer education, for example, how to find information about green retailers, and possibly disseminating the information to policy makers.



HYE-YOUNG KIM

Kim sees her work in the retail merchandising program as an important facet of the College of Design's overall focus on sustainability. She's also delighted to be in the Twin Cities, both professionally and personally. "The Twin Cities are an ideal environment to observe the retail industry," she says, noting that national retailers Target and Best Buy, both headquartered here, are involved in sustainability efforts. Between the cities and her work at the University, "it's a perfect match for what I'm doing."

SHOPPERS INFLUENCED BY EMPLOYEE'S DRESS

by Suzy Frisch

Retailers take note: it matters a lot to shoppers what your employees wear and how they present themselves. It can even go so far as to shape consumers' perceptions of a store and the credibility of its sales staff. New emerging research found that more than 80 percent of shoppers experienced feelings while in a store and their perceptions of a store were connected to sales associates' appearance, including clothes, accessories, and grooming.

Apparel Ph.D. students Jae-Eun Kim and Hae-Won Ju teamed with Professor Kim Johnson on the study, "Sales Associate's Appearance: Links to Consumers' Emotions, Store Image, and Purchases." Their article has been published in the *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*.

In their survey, the team polled 62 students about their experiences and reactions right after they shopped for clothing, shoes, or accessories in a specialty or department store. They asked open-ended questions about their positive and negative emotions, opinions of the store's image, and their purchasing behavior.

For 82 percent of participants, aspects of a sales associate's appearance influenced their perception of the store's image. In addition, 29 percent reported that they made purchasing decisions



HAE-WON JU & JAE-EUN KIM

based on an employee's appearance, noting especially if the salesperson wore the store's merchandise.

These findings have broad implications for retailers, who may want to consider insisting that employees wear their merchandise. "Requiring associates to wear a store's merchandise is an effective strategy, so retailers need to consider the store's image when they influence the dress code for sales associates," Kim said. Added Ju, "Retailers need to have some dialogue with their employees concerning the details of their dress and nonverbal cues such as facial expressions."

Kim and Ju, both natives of South Korea, were students in Johnson's course about the behavioral aspects of dress when they devised their research topic for a class project. "Through a review process we found that there is limited research on sales associates' appearance and a lot on

the sales environment," said Kim. "That's why I got interested in this topic."

Some of the most compelling findings for Ju and Kim were how much the looks of sales associates swayed consumers. "I was surprised that 80 percent of participants mentioned that positive emotions were generated by a sales associate's appearance," notes Kim. "Another interesting part related to fit, because the consumer really regarded the fit between the store image and sales associate's image as very important."

Ju and Kim plan to continue researching how salesperson characteristics, including appearance, interaction quality, and perceived sales associate power, influence shoppers' perceptions of employees' credibility, and whether perceived credibility influences consumers' satisfaction.

WHAT IF... TOUCH WERE USED TO CATEGORIZE PRODUCTS AND STORES?

Shoppers see, smell, and hear things in a store; they also touch them before they make a purchase decision. Touch gives a particular advantage to brick-and-mortar stores over online and

mobile venues. If touch sensations were emphasized in retailing, shoppers could be guided by their touch sensations in the search for new products.

GALLAGHER DISCOVERS OPPORTUNITIES IN RETAIL MERCHANDISING PROGRAM

by Lori-Anne Williams

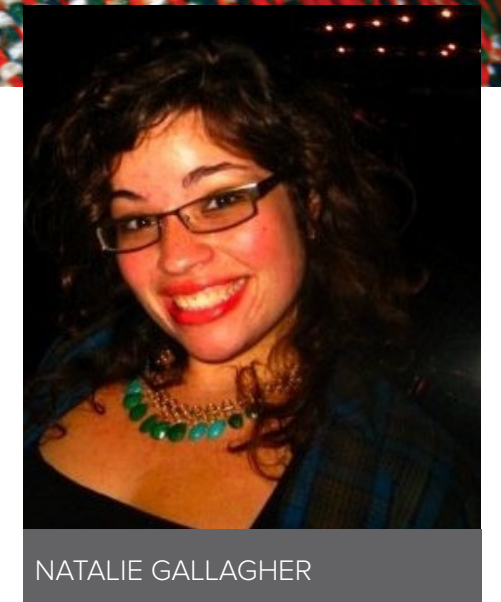
Natalie Gallagher didn't take it easy this summer.

A senior who will graduate in 2010 with dual degrees from the College of Design (retail merchandising) and the College of Liberal Arts (art), Gallagher held a job at J Crew, a summer internship with VIRTEX (a program of the University's Department of Psychology), and completed a University Research Opportunity Program (UROP) project entitled "Mother Daughter Identity Talk: Influences on Appearance Management Behaviors." Driving Gallagher is an insatiable curiosity about consumer behavior and an unabashed enthusiasm for the retail merchandising program.

"When I started the program, I thought my career choices were to be a buyer or a manager," she says of the retail merchandising program, "but I found so much more." Gallagher was especially challenged by product development

classes, where she learned how many roles there are in rolling out a new design line. (Students in the class have the opportunity to present their ideas to executives at Target.) Gallagher now hopes to work in retail, eventually returning to school to get her Ph.D. and pursue a career in research and teaching.

Gallagher encourages other retail merchandising students to make the most of their degree. "There are a lot of opportunities you just don't see at first glance," she said. One such opportunity for Gallagher was a chance to represent the University at the American Collegiate Retail Association's 3rd Annual Charette at the University of Florida last spring. During the charette, Gallagher had the opportunity to work with a team of students from across the country to prepare a presentation for Ron John's Surf Shop, a national retail chain. "We didn't sleep for three days. It was hugely competitive," reported



NATALIE GALLAGHER

Gallagher, "but the level and caliber of work was incredible." She worked with student designers and presented plans for a new Ron Johns store—including business strategy, merchandise placement, and budget information—to the chain's CEO and CFO.

Gallagher credits her professors with pointing out opportunities such as the UROP and attending the charette. She encourages other students to take the extra step. "Talk to upper-class students," she advises, "and get to know your professors. It sounds like old-fashioned advice, but it is so important."



AMERICAN COLLEGIATE RETAIL ASSOCIATION'S CHARETTE

SCHOLARSHIPS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

The Retail Merchandising program is focused on creating privately-funded scholarships to help students meet the rising costs of higher education. The University is offering a rare opportunity to double the impact of gifts through the Promise of Tomorrow Scholarship drive. Gifts of \$25,000 or more are

used to create an endowment fund at the University of Minnesota Foundation and the payout from the fund is matched by the University thereby doubling the impact of the gift. A group of retail merchandising alumni is currently meeting to lay a plan for developing at least one of these matching scholarships. Alumni and friends can help

by making gifts directed to scholarships for retail merchandising students that can then be added to this endowment.

For more information, contact Sue Danielson Bretheim at 612-624-1386, or visit the U of M Foundation's website at: www.giving.umn.edu.