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Hedonic Motivation & Post-Purchase Communication

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Abstract

This paper serves as a review of existing literature for the purpose of identifying potential future areas of research as it relates to the industry of e-Commerce in the apparel field. Within this paper, I use research in the subject of online consumer behavior to draw similarities and differences with research in the subject of online apparel consumer behavior. The intent is to highlight a distinction between the categories of a more generalized online consumer and an online apparel consumer, with particular attention on consumer-type responses to, and interaction with, hedonic atmosphere attributes as well as electronic word of mouth.

Key Words

Apparel, fashion, e-Commerce, online shopping, online consumer, hedonic motivation, post-purchase, eWOM, website attributes, literature review

Introduction

The growth of the online shopping industry has received much attention in recent years as traditional brick and mortar retailers struggle to re-capture slipping market share, learn how to utilize the internet as a part of an Omni-channel distribution strategy, and communicate effectively with their digital customers. In the last 12 months, the e-commerce industry in the United States generated almost four hundred million in retail sales as indicated in the table below.

The U.S. Census Bureau released a report on November 17, 2016 revealing a 15.7% increase in e-commerce retail sales in this year's third quarter as compared with Q3 2015. The report shows that internet sales have maintained an adjusted year-over-year growth rate higher than 15% for the last five quarters and already accounts for 8.4% of total retail sales. Additional research suggests that the e-commerce marketplace will account for 10% of total retail sales by 2019 (Hsu, Lin, & Louis, 2016). Some quick math using the average year-over-year growth for total retail and e-commerce (1.92% and 15.45%, respectively) indicates that the channel could hit 10.1% by the end of Q1 2018. The growing size and economic impact certainly warrant considerable attention to and research of this industry by the academic community.

(in millions)	Total Retail	E-Commerce Retail	E-Commerce % to Total	Same Qtr Last Year
Q3 2016	1,212,489	101,251	8.4%	15.7%
Q2 2016	1,201,330	97,392	8.1%	16.0%
Q1 2016	1,183,779	93,046	7.9%	15.5%
Q4 2015	1,186,184	89,454	7.5%	15.1%
Q3 2015	1,185,880	87,530	7.4%	15.1%

Figure 1: U.S. Census data reporting on the last 5 quarters

Motivation is a popular subject for consumer behavior researchers who seek a better understanding of the personal preference of one distribution channel over another. Two main types of consumer motivation identified in existing literature can be classified as either hedonic (pleasure-seeking) or utilitarian (task-oriented). The online shopping environment is considered by consumers to be a more utilitarian retail channel than brick and mortar (Forsythe & Liu, 2010). Demonstrating this belief, shoppers have been found to prefer the internet for the benefits of its perceived time and financial savings, product variety, and lack of physical contact or social interaction (Agudo-Peregrina, Chaparro-Pelaez & Pascual-Miguel, 2015). Two key barriers of online shopping are identified as 1) a failure to satisfy the shopper's hedonic needs due to the lack of an engaging and exciting atmosphere and 2) an increased perceived risk for post-purchase dissatisfaction occurring when the delivered product does not meet expectations (Agudo-Peregrina et al., 2015).

There are three theoretical models described in this paper which serve as a foundation for research on utilitarian versus hedonic online shopping environments and the post-purchase phase of a consumer's decision to purchase. Two of these theoretical models are frequently used in existing research of online consumer behavior to explain the use, acceptance and adoption of the internet as a retail channel. First, the theory of reasoned action (TRA), a broad model not specific to consumer behavior uses a person's attitude and the perceived subjective norm to predict intended behaviors across various fields (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). As an adaptation of TRA, the technology acceptance model (TAM) was developed to predict the user adoption of new technology, such as online shopping, by evaluating its perceived ease of use (PEOU) and perceived usefulness (PU) (Davis, 1989). Here, the topics of website design "flow" and usability are examined to support the area of hedonic shopping motivation. A third theory frequently

referenced in consumer behavior literature features the consumer decision-making process and is

known as the Engel, Kollat and Blackwell (EKB) model. The EKB model examines external

elements including individual characteristics, social influences, and situational/economic factors

to determine how they might influence the decision-making process (Blackwell, Engel & Kollat,

1978). Within this paper, the post-purchase behavior of electronic word of mouth as expressed

through customer reviews is examined as a tool to optimize and amplify the customer's pre-

purchase information search.

Research on traditional consumer behavior is vast, sound, and well-established. However,

when online shopping emerged as a new channel of retail, many of these existing classical

consumer behavior theories were simply applied to the developing field. Researchers have since

warned against the direct application of traditional theories onto online consumer research, as

there are significant differences between these two consumers in terms of their shopping

motivation and demographics (Chan, Cheung, & Limayem, 2005).

Much as online consumer behavior should be considered independently from traditional consumer behavior, so too should the apparel category be studied separately from a broader e-commerce industry (Birtwistle, McColl, O'Malley, & Siddiqui,
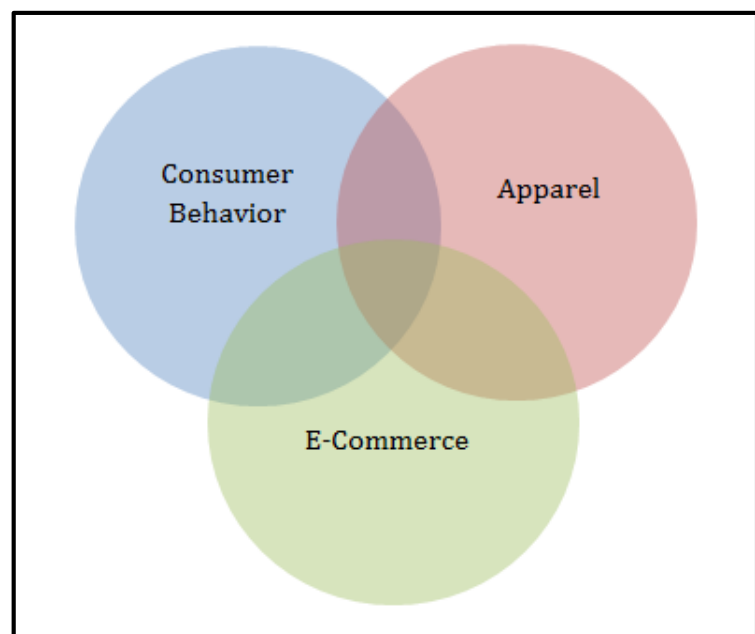

Figure 2: Relationship between fields of study

2003). Research on consumer behavior, e-Commerce and apparel can be composed within

varying degrees of relation to one another. Figure 2 shows the relationship between the three

fields within existing literature; the intersecting center representing the relatively small pool of

studies that address online apparel consumer behavior.

