



THESIS

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Consumer Behavior Towards Online Shopping of Fashion for a Population between 18 and 25 years old

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Abstract

The booming of the Internet has changed consumers' habits in many aspects. Nowadays it is possible to buy almost anything on the Internet but also to access to some information, consumers' reviews and other data that can help the consumer to make the best choice. Existing researches have been trying to find explanations to consumer behaviour online, even though it is complicated to analyse. This thesis is focused exclusively on shopping online for clothes and fashion accessories, investigating on a population between 18 and 25 years old. The hypotheses are based on four main aspects of buying: product, price, enjoyment and convenience. The research will provide elements and key factors on their consumer behaviour towards online shopping of fashion and how online companies could make them becoming more loyal to online shopping and become more prosperous.

Key words: consumer behaviour, online shopping, fashion, buying factors

INTRODUCTION

In the last few years, the Internet has become an essential part of a lot of people's daily lives. With computers and a connection, today, humans can buy pretty much anything on websites. The world is facing what we could call an electronic change that is affecting the way people communicate and which is transforming the entire value chain, from manufacturers and retailers to consumers (Donthu & Garcia, 1999). Thus online shopping became a booming market. In 2015, the retail e-commerce sales worldwide reached 1.672 trillion US dollars. This number could grow up to 3.5 trillion US dollars in 2019. All the continents are involved, especially Asia-Pacific, Europe and North America. The growth in the number of firms that compete in the e-commerce environment makes it important to understand which strategies work in this new environment and which do not (Filson, 2004).

In France, for example, every second, 19 purchase transactions are recorded (Planetoscope, 2016). In 2013, online retail in France generated 26.1 billion euros. This situation led retailers and owners of physical shops around the globe to try to adapt to an intense global competition. This includes adapting to the changing behaviour of buyers. Online consumer behaviour has become an interesting field to study and several theories can apply to it such as information processing (Bettman, 1979), personality research (Folkes, 1988), behavioural learning (Skinner, 1938), or attitude models (Fishbein, 1967). Moreover, nowadays people are more inclined to impulse buying and tend to plan less their shopping trip. (POPAI, 2014).

The aim of the thesis is to focus on consumer's behaviour towards online shopping of fashion and apparel to analyse how physical shops and retails can compete with e-commerce / how e-commerce can keep on expanding and how to improve their activities. Initially, this thesis should have been focused on the French population between 18 and 30 years old and on the websites that exclusively sell fashion or apparel. However, after weeks of research, the author chose to expand the segment population internationally, and to reduce the age gap in the target segment from 18 to 25 years old. In France, several websites such as Zalando, or Sarenza are becoming leader of online shopping. But on the e-commerce of fashion, there are a lot of

competitors: the British Asos, the American Shein or the South Korean YesStyle. All of these companies offer a huge range of products, some on their own brands, some as retailers, for cheap price and a guaranteed quality. To address the objectives of the thesis, these questions were formulated:

- How physical shops and retailers can overcome this e-commerce booming and keep on making profit on the fashion and apparel market?
- Which factors encourage or discourage the act of shopping clothes online for a population between 18 and 25 years old?

This thesis is structured as follows: the first chapter is dedicated to the literature review and takes examples of theories to understand the situation of the global market and the consumer behaviour towards shopping of fashion.

The second chapter describes research methodology. A quantitative approach was used to define consumer behaviour with an online survey offered to population from 18 to 25 years old.

The third chapter will cover primary data analysis and outline research findings. From the received results resulting from the questionnaire, the researcher will confirm or invalidate the hypotheses formulated in the second chapter. Finally, the factors involved to encourage and improve online shopping of fashion for consumers between 18 and 25 years old will be disclosed. To go further, some recommendations will be provided to online companies to improve their prosperity and encourage their development.

CHAPTER 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. CONSUMER BEHAVIOR OFFLINE AND ONLINE

This thesis is focused on consumer behavior online and will provide different definitions and models established by researchers. Comparison between online and offline consumer behaviors will be given as well as a description of the key factors influencing the consumer behavior online, as it is our field of interest. Brands and researchers started to have an interest in the consumer behavior in the 60s. Something often linked to consumer behavior in the different theories is the personality. Purchasing behavior, media choice, innovation, segmentation, fear, social influence, product choice, opinion leadership, risk taking, attitude change, and almost anything else one can think of have been linked to personality (Kassarjian, 1971).

With the booming of Internet, it became an emerging research area and the publications about the topic appeared in a variety of journals and conferences. However, it is argued that the process of making decision is very similar whether the consumer is online or offline. The main differences would be the shopping environment and the marketing communications (Katawetaraks, 2011).

