

BUSINESS BOOKSHELF

Getting a handle on what drives women to buy

Two books aim to give retailers and makers of goods insight into the decision process of this consumer powerhouse.

JONATHAN BIRCHALL

Women Want More

How to capture your share of the world's largest, fastest-growing market

Michael J. Silverstein and Kate Sayre

Harper Collins, \$27.99, 336 pages

Why She Buys

The new strategy for reaching the world's most powerful consumers

Bridget Brennan

Crown Publishing, \$26, 336 pages

Any recovery is likely to be consumer-led, so retailers in particular are becoming the focus for signs of new trends in what the customer wants.

As "Women Want More" points out, the majority of consumer spending in the U.S. is controlled by women, and the authors of this new book predict that the purchasing power of women around the world will continue to grow. They also suggest that the expansion of women's spending will help lead the way out of the current slump.

This book and another recently published title, "Why She Buys," go some way to guiding retailers and consumer goods manufacturers on how these increasingly powerful customers think and shop.



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A SHIFT: Vannessa Obermaier works at a Best Buy in Miami. The firm is promoting more female staff and trying to make stores more appealing to women.

In "Why She Buys," Bridget Brennan begins with a traumatic afternoon at a car showroom. The author and her husband are contemplating buying a BMW 540i model. They are impressed by the smooth test drive and the Teutonic engineering. But then Brennan notices the inadequate cup holders.

The salesman's dismissive response that Europeans don't drink coffee in the car fails to save the deal from Brennan's veto — proof, she argues, that manufacturers and retailers must ask themselves if they are addressing women's demands, even in the manly world of the car showroom.

Brennan, head of Female Factor Corp., a Chicago-based consulting firm, delivers an often entertaining and bullet-