According to a report published by ComScore, in 2015 the apparel and accessories

category surpassed computer hardware as the leading merchandise line in e-commerce for the

first time, bringing $51.5 billion in sales to the e-Commerce channel (Halzack, 2016). Figure 3

displays the size of the e-Commerce apparel industry as compared to total retail and e-commerce

sales. It shows 2015 data from U.S. Census documents for total retail and e-commerce sales, as

well as third party research on e-commerce sales by category (Halzack, 2016), to show that the e-

commerce merchandise category defined as "apparel and accessories" accounted for 15.1% of

total e-Commerce sales and 1.1% of total retail sales. In 2015, e-Commerce as a whole
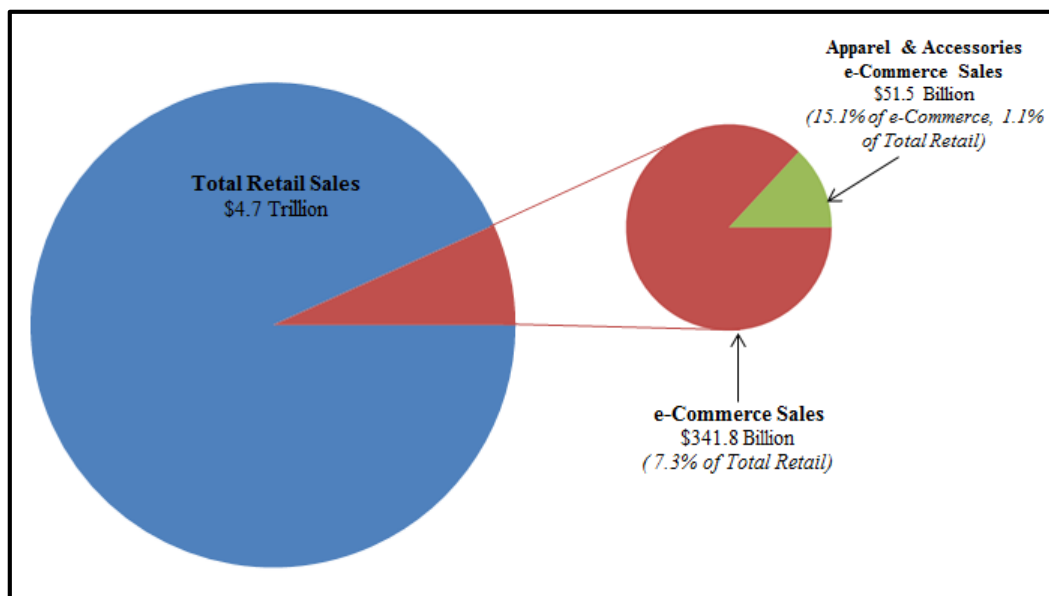
represented 7.3% of total retail sales.

Figure 3: 2015 Sales of total retail, e-Commerce, and apparel & accessories e-Commerce

The Washington Post suggests that strong increases in this online category of apparel and accessories can be attributed to both hedonic shoppers demonstrating impulsive behavior and retailers reducing the perceived risk of post-purchase dissatisfaction through lenient return policies (Halzack, 2016). These results from 2015 support a cause for further research into hedonic motivation and post-purchase behavior within the apparel and accessories category as an opportunity for retail growth in the online market.

Within the following sections, this paper first provides a definition for the online apparel consumer. Subsequently, existing literature in the subject of online consumer behavior is examined to draw similarities and differences with research in the subject of online apparel consumer behavior. Specific studies are analyzed between the two consumer categories focusing on the key barriers of 1) online apparel consumer's hedonic shopping needs, such as impulse behavior and exploratory search; and 2) interaction with post-purchase behavior, such as electronic word of mouth, as a means of reducing perceived risk due to dissatisfaction. Then, based on this analysis of existing research, possible solutions for overcoming the two key barriers of online shopping for apparel consumers are proposed. Finally, potential future areas of research are identified as related to the industry of e-Commerce in the apparel field.

Online Apparel Consumer Profile

One of the benefits for online retailers is the ability to customize messaging and product offerings to specific groups of target customers. This section seeks to answer the question of "who is the online apparel consumer?" by identifying demographics and defining key motivators for the purpose of better understanding how to reach this specific customer.

Motivational factors are often used to help define consumer-types and identify reasons why one might shop online while another shops in physical stores. The two main types of consumer needs are commonly identified as either being utilitarian or hedonic (Hernandez, Minor, & Wang, 2010; Eastin & Kim, 2011; Tuten, 2008). A customer seeking to satisfy either of these needs might choose an online or physical store depending on each channel's perceived benefits.

A customer seeking to fulfill a utilitarian need is goal-oriented and prefers gaining from their online experience by making a purchase or collecting information for a future purchase. Research shows that consumers consider the online shopping environment to be favorable for utilitarian purchases (Forsythe & Liu, 2010). Consumers are compelled to shop online for the perceived benefits of its convenience, lower prices, product variety, reduced physical contact, feeling of adventure or accomplishment, and online brand exclusivity (Agudo-Peregrina, Chaparro-Pelaez, & Pascual-Miguel, 2015). On the other hand, a hedonically motivated customer does not shop for the purpose of completing a task, but rather for an entertaining experience and typically prefers an in-store shopping environment (Eastin & Kim, 2011; Chebat, Putrevu, Richard, & Yang, 2008). Consumers who choose to shop in-store do so because they are able to evaluate the product quality and purchase risk in person, ask direct questions, and are able to leave with the product in hand (Fan, Lin, Wai, & Wang, 2016). Consumers view the most significant obstacles for shopping online to be the ease of website use and risk for the product not meeting expectations (Agudo-Peregrina, et al., 2015; Diriker, Passyn, & Settle, 2011).