1.1 COMPARISON BETWEEN ONLINE CONSUMER BEHAVIOR AND OFFLINE CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

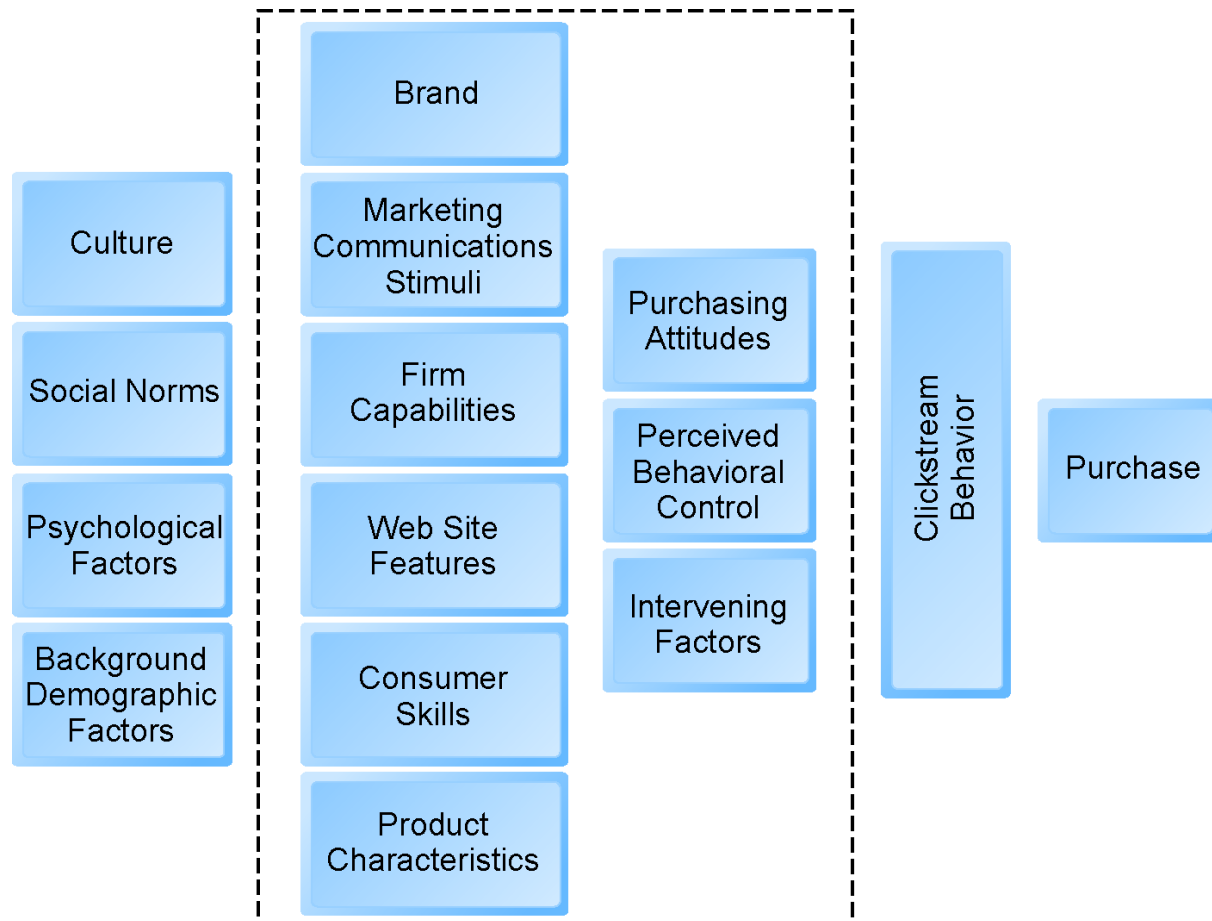
A traditional, or offline Consumer Behaviour would have five steps (Belch et al, 2012):

1. Problem recognition: the consumer becomes aware of something he lacks or he needs. By recognizing the difference between what is perceived as the desired state and what is the actual state, it triggers the buying decision process.

2. Information search: during the next step, the consumer is looking for information about what he needs. What is the best option according to his budget and the quality he is looking for. This search can be both internal (memory, thinking) and external (media, word of mouth, trial). Kuhlthau (1991) describes a process with six steps: initiation, selection, exploration, formulation, collection and search closure.
3. Alternative evaluation: after seeking for information, the consumer faces a dilemma of choosing the best option according to what he wants. Also here, for this step, the consumer can have a group of brands that comes to mind when the consumer thinks of a product category because the person has judged those brands to be acceptable (Duncan, 2005).
4. Purchase decision: once a consumer chooses which brand to buy, he or she must still implement the decision and make the actual process (Belch et al., 2012). It is the step when the consumer made his mind and solved the dilemma, before actually making the action of buying.
5. Post-purchase evaluation: after buying the product and using it, the consumer can compare his expectations and what the product brought him in terms of satisfaction. If the consumer is satisfied with his purchase, he may repeat the action again and communicate about it using word of mouth. Eventually this will lead people around him to be influenced to try the same product. The opposite can happen in case of dissatisfaction.

Laudon and Traver (2009) created a framework that compares online consumer decision and offline consumer decision.

They argue that the decision process for online and offline behavior are quite similar. However, they established a general online behavior model based on different factors (see graph below).



Laudon & Traver, 2014

According to Laudon & Traver (2014), in the case of consumer behavior online, an important number of factors are added up to what is the offline consumer behavior:

- **The brand:** they assume a consumer would be willing to buy a product because of the brand image.
- **Marketing communications stimuli:** a consumer would buy online if the marketing media used means something to him and triggers a will to possess a certain product.

- **Firm capabilities** imply that the consumer has to trust the firm and its ability to reply to his needs.
- **Web Site features:** in several models, it is assumed that the web site features, design, and ease to understand play a massive role in the consumer's final purchase.
- **Consumer skills** refer to the consumer's knowledge regarding the product and the quality. It also depends if the consumer did some research before purchasing.
- **Product characteristics:** a consumer would buy online if he is aware of the product characteristics and consider he will be satisfied with them.
- **Purchasing attitudes:** different attitudes can influence the act of purchasing online but according to Laudon & Traver, consumers who are impulse buyers tend to buy online more easily.
- **Perceived behavioral control** also depends on the purchasing attitudes of the consumer.
- Finally, **intervening factors** includes all other psychological and environmental factors that cannot be determined in this model.

Arguably, online and offline shopping are two different experiences, even for the same products. Consumers shop with utilitarian, goal-driven motives as well as for experiential motives, such as fun and entertainment; they shop to acquire products or they shop to shop (Wolfenbarger & Gilly, 2000).

Shoppers involve 87% of Internet users, 73% of them are buyers and 15% are browsers who purchase offline according to a survey from eMarketer, 2009. According to a survey realized in 2007 by eMarketer, major concerns about purchasing online for Internet users' are unease about online credit card use (44%), concerns about privacy of data (42%) and shipping charges (37%). Nevertheless, during those past years, safety issues online have been treated and today it is less and less common to have a bank account hacked. Online traffic can also be influenced

by offline brands and shopping, for example if a consumer didn't find out what he wanted in a store, he may look for it on the internet (Pearson, 2012).

