

Study: Black shoppers profiled more frequently

By Marisa Torrieri
Special to Sentinel-Voice
CHICAGO (NNPA) - It doesn't matter if you're Oprah Winfrey shopping at Hermès, or an ordinary pedestrian browsing the shops lining Chicago's Magnificent Mile.

If you're a minority — and especially an African-American or Latino — and you're shopping, you're more likely to have been racially profiled, whether at upscale boutique or a fast-food joint, according to a new study.

Fifty-six percent of African-Americans, according to the study, have felt at some time that a security guard or store clerk was watching them more intently than White customers, according to the study. The study, a random national phone survey of 4,300 people ages 16 and

older, was conducted earlier this year and presented at the Target Market News Black Consumer Research and Advertising Summit at the downtown Wyndham Hotel.

"Race consciousness is high on the screen of African-Americans," said McGhee Williams Osse, a co-chief executive officer of Chicago-based Burrell, an advertising and communications agency that co-authored the annual Yankelovich MONITOR Multicultural Marketing Study. Yankelovich, a national market research firm, conducted the interviews which were analyzed by Burrell.

"In the case of Oprah and the retailer she had a problem with, this is something we face everyday, regardless of class," said Williams Osse during a news conference before her presentation to

200 attendees, mostly Black marketing executives from Fortune 500 companies.

The goal of the report, said Williams Osse, is to help retailers more effectively sell to minorities, and especially African-American and Hispanic consumers. One key finding revealed in the report — which coincided with a recent incident in which Oprah was reportedly rebuffed at a Paris Hermès boutique — is that minorities feel they are lumped into homogeneous groups, or stereotyped, by workers at every level of a retail chain from sales associate to CEO.

Instead, marketers should target consumers in a non-condescending fashion, and carefully consider their wants and needs based on socioeconomic status, attitude, brand recognition, and their desires for information and products,

said Lorraine Miller, vice president of research for Burrell.

"You can talk to anyone if you know how to target them correctly," Miller said.

The study highlighted six different consumer groups in its African-American model, including "Emulators," who are generally status-focused students identifying with young, urban trendsetters, and "Reachers," who are often single parents working toward the American dream and want the products and services that give them the "biggest bang with their buck."

Williams Osse said she identified with Oprah, recalling an instance 10 years ago when she wanted to buy an expensive car, and she walked into the auto dealership wearing jeans and a "big old T-Shirt," with her hair

pulled into a ponytail. She waited half an hour before she was forced to complain to win the attention of a sales associate. "They clearly made an assumption," Williams Osse. "I don't know in our lifetime that [racism] is going to go away."

And such incidents won't end simply by increasing marketing during Black History Month in February, a time that many companies do outreach to Black consumers, Miller added.

Corporate executives need to implement policies and tailor marketing campaigns to make Black, Hispanic and other minority groups more comfortable. Such policies must be followed from the top down to the showroom floor.

"It really has to start in the boardroom," Williams Osse said. "It has to trickle down

to every level of the company."

According to the study, 46 percent of Blacks have been made to feel unwelcome in a store, and 88 percent agree discrimination is still prevalent on a daily basis. The same held true for 81 percent of non-White Hispanics. And whether on Chicago's Oak Street or Rue du Faubourg Saint Honoré (where Oprah went for Hermès goods), elite boutiques should pay attention to such numbers.

"It's important for a salesperson not to place stereotypes on consumers," said student Ian Ponder, 20, who is Black and lives in Chicago. "There are so many people used to seeing people of the same color. When difference comes, a lot of people don't know how to react."

Marisa Torrieri writes for the Chicago Defender.

Store

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asked: "Do you support one man, or a whole community?"

The City of Las Vegas said that it will continue to work to help find a tenant for the existing store in Edmond's center, but will release the land on MLK soon if otherwise.

Edmonds, who was not at the news conference, said he opposed the proposed second site for several reasons: "The people that are talking about putting a grocery store there aren't developers and don't know what they are talking about," he said. "In my opinion, it's not a good location for a grocery store."

Edmonds believes that corner is better for office businesses, similar to the ones that are located in the adjacent Enterprise Park offices — EOB Micro Business Center and the area Police Command. The park is being expanded, and the proposed new tenants include a new building for the Urban Chamber of Commerce and service-oriented businesses, according to Edmonds.

"Those are not retail businesses. A grocery store is not in keeping with that kind of development," Edmonds said. "To me, that would kill the whole theme of Enterprise Park," he explained.

He further said that the traffic flow on Martin Luther King is "through traffic, North to South, going back and forth — it's not neighborhood traffic."

He also expressed his dismay that the organization and residents advocating for a location other than the Vons site are "taking away the syn-

ergy" that existed before, when the focus was H and Owens.

One resident agrees and emphasized his view at the meeting. D. C. Rider said "it was great" when [the initiative] started and it was aimed at the Vons store site. Now, he believes it's going in the wrong direction.

"In the meantime, we abandoned our own neighborhood — and the Black man who has a [development there]," Rider said.

The City has supported the development of Edmond's 10.5 acre new neighborhood retail center at H Street and West Owens adjacent to the Edmond Town Center during its construction, which has had its deadlines extended several times over the contract period and most recently, last Wednesday.

"Mr. Edmonds was given an extension due to construction delays and time lost due to rain [late last year and earlier this year]," according to Diana Paul, public informa-

tion officer for the City. She said that it was decided at the council meeting last week.

Some of the area residents and members of ACORN said they are growing impatient with the passing months.

"We are tired of being held hostage by Edmond Town Center," said Dunn-Jones in a news release. "It is time for the City to respond to the needs of this community and pursue a strategy that we know will be successful."

Dunn-Jones explained her frustration and her remarks at the Thursday news conference:

"We are here today to make sure the City keeps its deadline of September 1...and issue an RFP [request for proposal] for the development of a full-service grocery store."

Dunn-Jones and others seem to be united on the point that neither a discount grocer nor a super-size store is desired. As for Vons re-opening a store at the new

location, Assemblyman Harvey Munford, who spoke at the meeting in support of ACORN and the resident's initiative, said, "It would be interesting."

Munford said that many of his neighbors in the District 6 area he represents felt "burned" by Vons.

In a written statement following the Wednesday Council meeting, the City said: "While we continue to work with Mr. Edmond, if those efforts do not bear fruit, the City will request proposals from grocers for the Martin Luther King location. Maybe at the end of the day

we'll be fortunate enough to have more than one supermarket for the community."

When asked, Edmonds said that the area cannot support two grocery stores. ACORN's representatives said they want to have at least one store, and repeated, "We want it now."

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The Southern Nevada Black Nurses Association will provide blood pressure screenings.

Call 940-5423 for more conference information

A Collaborative effort of: University of Nevada Cooperative Extension, Southern Nevada Black Nurses Association, Southern Nevada Coalition of Concerned Women, and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority

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