There are many notable differences when comparing the in-store consumer, online consumer, and the apparel and accessories online consumer. The online consumer is predominantly male and of a younger generation than the in-store consumer (Diriker, et al.,

2011). Men were the early adopters of online shopping and preferred it for utilitarian reasons (Chebat, Putrevu, Richard, & Yang, 2008). The online consumer is typically utilitarian motivated, or goal driven, and unlike the in-store consumer, is not affected by their shopping environment's hedonic attributes (Eastin & Kim, 2011; Forsythe & Liu, 2010). Finally, only 20.9% of multi-channel shoppers conduct research in stores before purchasing online, as opposed to the 79.1% of multi-channel consumers who are influenced by research online before purchasing in-store (Hogan & Paul, 2015).

Although men are the main users of the internet channel for online shopping, researchers found men to be more likely to purchase electronics over the internet, whereas females were found to be more likely to purchase clothing (internet as a shopping/purchasing tool source). Therefore, the apparel and accessories online consumer is predominantly female. However, it should be noted that only 75% of female consumers have made an online purchase as opposed to 82% of male consumers (Chebat, Putrevu, Richard, & Yang, 2008). With women being responsible for 83% of total U.S. consumer spending annually (Brennan, 2013), there is great opportunity for retailers in attracting more female consumers to the online shopping channel. Understanding that the online apparel and accessories consumer is predominantly female, and the online electronics consumer is predominantly male, the recent accomplishment in 2015 of apparel and accessories surpassing computer hardware as the biggest e-commerce merchandise category might indicate that the adoption of online shopping by female consumers has already begun to climb. Further research should be composed to determine if this growth can be attributed to the female consumer. Finally, it is found that apparel and accessories consumers are looking for a more hedonic and engaging shopping experience when shopping in the online channel, but are less influenced by fashion involvement than the in-store apparel consumer

(Flynn & Goldsmith, 2004; Fogel & Schneider, 2009). As indicated by the findings from previous research, both the motivation and demographics of online apparel and accessories consumers differ from both the in-store apparel and accessories consumers as well as the general online consumer.

Literature Review

With an understanding of the online apparel and accessories consumer and how they differ from both the general online consumers and in-store apparel and accessories consumers, the following section of this paper more closely examines the findings of existing literature to identify common occurrences and draw parallels in the behavior of these different consumer categories, as applied to the areas of hedonic shopping motivation and electronic word of mouth.

Several limitations were encountered in reviewing existing research for this paper. First, the subject merchandise category creates restrictions for the cross-application of research findings. A review of literature finds that many studies in online consumer research use specific individual consumer product categories such as books, gaming consoles, craft beer and film (Chou, Pearson, & Picazo-Vela, 2013). Another constraint observed in existing literature was the seemingly large number of studies that use students as their sample population. Although this is a very common and widely accepted sample group in the academic community, further consideration should be given in its use for online consumer behavior studies. This is because collecting data from a pool of college students, regardless of sample size, imposes the increased likelihood of skewed results due to selection bias, since Millennials, those born between 1982 and 2004 (Bump, 2014), make up the largest group of online consumers (Stevens, 2016). Finally, further reducing the number of relevant resources on this subject is the date of publication. Due

to the newness and ever-changing dynamic of the field, studies as recent as ten years can be disregarded as irrelevant or outdated in my own opinion. Articles from 2010, just six years ago, often times read as shallow, mainly speculative, and unscientific. For example, one article from 2010 suggests collecting data on the number of "hits" that a website might receive, a term that is replaced in more recent literature by "unique visitors" (Schaupp). In reviewing the research for this paper, careful consideration was used to determine which findings could be applied to the online consumer, and more specifically the online apparel consumer.

In comparison with traditional consumer behavior, the areas of e-Commerce and fashion studies are much fresher in the scholarly world. The academic studies of consumer behavior emerged in the early 1950's after World War II, becoming well developed by the late 1970's (Bettman, Kassarjian & Lutz, 1978). Meanwhile, scholars only more recently began to accept fashion as a respectable subject for cultural studies (Clemente, 2014; Evans, 2013; Roche, 1987). One of the earlier references found which cites the significance of fashion as material culture is from 1987 and argues that "clothing is a good indication of the material culture of a society, for it introduces us immediately to consumer patterns and enables us to consider the social hierarchy of appearances" (Roche, p. 160). Last, the internet as it is used today did not come to fulfillment until just over two decades ago (Cerf, et al., 2012).

There are fewer scholarly journals focused purely on online consumer behavior. More commonly found are traditional business and marketing journals that release special issues periodically which delve into the topic of online consumer behavior. The most useful resource for literature in the topic of online commerce as it applies to apparel consumers was found to be the *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management* which focused on the apparel industry and published studies on the e-commerce channel.

Although the internet shopping channel boasts the ability to collect and analyze massive amounts of consumer data, the type of data available does not quite paint a complete picture of the online consumer. One reason for our incomplete understanding of online consumer behavior could be related to the quantitative nature of the data available. By collecting mainly numerical data such as click-through rates, conversion, glance views, bounce rates, navigation usage, search terms, and even eye and mouse movement, researchers are able to surmise a great amount about what consumers are reacting to and how, but not necessarily why. It might be that researchers are intrigued by online consumer motivation because the internet is a "complicated socio-technical phenomenon and involves too many factors" (Hsu, et al., 2016).

As previously mentioned, three theories that often occur in online and/or apparel consumer behavior studies are the theory of reasoned action, technology acceptance model and the Engel, Kollat and Blackwell model. Stemmed from social psychology, TRA is widely used across many fields of research and is not specific to consumer behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). However, it has been found useful in predicting consumer behavior and serves as a strong foundation for research in this field (Chan, Cheung, & Limayem, 2005). TRA finds that a person's behavior can be predicted based on a combination of their attitude and the subjective norm of that behavior. It measures the strength of one's behavioral intention to determine the likelihood of completing the actual behavior in question. TAM was developed as an extension of TRA, and is widely embraced by the scholarly world for explaining online consumer behavior (Chan, Cheung, & Limayem, 2005; Forsythe & Liu, C, 2010). TAM was developed to explain the use and adoption of a new technology by its users. It does this by measuring two variables, perceived ease of use (PEOU) and perceived usefulness (PU). Perceived ease of use is defined as the degree to which a person believes using a certain technology would be without effort and

match their skill level and perceived usefulness is defined as the degree to which a person

believes that using a certain technology would improve production or provide convenience

(Davis, 1989).