A study from Chen and Jiang (2009) was led on consumer's perception about e-commerce and their online behavioral patterns. Over 1,000 students were interviewed in groups, for discussions related to convenience to use the Internet resources, tendency to perform online information search and evaluation before purchase, experience of online shopping, intentions of online behavior and experienced benefits, and factors influencing the channel choices. The study shows that we can distinguish four behavioral patterns between the online purchasers:

- Product-oriented: it means that the consumer is very sensitive about the value of the product, its attributes, its brand, specification, features and function. This type of consumers tends to search for extensive information on the Internet before realizing the act of buying. They are not price-sensitive as their priority is the product and its quality.
- Price-oriented: this type of consumers would look for extensive information regarding the price from a large number of websites, as they want to find the cheapest possible. Their price-sensitivity is very high and is their priority in the act of shopping. Some brands target directly this group of consumers by putting their prices as low as possible, without realizing a big profit margin.
- Convenience-oriented: these consumers emphasize the convenience and the fact that they won't spend more time in purchase and won't have to go into an offline shop. They are not very sensitive to the price as they consider the time saved like a gain of money. This type of consumers appreciates the friendliness of sites' interfaces or the efficiency of delivery and payment.
- Service-oriented: this type of buyers considers as extremely important the services and securities provided by retailers. In this case, the reputation of retailers and the level of service are two major factors to encourage the act of purchasing. They are not very price-sensitive.

From this study, we learn that these four different consumer behaviors can also be referred as target groups by online shops. Different factors are taken into account and something that needs to be underlined is that three of these four groups are not price-sensitive.

According to Wolfinbarger and Gilly (2000), online and offline shopping experiences are evaluated by shoppers regarding two dimensions that must be satisfied: goal fulfillment and experience-related outcomes. From this study, we learn that goal-directed motivations are more likely to be satisfied online while experiential shopping motives are more likely to be associated with offline shopping. Wolfinbarger and Gilly (2000) found that online buyers engage in experiential browsing for three reasons:

Auction activities, which would be applicable on websites like Ebay. Auction consists in a system where potential buyers place competitive bids on assets and services. The asset in question will be sold to the party that places the highest bid.

Ongoing hobby-type search: some people have the hobby of looking for products, services, their features and information and the easiest place to practice this kind of activity is Internet.

Bargain hunting: this category of people are very price sensitive and are looking for the cheapest option for a same product. Internet gives them access to a wide range of websites.

Another researcher and professor called Oppewal and his student Huang created a model (2005) to determine the factors that would influence the consumers to shop online or not. Their study is focused on grocery shopping but their model also works for any type of shopping online. They highlighted four different factors:

- **Cost factors**, or the sum in monetary cost perceived by consumers when shopping online or offline. Bell et al. (1998) identify fixed costs as travel costs associated with going to a

store (petrol, parking charges) and the shopper's preference and loyalty for a store. Variable costs depend on what is on the list. If the price is the same for a shop online and offline, then the cost will be more consequent if the consumer shops offline, as he has to pay the travel costs.

- **Convenience factors** are related to psychological costs such as time, effort and stress. It is argued that online shopping provides consumers the opportunity of shopping from anywhere, at anytime. It is also timesaving. However online shopping has also inconveniences, especially if you do not have access, or a bad access to Internet.
- **Enjoyment factors** are defined by Beatty and Ferrell (1998) as the pleasure one obtains from the shopping process. Some shoppers see it as a boring activity while some others like the entertainment provided by shopping. Arnold and Reynolds (2003) identified several categories of shopping motivations such as adventure shopping, gratification shopping, idea shopping, role shopping, social shopping and value shopping.
- **Risk factors** are a determinant factor in consumer behavior. In the risk factors, first there is the possibility for the data or bank information to be stolen on the Internet. This is why websites must be very reliable. Also in risk factors, there is the disappointment if what a consumer ordered is not what was expected. In the shopping of apparel, it can be related to the color, the composition, the shape, etc.

1.2 KEY CONCEPTS OF CONSUMER BEHAVIOR ONLINE

Internet has now become a common platform for consumers to buy anything they need in an easy and simple way, available to anyone with a computer and an Internet connection. Consumer-purchases are mainly based on the cyberspace appearance such as pictures, images, quality information, and video clips of the product, not on the actual experience (Lohse and Spiller, 1998). Thus, websites has benefits in investing in some fancy design and advertising. Online shopping depends a lot on user interfaces and how people interact with computers (Hoque and Lohse, 1999).

According to some other studies, unlike traditional retailing, the characteristics of information presentation, navigation, order fulfillment in an interactive shopping interface is considered a main factor in building trust. (Alba et al., 1997; Reynolds, 2000). Many are losing sleep wondering whether e-commerce is destined to replace traditional retailing, work in concert with it, or perhaps even fade away to become another fashion the next generation will laugh about some day (Solomon, 2013).

One important difference between online and offline shopping is that online, the seller can display a lot of information about the product: price, confection, but also information like price comparison and testimonials from consumers. In a store, this information wouldn't be available. On the other hand, big online stores are less effective than small stores at converting site traffic into sales because consumers have difficulty in finding the products they seek (Lohse and Spiller, 1998).

Online shopping is highly appreciated and satisfying to consumers when the retailer sites are fast, uncluttered and easy-to-navigate (Park & Kim, 2003). Uncluttered and easy-to-navigate sites economize shopping time and the cognitive effort consumers expend figuring out how to shop effectively online (Szymanski & Hise, 2000).

