

## Media Relations

# UNH Researcher: For Men, Shopping For Valentine's Day Is All About Rejection

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DURHAM, N.H. – With Valentine's Day less than a week away, millions of men will be in search of just the right gift for their sweetie. According to a shopping behavior expert, more than anything else, men want to be sure that what they buy their sweetie will not be rejected.

Nelson Barber, associate professor of hospitality management at the University of New Hampshire, says men are most concerned with purchasing a gift that has the least possibility of rejection by their sweetie. And it's no surprise that in the minds of men, that gift is jewelry.

"Women like jewelry – or at least men think they do – and men want reassurance that their taste in jewelry is not poorly judged. In other words, men will take the path of least resistance and purchase an item that will have the least amount of social interaction with sales personnel and lowest probability of rejection from their loved one," Barber says. "Essentially, men tend to spend money on larger, less risky items that ultimately have the 'wow' factor."

"Men will avoid that risky purchase of a sweater that looks like something her grandmother would wear or a sexy item that only certain movie stars would wear. Men fear the 'why did you purchase that' or 'this is really nice of you' as she puts it in the back of her closet," he says.

When it comes to selecting that Valentine's Day gift, men and women approach the process entirely differently. Women are more like foragers and men are more like hunters.

"Women are happy to forage around sprawling clothing and accessory collections or take the long way around through the shoe department. They like to spray a perfume sample on themselves on their way to making a purchase. On the other hand men consider the shopping experience as a mission, much like hunting. They find a targeted item, make the kill – the purchase – and leave the store as quickly as possible," Barber says.

Women react strongly to personal interaction with sales associates. In fact, allegiance to a store is related to sales associates' familiarity with the products and an ability to determine what products best suit their needs. Women shoppers also value sales associates who make them feel important.

For many men, such situations are uncomfortable. While many men would love to purchase a sexy item or even something as simple as a sweater for their mate, they find engaging with a sales clerk for such an intimate item socially challenging.

"Men are more likely to respond to the utilitarian aspects of the experience – such as the availability of parking, whether the item they are seeking is in stock, and the length of the checkout line. Women in many ways are more invested and engaged in the shopping experience, while men want to buy a specific item and get out," Barber says.

And when it comes to Internet shopping, the professor says that although men experience less social risk of confronting the sales person, their habits are very similar to in-store shopping. On the other hand, women have no problem "foraging" on the Internet, and tools that allow for viewing colors, styles, and accessories provide this avenue of shopping.

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea, and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling 12,200 undergraduate and 2,300 graduate students.

 
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Media Contact: [Lori Wright](#) | 603-862-0574 | UNH Media Relations

Researcher Contact: [Nelson Barber](#) | 603-862-3571 | UNH Department of Hospitality Management

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UNH Experts available for comment:

- [Nelson Barber](#)



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