Lastly, the EKB model as portrayed in figure 4 examines a consumer's decision making

process as influenced by various internal and external elements including individual

characteristics, social influences and situational or economic factors (Blackwell, Engel & Kollat,

1978). Since it has been determined that consumers prefer an in-store environment for shopping

to satisfy hedonic needs, the first pre-purchase decisional variables examined in this paper is the

consumer's motives, and how their expectations are being met in the online channel if they seek

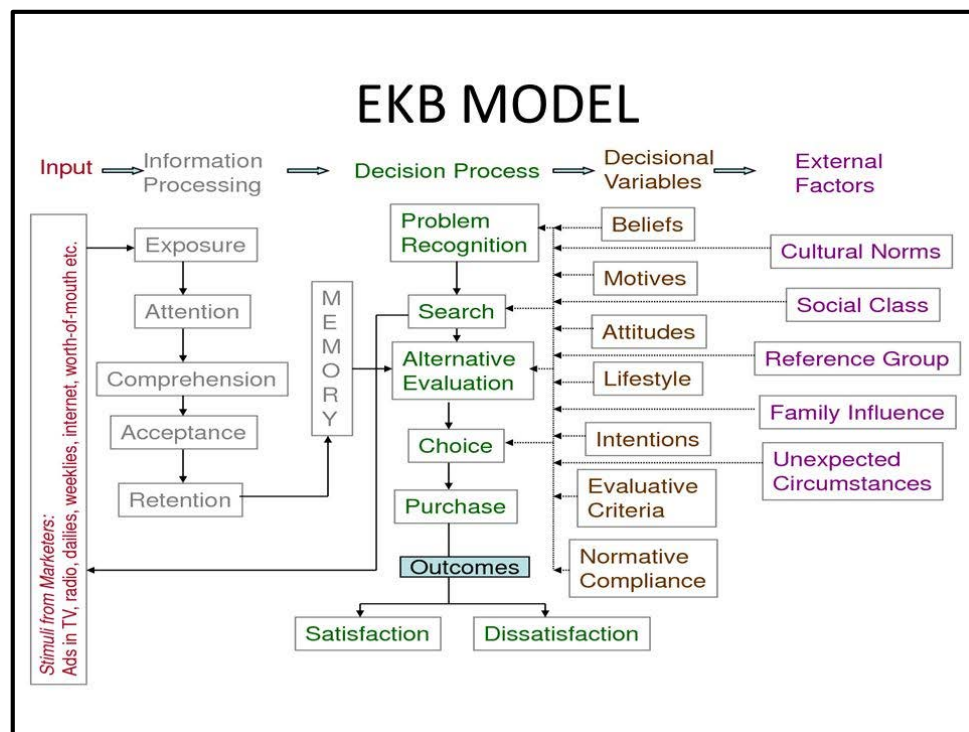to be entertained and engaged with the shopping environment. The other reason that has been

Figure 4: Engel, Kollat & Blackwell model explaining the consumer's decision making process

identified for shopping in-store is the lowered perceived risk of post-purchase dissatisfaction with the ability to touch, try on, and evaluate product quality in person. As a means of combating that risk, a second pre-purchase decisional variable classified as a social influence, which actually occurs as a result of post-purchase behavior through electronic word of mouth, is examined next in this paper.

Hedonic Motivation and Website Usage

Research in the field of e-commerce has redirected its focus to non-functional consumer motivation in order to gain better understanding of the hedonic online consumer (Eastin & Kim, 2011; Dittmar, 2005). Research recommends that apparel retailers should make use of the internet as a way to add value to their brand by creating a website that engages the hedonic consumer based on their interests and personalities (Birtwistle, et al., 2003). The online shopping environment is capable of designing itself to suit the needs of either utilitarian or hedonic consumers through thoughtful and deliberate use of web aesthetics. A few of the ways in which a retailer might encourage a clothing purchase by a hedonically motivated customer is though webpage design, ease of navigation and ease of search. Due to the online shopping environment being thought of as predominantly utilitarian (Eastin & Kim, 2011; Forsythe & Liu, 2010), it would be prudent for online retailers to find ways of attracting more consumers with hedonic shopping patterns. In addition, it has been found that in comparison with the general online consumer, the online apparel consumer expects a more hedonic website experience (Birtwistle, McColl, O'Malley & Siddiqui, 2003). Research reveals that hedonic consumer motivation directly influences both impulse purchasing and exploratory information seeking behaviors (Eastin & Kim, 2011).

Speaking to the unpredictable and mysterious nature of the online consumer, studies reveal that hedonic tendencies are strong determinants of impulsive or "emotional, sudden and forceful" purchases (Hsu, et al., 2016). It has been discovered that impulsive purchases make up the largest share of e-commerce revenue (Hsu, et al., 2016), and 40% of online shoppers can be identified as impulsive (Chen, et al., 2016). Impulsive shoppers are found to have little participation in the opinion- and information-seeking phases in a decision to purchase (Kang, Johnson & Wu, 2014), are typically less concerned with cost and often experience buyer's remorse (Bakewell & Mitchell, 2003; Kamaruddin & Mokhlis, 2003).

Researchers often identify impulsive shopping behavior as a means of mood repair which can serve as both an addiction variable and shopping motivator (Calleja & Clark, 2008; Dittmar, 2005). Compulsive or addictive shopping behavior, which is caused by a lack of impulse control, is found to be caused by a consumer's desire for a shopping experience (Calleja & Clark, 2008). The compulsive purchasing of apparel is thought to be linked to a consumer's issues with self-esteem, anxiety and other forms of psychological emptiness and results in a temporary state of relief and elevation (Calleja & Clark, 2008). Since impulsive shoppers are hedonically or emotionally motivated and found to be more interested in the rush of the shopping experience, it becomes difficult to identify specific and consistent factors that might influence them.

Interestingly, although impulsive shopping is found to be an effect of hedonic shopping motivation, it has not been shown to predict exploratory information search and vice versa (Eastin & Kim, 2011). The second behavior predicted by hedonic motivation, exploratory information search, is a browsing-type shopping pattern in which the consumer is seeking engagement and entertainment (Birtwistle, McColl, O'Malley & Siddiqui, 2003). One study from 2011 emphasizes the importance of the online consumer's experience in order to satisfy

hedonic needs, and not simply a purchase. The research recommends that websites add features

to encourage lingering for their hedonic natured consumers (Eastin & Kim, 2011). One study

finds that exploratory browsing was more influenced by bored individuals who had a greater

intention to purchase apparel in hedonic shopping environments (Fogel & Schneider, 2009).