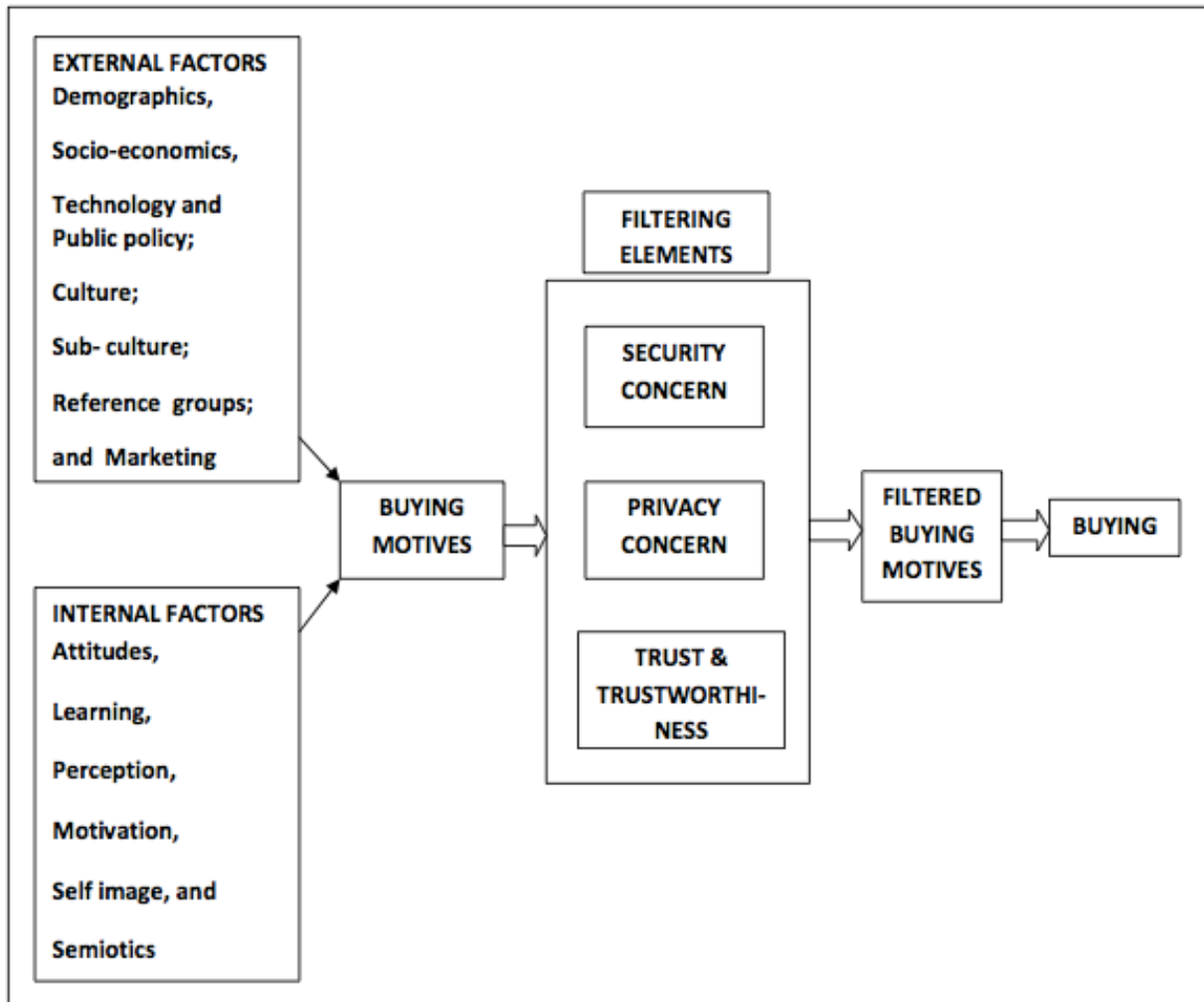
Another important factor is the security of online payment. It is one main worry for consumers: the disclosure of their information and the fear of being hacked. The websites need to be extremely safe and take important measures to ensure this cannot happen. During those past years it has been quite common for anyone shopping on the net to experiment having their data stolen. While most online shopping sites provide personal information privacy protection policy and guarantee for transaction security, they do not offer detailed information on how transaction and person data are secured (Elliot & Fowell, 2000).

Alba et al. (1997) argue that consumers reduce their decision-making efforts while shopping online, because the websites provide vast selection, information screening, reliability, and product comparison. It is then accurate to think that the consumer reduces the cost of information search and the effort in making purchasing decisions (Park & Kim, 2003).

Buying online is spread now and thus we can consider that it is also a “fashion effect” helped by word-of-mouth. In Bikhchandani et al.’s model (1992), the herd behavior is described. Herd behavior is a phenomenon where agents decide to choose the same alternative from a set of multiple available alternatives. An example of herd behavior could be when peaceful street demonstrations turn into violent riots. Therefore, as a social learning behavior, if your entourage shops online, you are more like to experiment it and do it yourself. Online, the word-of-mouth is playing a role based on communication and persuasion theory. Word-of-mouth can be an efficient tool. Indeed, people are becoming more cynical about all sort of commercial communications, they thus turn to sources, which they feel, are above commercial exploitation: friends and family (Solomon, 2013). Today, 80% of all buying decisions are influenced by someone’s direct recommendations (Stern and Gould, 1988). Xiaofen and Yiling (2009) even demonstrated that people with a lower education will be more receptive to online word-of-mouth.

On the other hand, if a consumer is having a bad experience with your company, he will tell between 9-15 people about their experience. Around 13% of dissatisfied customers tell more than 20 people (White House Office of Consumer Affairs, 2013).

Dange and Kimar (2012) created the FFF model to explain online consumer behavior (see the figure below).

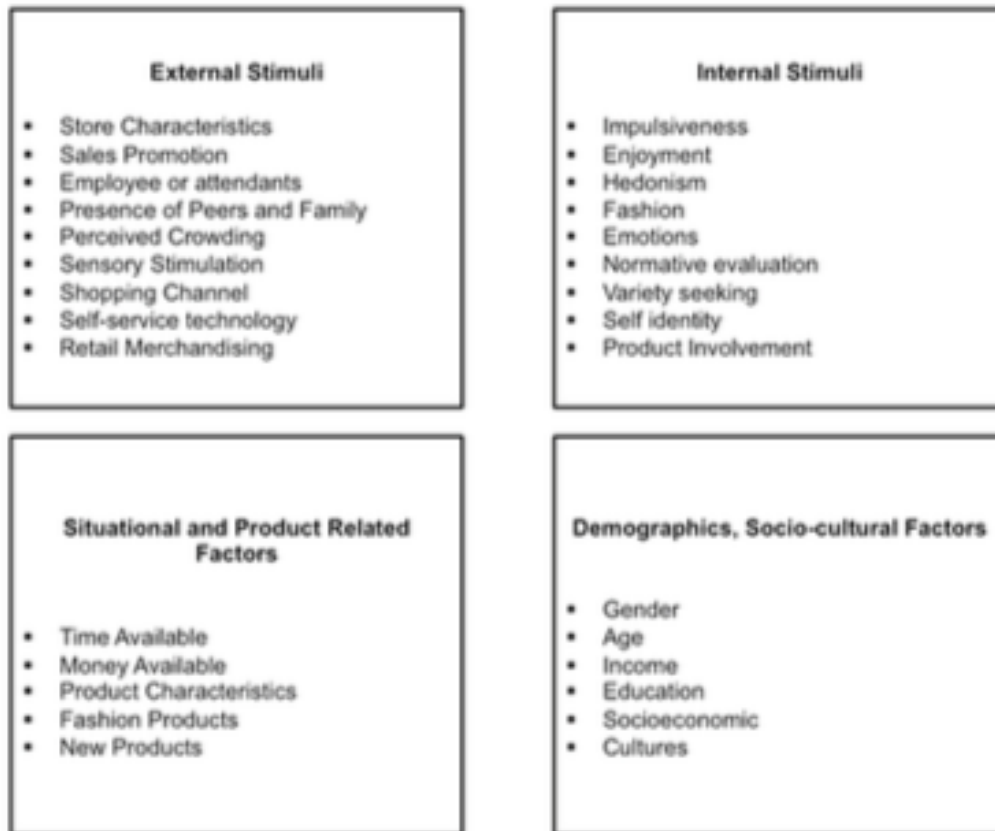


Dange & Kimar, 2012

This model takes into account the external and internal factors influencing consumer behavior. External factors are the ones the customers cannot control. The internal factors are directly related to consumer's traits and behaviors, which is personal to any of them. Then it takes into consideration the filtering elements customers will apply before doing their purchase decision, like security concern, privacy concern and trust and worthiness. This model underlines the importance for the online brands to develop a trusty relationship with their consumers and

make them feel like the website is 100% safe.

Several researchers linked the fact of buying online as an impulse buying strongly influenced by environmental cues (Rook and Fisher, 1995; Adelaar et al., 2003; Loiacono et al. 2007). Moreover, the website quality would play an important role on the consumer's decision to buy or not; Hoffman and Novak (1996) argues that a well-designed interface increases the likelihood of impulse purchases. The researchers Wolfinbarger and Gilly (2003) also show that a well designed website and an increased purchase behavior are directly linked. These studies emphasize the importance of an easily understandable and well designed website in order to encourage purchase and ease consumer behavior. According to Wells, Parboteeah and Valacich (2016), emerging evidence is provided for the moderating effect of consumer impulsiveness on the relationship between website quality and the urge to buy impulsively. Impulse buying is another component of the consumer behavior online, it can be defined as any kind of purchase that was not the purpose of visiting the store (or a shopping platform) (Applebaum, 1951). Impulse buying is triggered by stimuli. The figure below shows Muruganantham and Bhakat's classification of these stimuli.