Another study finds this kind of exploratory shopping behavior to be predominantly

female since women prefer engaging with resources providing vast and rich information whereas

men prefer the straight-forward delivery of information on focused topics through the structure

of online environment. The research concludes that websites designed for male interaction

should be very efficiently designed and websites designed for female interaction should

encourage exploratory research (Chebat, et al., 2008). An article by Wharton University of

Pennsylvania, aptly titled "Men Buy, Women Shop" helps explain why women might be slower

to adopt the ways of online shopping. The article scientifically examines a women's tendency

toward browsing and exploratory information search in their buying behavior. It explains that

women benefit from greater peripheral vision than men, and as is such that women ended up as

"gatherers" and men as "hunters". This research directly links this characteristic to male and

female shopping patterns, suggesting that women prefer to browse because of their inherent

"gathering" natures (Wharton's Jay H. Baker Retail Initiative & the Verde Group, 2007). The

female consumer's preference for a shopping experience and the perception that online shopping

is primarily functional helps us to understand why more women are not adopting the ways of

online shopping. This would further support the recommendation that apparel websites should be

designed to enhance an engaging and interactive user experience.

To my discovery, all of the existing literature in online consumer motivation identified

some variation of the two main consumer types, hedonic and utilitarian. Of the eight pieces of

literature examined, seven were centered on the field of electronic retail and one on social

network cites, while five were centered on the general consumer goods category and three on

apparel and accessories. These studies and their findings are demonstrated in detail within Figure

5 (each reference number corresponds with a source in Appendix A).

In examining existing literature, three conclusions can be made about the online apparel

consumer. First, despite increased attitudes towards hedonic website attributes it is found that

these attributes do not directly contribute to usage. Second, utilitarian website attributes are

found to directly affect website usage. Finally, in store purchase is preferred by apparel

consumers because it is an engaging sensory experience, which is likely why hedonic website

atmospherics positively affects the consumer's perception of functional website attributes among

apparel consumers.

Despite the argument that online apparel consumers are looking for a more hedonic

shopping experience, articles 2, 3, 4, 7 and 8 found that engaging and entertaining the customer

to fulfil a hedonic need does not necessarily determine website usage and participation. However,

these researchers still argue that these features are necessary for attracting hedonic consumers.

This might simply indicate that hedonic shopping motivation is so personal and unique that the

usage of websites by hedonic shoppers varies deeply based on individual consumer preferences,

making it difficult to identify a significant relationship. Further research should be done to

discover how hedonic shoppers use the online environment and what factors they do respond to.

Articles 1, 5 and 7 examined the effects of website aesthetics or attributes on the hedonic

and utilitarian consumer. In these articles, the terms usefulness, aesthetic formality, or high task-

relevant cues were all used to describe the more functional and utilitarian features of a website

such as organization, navigation, information availability and check out convenience while the

terms enjoyment, aesthetic appeal, and low task-relevant cues were used to describe the

recreational and hedonic features of a website including visual appeal, imagery, 3D modeling,

and engaging activities. These studies which examine website aesthetics indicate that a website's

functional and utilitarian features can be used to predict website usage, including adoption.

Despite the lack of a significant relationship between a hedonic shopping environment

and usage, one article (reference number 7) which specifically examined online apparel and

accessories consumers discovered that hedonic website attributes were found to positively

influence the consumer's perception of a website's utilitarian features. While many studies

emphasize the importance of hedonic website attributes, particularly for apparel, this is the first I

have seen that draws a connection on how it actually affects the consumer's interaction with the

website. Therefore, it could be that hedonic website attributes which lend to the utilitarian

attributes such as ease of use and usefulness could be substitution for the engaging sensory

experience specifically sought out by in-store apparel consumers. Since it examines utilitarian

motivation, "flow" theory which has been found to help predict behavior by examining the state

in which the e-commerce user has achieved equilibrium in their personal skills and the ease of

use of a given website, might also be a good indicator of online apparel consumption (Chebat, et

al., 2008; Chen, et al., 2016). By optimizing a customer's flow experience and web usability

through numerous design and functional features, the online retailer may be better able to attract

hedonically driven shoppers.

Ref	Subject	Field	Product	Utilitarian Motivation Term	Hedonic Motivation Term	Findings
1	Web Aesthetics	E-tail	General consumer goods	Aesthetic Formality (AF)	Aesthetic Appeal (AA)	1. AF is important for utilitarian tasks & influences customer satisfaction 2. Both AF & AA are important for exploratory fun browsing or variety seeking 3. For sites with no task-relevance, AA becomes primary predictor of satisfaction
2	Post-Adoption Usage of Internet for Shopping	E-tail	General consumer goods	TAM (ease of use & usefulness)	Enjoyment	1. TAM, though applicable to adoption of e-commerce, is unconfirmed in its ability to predict continued usage of e-commerce 2. Usefulness predicts both initial and continued use of internet channel 3. Enjoyment does not directly influence online retail web usage 4. Online consumers view the benefits of the channel to be the utilitarian usage
3	Consumer Motives	E-tail	General consumer goods	Content gratification	Process gratification	1. Hedonic traits affect both exploratory information seeking and impulsive purchasing 2. No relationship found between hedonic motivation & participation in pre- or post-purchase communication
4	Gender	E-tail	General consumer goods	Male	Female	1. Men value easy-to-access & focused information 2. Women prefer engaging online with rich content 3. Website's hedonic attributes didn't translate to higher involvement by either sex
5	Web Aesthetics (ease of use)	E-tail	General consumer goods	Usefulness	Enjoyment	1. Usefulness is directly associated with both online information search & purchase behavior 2. Enhancing usefulness is more important since it affects ease of use and enjoyment
6	Increasing Brand Value	E-tail	Apparel & accessories	Website as a tool for communication	Website as a tool to develop relationships	1. Fashion consumer looking for an engaging online experience w/ multi-media features, search ability, fashion trends, & stock alerts 2. Low prices not cited as motivation for online fashion consumer
7	Web Aesthetics	E-tail	Apparel & accessories	High task-relevant cues	Low task-relevant cues	1. In luxury brands, LTRC's had a significant influence on brand attitude, while HTRC's had no impact 2. LTRC's had a positive effect on enjoyment, but did not directly influence fashion consumers responses to the website 3. LTR features were found to positively affect the consumer's evaluation of a website's HTR features (ie: product information and convenience) implying that AA and LTR attributes could influence utilitarian motivation in fashion
8	EWOM Opinion-Seeking & Attitude toward Online Social Shopping (OSS)	Social Network Sites (SNS)	Apparel & accessories	Consumer decision-making styles 1 and 2	Consumer decision-making styles 3 through 8	1. Both opinion-seeking and attitude predicted price-, fashion-, & brand- consciousness 2. Hedonic/recreational shoppers had a negative attitude toward online social shopping, likely because reading reviews is viewed as a chore, or because they believe SNSs are intended for non-shopping purposes such as communication and entertainment (only 18% had prior experience with OSS) 3. Impulsiveness did not predict opinion seeking or attitudes toward OSS, likely because impulsiveness does not require opinion-seeking