Source: Muruganantham, Bhakat, 2013, page 156. Author's design

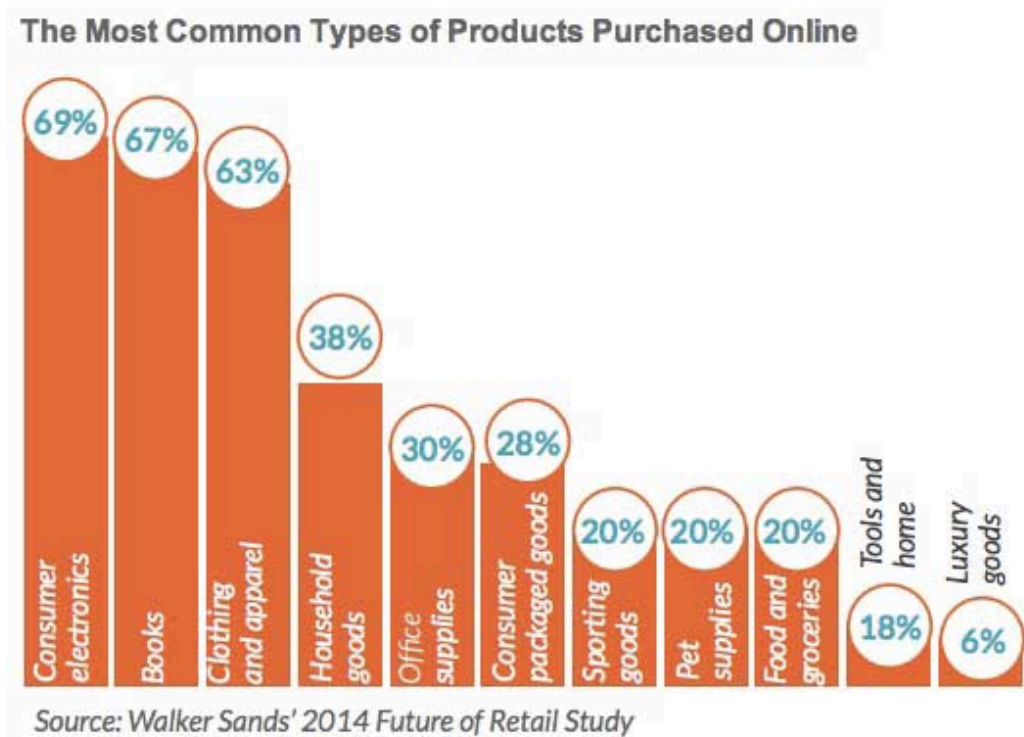
Muruganantham & Bhakat, 2013

2. ONLINE SHOPPING OF FASHION

This part aims to provide an understanding and describe how consumers behave when they are in a situation of shopping online. In this case, the global meaning of fashion refers to clothes, shoes and apparel.

2.1 DEFINITION AND FACTS

According to Cambridge Dictionary, fashion can be defined as a style that is popular at a particular time, especially in clothes, hair and make-up. Evans (1989) defines fashion as the current mode of consumption behavior, or in other words the styles being worn at the time in question by consumers of clothing. Shopping of fashion is basically the act of purchasing clothes, apparel or shoes. Online shopping of fashion is the act of purchasing those items over the Internet, via the e-commerce. E-commerce, or electronic commerce, is the process of buying, selling, transferring, or exchanging products, services, and/or information via networks, including the Internet (Turban et al., 2006). This researcher also uses the term “e-business” to refer to a global definition of e-commerce. E-business is the use of the Internet and other information technologies to support commerce and improve business performance (McKay & Marshall, 2004).



Walkers Sands, 2014

Online shopping has grown in popularity over the years, mainly because people find it convenient and easy to bargain shop from the comfort of their home or office. One of the most enticing factor about online shopping is it alleviates the needs to wait in long lines or search from store to store for a particular item (Business Dictionary, 2016). It is important to note the difference between online shopping and online buying. Online buying refers to the frequency of buying from an online store after browsing during a given Internet session. Online shopping is the act of browsing for, searching for, gathering information on, and considering various goods and services does not necessarily result in an online buying (Close & Kukar-Kinney, 2008). Moreover, Wolfinbarger and Gilly (2000) argues that online buyers often said in their study that they decide to go online to shop only when they had a specific purchase in mind; therefore they refer to buying on the net as “buying” and not as “shopping”. Their findings also show that online buyers are more impulsive while shopping offline. The little pressure to buy online whereas offline when a consumer can feel disappointed if he comes home empty handed, can explain this.

Consumers of fashion online purchase it this way for different reasons: ease, cheaper prices, accessibility, availability, developed information and description, advises, consumer reviews, etc. According to Luo (2002), informativeness is a key consideration in consumer’s decision to use the Internet. But according to Punjand & Moore (2009), the main motivation for online shopping is the ability to easily search. Shopping of fashion and apparel is a specific type of shopping because it is linked to body appearance and therefore it reaches a psychological dimension specific to each of us. Shopping of fashion can be associated with leisure as it appears that, in industrial societies, leisure activities are increasingly synonymous with consumption activities (Baudrillard, 1988). It is of course not the case for every one, some will see shopping of fashion as leisure and some others as drudgery.

According to the website FashionUnited, in French households, the share reserved for shopping of clothing and footwear was 3.2% in 2009. On average, for example, a French consumer spends annually 407€ for their clothes. However, the young people between 15 and 25 years old are biggest buyers, spending an annual average of 630€. Sales of online clothing, account for 11% of purchases in 2012, against 9.5% in 2011. Nowadays these numbers has probably increased, as

the number of websites for online shopping keeps on growing and are very popular. In France, the most popular websites are La Redoute, les 3 Suisses, Vente Privée, Kiabi, Amazon, Sarenza, Zalando and CDiscount. Recently, markets still do not have a good grip of online consumer's real needs, and consequently their purchasing behavior (Chen & Juan, 2009).

In 2013, the French group La Redoute had a turnover of 846 millions euros. It was a decrease of 17.5% compared to 2012. Most of the websites quoted above were originally not e-commerce websites, but had to adapt because of the threat of foreign websites taking an important market share. In 1994, La Redoute launched its first website and today it is where the brand realizes the biggest part of its turnover. But that was not enough to compete. In April 2014, the group had to change its strategy and marketing to stop the deficit. It is because of this restructuration, 1,178 people had been fired (it is half of the total people working for La Redoute). To face the competition, La Redoute plans on reducing the delay of order preparation from 24 hours currently to 2 hours.

The Internet provides the consumer with numerous benefits: a time and cost saving shopping venue; 24-hour, 7-days-per-week accessibility; and consistent service, all of which can be experienced wherever the Internet can be accessed. With increasing demands on time, this shopping mode offers an appealing promise. (Then & DeLong, 1999) Even almost 20 years ago, the rise of the Internet was expected as 52% of consumers were interested in reducing the amount of time they spend shopping at a mall in the US (Kotkin, 1998). According to the same study, online shopping was predicted to grow to more than 55% in the next 15 years. Shopping of apparel on Internet had a promising future that confirmed itself to be true.

In developed countries, fashion is an important component of every day's life, as a person's physical appearance is a large part of his or her self-concept. Body image refers to a consumer's subjective evaluation of his or her physical self. However, this image is not always true, as a man tends to think he is more muscular than he really is or a woman may think she is fatter than is the case (Solomon et al., 2013). Fashion groups are often playing on those effects through marketing strategies, promising consumers that with the right clothes, your insecurities will be gone.

2.2 INFLUENCE OF CULTURE IN SHOPPING OF FASHION

2.2.1 Definition of Culture

Geert Hofstede defines it as "the collective programming of the mind distinguishing the members of one group or category of people from another". Culture refers to the way people from a certain group think, feel and act. The term « group » can refer to nations, regions, ethnicities, religions, occupations, organizations or genders. Culture is a set of values and manners that belong to each individual. It is built through education and socialization.

Margaret Mead (1937), American anthropologist, defines it as the whole complex of traditional behaviour, which has been developed by the human race and is successively learned by each generation. It can mean the forms of traditional behaviour, which are characteristics of a given society, or of a group of societies, a certain race, a certain area, or of a certain period of time.

The definition of culture has some similarities with the definition of fashion: the two terms are both adopted by a given society in a given area for a certain period of time, of course implying that fashion lasts way less than culture. As culture influences society's values, manners and ways of thinking, it is then logical that culture also plays a role in fashion.

2.2.2 Links between consumer's culture and fashion

Culture plays an important role in shopping of fashion as it is inspired by celebrities, pairs or by groups where the consumer identifies himself. The society we live in directly creates fashion and what is appreciated or not. The anthropologist Edward Sapir (1931) makes a parallel between fashion and culture by noting that "the chief difficulty of understanding fashion in its apparent vagaries is the lack of exact knowledge of the unconscious symbolisms attaching to forms, colors, textures, postures, and other expressive elements of a given culture. The difficulty is appreciably increased by the fact that some of the expressive elements tend to have quite different symbolic references in different areas."

As fashion is directly inspired by what consumers see in the street, in magazines or through media, we can notice the impact of regions and how people are dressed differently all over the world. Designers and manufactures produce clothing and accessories in accordance with the culture of a particular region, which become the fashion. Consumers adopt a trend in clothing only if it is in accordance with the culture of that area. Factors above culture such as the weather or religion can also play a role. For example fashion in Scandinavian countries relates to winter clothes such as coats or warm jumpers all along the year whereas in Australia fashion concerns mainly swimsuits and summer clothing. Another example is that Muslim women wear burqas and American women would have no problem to show some of their skin off because in their culture, this is appropriate.

Jattin Kochhar, a designer from India, stated “Fashion designers all over the world promote the color of fruits and vegetables of the season in their collection, because it is logic that people can connect better with those colors”. Surroundings influence fashion of regions.

According to Joseph Hancock, teacher at the Drexel University in Philadelphia, USA, the creative process for fashion does not start with design genius but with the analysis of last year’s sales, retail successes and failures, and merchandisers wish lists, with changing demographics and psychographics. Demographics are related to characteristics like age, race, gender, ethnicity and psychographics concerns attitudes like personality or interests.

Culture plays a huge role in deciding the fashion of a region, nation or not. According to the website fibre2fashion, “fashion trends in a society are just a mirror to its culture. If the culture changes, fashion changes.” For the e-commerce specialized in fashion, this represents a big challenge or the need to be selective with your target group, knowing that consumers don’t wear the same things across the globe.

2.2.3 Cultural challenge for the e-commerce

As explained above, each country or region has there own appropriation of fashion code. The websites specialized in apparel and targeting different regions of the world and aiming to answer to very different consumers’ needs and wants had to adapt and offer a wide selection.

ASOS is worldwide famous and a leader in the field of fashion shopping online. ASOS' target is the consumer in their twenties. Its strategy includes on-trend products, an efficient customer services, and their focus on the customers. It is described on the website as "more than just an online retailer", and using four strategies:

- Great fashion for great price: ASOS retails more than 800 brands and actually sells also collections of its main competitors on the UK market such as Boohoo or Missguided. Their wide selection of choices, price points and sizes aims to reach a very large segment of customers in their 20s. Indeed their prices vary from the very cheap to the very expensive.
- "Awesome on mobile": ASOS developed an application both on iOS and Android available in 240 countries, which considerably expand their target segment. They created this application in a very simple way to understand offering different payment methods.
- Best-in-class service: their system of delivery is described as free, quick, reliable with a hassle-free return possibility. They also deliver to store for consumers who would have troubles with their mailboxes or robbery cases as it can happen in apartment buildings.
- Engaging content and experience: describing itself as more than a shop, ASOS is also an influence through daily fashion and social media where it establishes link with the consumers.

Through this 4-point strategy, ASOS seems to answer to consumers' needs and also ensures that any factor that could lead to a bad opinion towards online shopping has an easy answer and solution, which could explain its great success worldwide. To answer to cultural differences, the key is to offer a wide range of products and be present on social media which gathers all the consumers, especially in their twenties, no matter their country as long as they have Internet.

3. CONSUMER BEHAVIOR MODEL APPLIED TO SHOPPING OF FASHION

This third part will provide an overview of consumer behavior towards shopping of fashion, clothe-wise or regarding other forms of culture. The first part will emphasize the importance of the self-concept in interpretation of fashion. The second part will explain the factors playing a role in consumer's behavior in shopping of fashion.

3.1 THE SELF CONCEPT AND FASHION

Fashion is the ideal product to express physical and psychological aspects of self, and one of the best for reflecting changes in health, diet, exercise and grooming (Evans, 1989). Solomon et al. (2013) defines the fashion system as all those people and organizations involved in creating symbolic meaning and transferring these meaning to cultural goods. It includes clothing but also any type of cultural phenomena. For example, in the 90s, members of ghetto gang in the USA were dressed similarly and they also listened to the same kind of music. This is part of the process of identification and belonging to a group (Bourdieu, 1979).

Therefore the self-concept in anyone's interpretation of fashion plays a major role. Self-concept is a combination of the physical and mental 'self' and as such it is conceptually satisfying to apply it to apparel markets since garments and cosmetics are worn "physically" for functional reasons (warmth, protection) and are also worn for emotional enhancement (Evans, 1989). In other terms, according to Shavelson et al. (1976), self-concept is a person's perception of himself. These perceptions are formed through his experience with his environment and are influenced especially by environmental reinforcements and significant others. Self-concept has a complicated structure as it is composed of many attributes (physical appearance, face, attractiveness, personality, mentality) and some of them are of a bigger importance.