Figure 5: Examined literature in hedonic consumer motivation

Interestingly, it was discovered that despite the hedonic consumer's heightened interest in website content and exploratory research, this customer had no significant interaction with pre- or post-purchase communication (Eastin & Kim, 2011). Likewise, it was found that despite the amusement women received from websites featuring hedonic design, the hedonic characteristics of the website did not impact the customer's involvement with or attitudes towards the website (Chebat, et al., 2008). Future research is recommended to investigate what the hedonic online consumer is responding to and engaging with. Despite being the two most significant remaining barriers for those who choose not to shop online, it can be inferred based on existing research that exploratory browsing behavior does not have an impact on or contribute to pre-and post-purchase behaviors.

Aside from a lack of hedonic website features for encouraging online shopping as an exploratory process for the consumer, the second barrier identified by shoppers as a reason not to participate in e-commerce is risk. The concerns centered on risk are that the customer does not feel as though they are adequately able to evaluate the quality of the product themselves, therefore would be increasing the chance for post-purchase dissatisfaction (Fan, Lin, Wai, & Wang, 2016). This risk is especially high in the apparel product category online (Livett & McCormick, 2012). As discussed in the previous section, the attribute "product meets expectations" appeared as the number one concern for both shopping goods consumers and convenience goods consumers (Bhatnagar, Ghose, & You, 2016). If consumers are simply able to better set realistic expectations for themselves, there would be a lesser chance of post-purchase dissatisfaction.

Post-Purchase Behavior and Electronic Word of Mouth

Customer satisfaction is important to retailers for the purposes of both retaining customers and acquiring new ones through positive word of mouth. It was found that 82% of consumers discontinued business due to a negative experience (Bhatnagar, Ghose, & You, 2016). Customer retention is important because it is found that the chance of selling to an existing customer is between 60 and 70% while the chance of acquiring a new one is between 5 and 20% (Hull, 2013). This makes retaining customers less expensive than finding new ones. Furthermore, customer satisfaction is rewarded by positive word of mouth and it is found that 40% of consumers plan to do business if they've heard positive reviews of customer service (Bhatnagar, Ghose, & You, 2016). The online apparel consumer is especially sensitive to the risks of post-purchase dissatisfaction associated with online shopping due their inability to evaluate quality and fit, and fear that product will not meet expectations (Birtwistle, et al., 2003). Risk can be reduced for these factors through the "information search" stage of the consumer's decision to purchase.

An underdeveloped, but emerging topic for online shopping research is also the fifth and final step found in literature on traditional consumer's decision to purchase, known as "post-purchase behavior". Occurring in this phase of a consumer's decision to purchase, word of mouth is often recognized in traditional consumer behavior research as one of the most important marketing tools, being that it is highly impactful and free (Goh, Robinson, & Zhang, 2012; Korgaonkar and Petrescu, 2011). The process of receiving or seeking out word of mouth is a part of a consumer's information search process and access to it has only grown with the development the online marketplace. Increased information search in the pre-purchase phase of

the consumer's decision to buy is one of the ways for combating post-purchase dissatisfaction, therefore decreasing perceived risk in purchasing the item (Kang, Johnson, & Wu, 2014).

Due to easy it's accessibility and wealth of information, the internet has developed into a main source of information for consumers (Chebat, et al., 2008). Electronic word of mouth (EWOM) can be defined as the digital, informal and unpaid communication from one consumer to another based on personal experiences (Korgaonkar & Petrescu, 2011). Therefore, post-purchase behavior is now significantly affecting pre-purchase behaviors such as "need recognition" and "information search" through EWOM. However, EWOM is not simply an influential element of the shifting and evolving online shopping environment; it has actually changed shopper's preferences, in both online and physical retail channels (Hogan & Paul, 2015). Post-purchase customer satisfaction, traditionally being an overlooked area for brick and mortar retailers, is now high on all retailers' radar as research finds that nearly half of all in-store customers had been influenced by digital data before making a purchase (Hogan & Paul, 2015). As opposed to the consumption of information spread by companies, consumers now have the power to slowly shape their own marketplace by being the ones controlling the spread of information (Korgaonkar & Petrescu, 2011). EWOM gives control back to the customer in that they now have the power to influence the decisions of their peers and by extension, the quality and assortment of products offered to them. There are multiple online platforms through which a consumer might apply this power, each one serving its own unique purpose.

Literature focusing on the topic of EWOM indicates the importance of collecting this information by retailers, as a way of analyzing the performance and satisfaction of their products and services (Hogan & Paul, 2015; Chahuneau, et al., 2014; Vasquez, 2014; Korgaonkar & Petrescu, 2011; Goh, et al., 2015; Eastin & Kim, 2011). Through doing this, retailers are able to

produce products to better suit their consumer's needs. Certain studies also suggest that retailers should concentrate on developing more advanced and intelligent review systems for their own websites (Eastin & Kim, 2011; Korgaonkar & Petrescu, 2011).

EWOM is often displayed in the context of consumer reviews, or "report(s) on the match between reality and expectation" (Vasquez, 2014). Research published by Deloitte University finds that an online review or social media recommendation influenced a consumer's decision to buy by 61% (Hogan & Paul, 2015). EWOM resources, such as reviews, make no attempt to control the opinions of the consumer, therefore providing trustworthy access to unsolicited feedback. Therefore, EWOM can help reduce the perceived risk of purchasing an unfamiliar product (Korgaonkar & Petrescu, 2011).

Consumer reviews are found to influence purchases 61% of the time (Hogan & Paul, 2015). As such, the art of consumer review have has peaked the interests of many researchers. Linguist, Dr. Camilla Vasquez studied the content of more than 1,000 reviews from various sources and platforms such as Yelp, TripAdvisor, Amazon, Epicurious and Netflix in search for deeper meaning and emerged from the research with an invaluable understanding of the consumer review complexities (Vasquez, 2014). Dr. Vasquez discovered that the author of an online review was usually trying to tell a story, often with the intent of entertaining and informing. Many reviews conveyed prior knowledge on the item, expressing their personal expertise and "read like lifestyle mini-blogs" (Vasquez, 2014). Negative reviews were often written as a narrative, to tell a series of traumatic events related to their experience. Consumers also exercise improved stylistic writing in their reviews so that their feedback will be taken more seriously. More closely relevant to apparel and consumer goods, as opposed to restaurant and

service, Dr. Vasquez also discovered that a product's price greatly influenced the length of a consumer review on that item.

Many researchers place emphasis on the importance of analyzing personality traits in consumer reviews (Chou, 2013; Bhatnagar, Ghose, & You, 2016). For example, it was shown that persons exhibiting character trait "openness to experience" were more accepting of products with fewer reviews online while traits focused on emotional stability indicated a higher sensitivity to number of product reviews (Chou, 2013). The main factors found to influence how a user interacts with and processes reviews were found to be gender, product cost, consumer's experience level with the product, shopping motivation and platform.

Gender has been shown to greatly influence consumer reviews. A study examining personality in consumer reviews determined that women typically pay more attention to the number of reviews while men focus on the content (Chou, 2013). Another study examined the male versus female use of two different platforms. It found that women are more likely to leave reviews on Facebook than Yelp, while men are more likely to leave reviews on Yelp than Facebook (reviewers demographics article – insert citation). Women as hedonic apparel consumers are also less likely to contribute to or use post-purchase communication (Eastin & Kim, 2011).

One study also finds that product cost also had a significant impact on a consumer's use of reviews (Chou, Pearson & Picazo-Vela, 2013). For less expensive items both quantity and content of consumer reviews were found to be equally important, as opposed to quantity being the only significant factor in more expensive items. Although reviews for less expensive items were considered less important to the consumer in comparison with high ticket items, they were

still found to impact sales. Short, terse reviews often using slang or abbreviations and weakened

sentence structure were also found in reviews for low ticket items, whereas longer, verbose

reviews expressing high levels of education through word selection and sentence structure were

found to be more common in reviews for high ticket items (Vasquez, 2014).

Experience level from prior purchase was also found to be an indicator of product review

usage. Unexperienced consumers have a heightened usage of reviews in general and find content

to be more important than quality. Experienced consumers were seen to have a lowered usage of

consumer reviews and found quantity to be more important that content (Chou, 2013).

A consumer's individual shopping motivation was also found to be a determinant of

product review usage. Hedonically motivated consumers, being exploratory and impulsive in

nature, are not likely to use product reviews (Chou, 2013) and are found to be more accepting of

products with fewer reviews (Chou, Pearson & Picazo-Vela, 2013). It is argued that reading

reviews is seen as a chore and does not enhance shopping as an experience (Kang, Johnson &

Wu, 2014).

Finally, review platform was found to significantly impact the usage of consumer reviews.

Figure 6 below gathers several resources for drawing conclusions about platform usage. The

three platforms identified and examined within are social media, third party and retail platforms.

	Social Media	Third Party	Retailers
Examples	Facebook, Blogs, Twitter	Yelp, TripAdvisor	Amazon, Macy's, Zappos
Main Product Type	Any consumer good or service	Service and hospitality industry	Consumer goods
Primary Use by Retailer	Communication of opinions and ideas, recently has opened up to transaction of product	Transaction of Communication	Transaction of product
Primary Use by Consumer	Sharing experiences	Sharing experiences Found that Reviewers use this platform as means of coping with a traumatic experience	Seeking and providing detailed product information and deliverance on expectations such as fit properties and appearance
Contributors	Family and friends within a given social network	Members of reviewing community	Any prior consumer of a given product
Factors in Trustworthiness	Considered highly trustworthy by consumers due to review sources being well-known	Considered trustworthy due to no direct connection to retailer/supplier	Least trustworthy of 3 platforms due to perceived ability of retailer to influence or edit posted reviews
Impact	Impact on brand recognition and awareness Viral Marketing: extremely fast method of sharing information from consumer to consumer	Impact on perceptions of given service or hospitality vendor Impact on sales	Direct impact on sales of consumer goods

Figure 6: Comparison of product review platforms

One of the more intricate and evolving platforms for writing and reading consumer reviews is social media. Social media as a platform for consumer review and recommendation is mainly a form of communicating or exchanging experiences and information amongst a known community (Goh, Khong, & Teng, 2015). While learning of product opinions, a relationship is formed with other users of those items and the information-seeking party opens themselves up to normative influences (Kang, Johnson & Wu, 2014). Websites such as Facebook are home to hundreds of millions of active users who regularly participate in the exchange of information (Korgaonkar & Petrescu, 2011). The most unique quality of this platform of consumer reviews is

that the user has the ability to choose what kind of information they are exposed to by assorting their own individual community with like-minded individuals consisting of their co-workers, family and friends.

One developing field of research in online apparel shopping is the concept of online social shopping, which provides consumers with an environment similar to the social media platform but with the ability to research and shop consumer goods (Kang, et al., 2014). One study uses consumer's decision-making styles, and use of EWOM in opinion-seeking, to predict attitudes towards online social shopping for apparel products. Researchers gathered information from 304 predominantly female college students with an average age between 18 and 21 and discovered that an online social consumer profile for apparel could be created using consumer decision-making styles (Kang, Johnson & Wu, 2014). They found that a positive relationship was found between shopping type "confused by overchoice", price-, fashion-, and brand-conscious consumers and opinion-seeking through EWOM. Tying in to the previous literature on hedonic shopping motivation, it was also found that hedonic style shoppers had a negative attitude toward online social shopping, possibly due to consumers associating the reading of online reviews as work (Kang, Johnson & Wu, 2014).

With consumers showing increased interest and awareness of the ability of the internet to provide and spread information quickly, the concept of viral marketing has recently caught the attention of many in the e-commerce industry. Viral marketing is a kind of word of mouth that might come from a business, but is spread and shared across social networking platforms. One study on viral marketing defines some of the key traits of viral marketing. Viral marketing has an "exponential growth potential in the global community, builds awareness and buzz, (is) passed along due to interesting or entertaining content, and is encouraged by and influenced by

marketers" (Korgaonkar & Petrescu, 2011, p. 215). As online marketing rapidly begins to overshadow traditional marketing, areas like viral marketing are increasingly important for marketers to understand. While there is a rather underdeveloped understanding of viral marketing, this study suggests that consumers are becoming more trusting of viral marketing, that negatively charged viral marketing spreads faster, and it is most quickly spread by consumers with strong opinions (Korgaonkar & Petrescu, 2011).

Although social media platforms are considered highly trustworthy due to the network of opinions stemming from known family and friends, the use of blogs as social network warrants further investigation since many bloggers are reimbursed for product reviews, introducing the potential for bias within their review. There was no literature discovered which discussed the potential implications of this bias, and this paper recommends further investigation into how paid reviews might impact EWOM trustworthiness.

Another highly utilized digital platform for consumer reviews is third party review websites such as Yelp, TripAdvisor, Angie's List and even Google. This platform is unique in that its only "product" is a consumer's review, and is most commonly used to review the service industry. Consumers are found to be very trusting of third party review websites (Hogan, & Paul, 2015). Much of the research found in researching EWOM turned up studies specifically on this kind of platform. This is most likely because before EWOM existed, this type of 3rd party review system was not easily accessible and appeared mostly in catalogs that often required a paid subscription.

Some research on this platform found that negative reviews often portrayed the author as a victim and were written in search of support from the online community and as a way of

emotionally coping with a traumatic experience (Chahuneau, et al., 2014; Vasquez, 2014). Other studies examined websites for movie reviews. One finding from this study was that negative reviews hurt movie sales more than positive reviews, however the impact on sales of a negative review lessened over time while the impact of a positive review did not (Bhatnagar, Ghose, & You, 2016). Another study concluded that it was the quantity of reviews, not average rating that most significantly impacts product sales (Chou, Pearson & Picazo-Vela, 2013).

A third platform on which EWOM is spread and utilized is directly on retailer websites. Consumers are typically less trusting of this platform, due to retailers' ability to filter what is posted on their website. In a previously mentioned study, it was found that the importance of individual characteristics differ by product type (Bhatnagar, Ghose, & You, 2016). No research has been found that examines the importance of different traits by retailer type. Most research takes place on either a specific retailer website, or is focused on a specific product type. For example, one study specifically examining the reviews of books on Amazon finds that highly descriptive product information is responsible for increases in product sales while another on videogame consoles and videogames reveals that the quantity of reviews leads to additional sales for currently have both high and low sales (Bhatnagar, Ghose, & You, 2016). Lastly, research on the configuration of online reviews on eBay finds that for expensive purchases, a higher number of reviews had a more significant impact on sales than a higher rating with less reviews (Chou, Pearson & Picazo-Vela, 2013).

Based on these findings, it can be argued that online apparel consumers are also uniquely influenced by these EWOM factors. Despite women being the predominant gender to shop for apparel online, men are more likely to participate in the sharing and using of consumer reviews in purchasing apparel online. Furthermore, lower ticket apparel such as mass-market are not as

impacted by consumer reviews as higher ticket such as designer and luxury apparel. Returning customers to a particular brand or apparel product are less likely to use reviews than new customers, while new customers place greater emphasis on the review content. As predominantly hedonic, online apparel consumers are also less likely to consider reviews and place less emphasis on quantity of reviews than the general consumer goods shopper. And finally, online apparel consumers are most influenced by third party and retailer websites.

Furthermore, it was discovered that the more a consumer uses reviews to acquire information on a product, the more likely they will be to write a review themselves (Eastin & Kim 2011). This might imply that review sections all over the internet are filled with feedback from a majority of utilitarian-motivated shoppers, not hedonically-motivated customers. Further research should be done to find out if the act of exploring product reviews could be an indicator of intent to purchase.

Finally, no studies were discovered that investigated compensated blogger-reviews. It can be assumed that the online apparel consumers would be less trusting of a paid review in fear of receiving biased information. Further research should be done to discover how consumers interact with this kind of EWOM.

Conclusion

As the online apparel consumer differs from the in-store apparel and general online consumer, there are several deterrents of the online shopping environment for adoption by the apparel consumer. In resolving the barrier of the utilitarian nature of online shopping preventing adoption by apparel consumer due to hedonic motivation, website attributes that appeal to an apparel consumer's hedonic need for entertainment; enjoyment and interactivity are strongly

encouraged. The second barrier, perceived risk of post-purchase dissatisfaction due to inability to touch, try on, and evaluate product quality in person can be addressed by improved information search process through use of online channel and consumer reviews to better set customer expectations and improve satisfaction.

The online apparel consumer also exhibits several key differences in shopping habits and motivators from the general online consumer. Retailers should be careful to apply general online consumer behavior theories to the online apparel consumer. Online apparel consumers are still of a younger generation than in-store apparel consumers, but they are predominantly female whereas the general online consumer is male. Online apparel consumers are also responsive to atmospheric qualities and seek a more hedonic shopping experience, as opposed to the utilitarian experience preferred by online consumers of other goods. Finally, online apparel consumers are also less motivated by fashion involvement than in-store apparel consumers.

Online apparel consumers are influenced by a website's hedonic attributes through exploratory information search and impulsive shopping behavior. These shopping behaviors emphasize the importance of the consumer's experience instead of an end goal. Although it was found across many studies that hedonic website attributes do not directly influence a consumer's interaction with the website, one online apparel study did find that the hedonic website attributes impacted the consumer's use of utilitarian attributes, and also affected the consumer's perception of the brand.

Online apparel consumers are also impacted by consumer reviews in different ways than other online consumers and are affected by the review platform, gender, product cost, experience level with product, and individual shopping motivation. As most online apparel customers are

hedonically motivated, consumer reviews are not widely used within this product group. Online

apparel consumers who do use reviews were predominantly male, shopping for an unfamiliar

item of higher perceived cost, and used on a third party or retailer platform.

Appendix A

Reference #	Source
1	Hernandez, M.D., Minor, M.S., Wang, Y.J. (2010). Web aesthetics effects on perceived online service quality and satisfaction in an e-tail environment: The moderating role of purchase task. *Journal of Business Research, 63*(9-10): 935-942
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7	Choi, Y.J., Kim, H., Lee, Y. (2015). Web atmospheric qualities in luxury fashion brand websites. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management, 19*(4): 384-401
8	Kang, J.M., Johnson, K.K.P., Wu, J. (2014). Consumer style inventory and intent to social shop online for apparel using social networking sites. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management, 18*(3): 301-320

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