Individuals' relationships to their bodies and image are very often complex: according to Goleman's study, 72% of men and 85% of women are unhappy with at least one aspect of their appearance (1991). Moreover, women tend to perceive their bodies as curvier than they actually are and men tend to see themselves as more muscled than what they look. Therefore

consumers will dress up taking into account those factors, whether it is to hide a part of their body or put it forward. As clothing is worn in a public space, people dress for others, and how they want to be perceived by others (DeLace, 2011).

3.2 FACTORS AFFECTING CONSUMER BEHAVIOR IN SHOPPING OF FASHION

After stating the importance of self-concept in shopping of fashion, a general model of consumer behavior towards fashion will now be provided. From Lipotevsky's perspective (1987), fashion is a phenomenon typical of modern societies, also associated to values and socializing ways. Clothes are the strongest way of representing fashion concept. (Vignali & Vignali, 2009).

The traditional consumer behavior model is as explained below. Depending on some independent demographic variables that are cultural, social and psychological, and some intervening variables like the brand, the marketing communications stimuli and the firm capabilities, the buyer makes a decision to purchase (adapted to Kotler, 2009). Several researchers have tried to define what are the main factors regarding shopping of fashion.

The brand plays a role even more important than for another product. According to DeLace research (2011), consumers are more willing to buy a dress or some shoes if they are from a good brand, even if the price is the double of a generic article. This relates to the self-concept, and consumers wearing high-end articles feel that it is representative of their value and the way they want to be perceived. Shopping of fashion would also depend on social and physical surroundings, as Solomon et al. (2013) explain: physical and social environment can make a big difference in affecting his or her motives for product purchases and usage and also affect how he or she evaluates products.

Consumer behaviors can be explained in four dimensions, which are personal characteristics, psychological characteristics, social characteristics and cultural characteristics (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010). Fashion-wise, marketers and companies must identify those characteristics to reach their target group. They are strongly correlated to consumer behavior towards shopping of fashion as they are all playing a role that influence fashion interpretation. For example, socio-

cultural characteristics gather family, friends, work, the social groups with which the consumer identifies himself and that influences the purchasing behavior and the looking for a garment type (Vignali, 2009). Social groups and friends influence a consumer. Consumer's final decision to purchase is also influenced by demographic factors: age, monthly income, living place, marital status, professional situations make a consumer buying from a brand instead of another (Paulins and Geisteld, 2003). Lifestyle is also a factor implying that consumers choose certain garments associated to a certain life style. The fashion industry must pay more and more attention to life style tendencies (Vignoli, 2009). Personality and psychological plays a role in shopping of garments, as it is related to self-concept and social group belongings.

To justify the buying behavior of consumers, other factors can be emphasized: organization's corporate values (Cambra et al. 2007), perceived quantity and quality of information (Pelsmacker & Janssens, 2007), environmental factors (Dewan, 2007) and societal communicating factors (Grand and Stephen, 2005). Organization's corporate values refer to some consumers' preferences for ethical companies, for instance the society Veja that creates sport shoes with materials from fair-trade and advertises them under that brand image. Quantity and quality of information concerns the consumers who are expecting a certain quality for the product they buy; this type of consumers tend to search for information before purchasing, unlike the compulsive buyers. According to Solomon et al. study (2013) environmental factors such as décor, smell and temperature can play a role in shopping of fashion. Finally societal and communicating factors include the media chosen to advertise the product (preference for social media for teenagers, preference for catalogues for housewives) but also all the communication strategy designed and social groups.

Dutton (2006) demonstrated that product's attributes such as styling; brand, price, place, production and fiber content have a significant influence on the consumer's purchase decision. For example for some consumers, product comfort is the most important attribute and will satisfy certain specific needs. Price is also a factor since consumers consider a better product the one with a better price (Hanf and Wersebe, 1994).

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

1. RESEARCH APPROACH

In the previous chapter, a review of the literature is described. This study has for main objective to analyze the consumer behavior towards online shopping of fashion. Therefore the secondary objective is to give an overview of the points of improvement for online shops of apparel and clothes. To bring the research to fruition, the researcher used a large range of literature review to define her topic. A large range of information was collected from academic articles, books and marketing journals. Moreover, the secondary data gave an insight on what is fashion for consumers and how consumers shop this category of product.

There has been a debate about the best methodology to use between qualitative and quantitative, and if the literature review was enough to use quantitative data. “A **qualitative approach** is one in which the inquirer often makes knowledge claims based primarily on constructivist perspectives (i.e, the multiple meaning of individual experiences, meaning socially and historically constructed, with an intent of developing a theory or pattern) or advocacy/participatory perspectives (i.e, political, issue-oriented, collaborative, or change oriented) or both. It also uses strategies of inquiry such as narratives, phenomenologies, ethnographies, grounded theory studies or case studies. The researcher collects open-ended, emerging data with the primary intent of developing themes from the data.” (Creswell, 2003). Qualitative approach also involves the use and collection of a variety of empirical materials such as reports, books and articles, but also conventional approaches such as interviews, focus groups or case studies (Sachdeva, 2009). Finally, with the approval of the direct of the thesis, the researcher chose to use quantitative data, enabling her to reach a bigger segment.

The strategy is to use now quantitative data to find out how consumers perceives online shopping of fashion and to give improvement keys to websites. “A **quantitative approach** is one in which the investigator primarily uses post positivist claims for developing knowledge (i.e, cause and effect thinking, reduction to specific variables and hypotheses and questions, use of

measurement and observation, and the test of theories), employs strategies of inquiry such as experiments and surveys, and collects data on predetermined instruments that yield statistical data.” (Creswell, 2003).

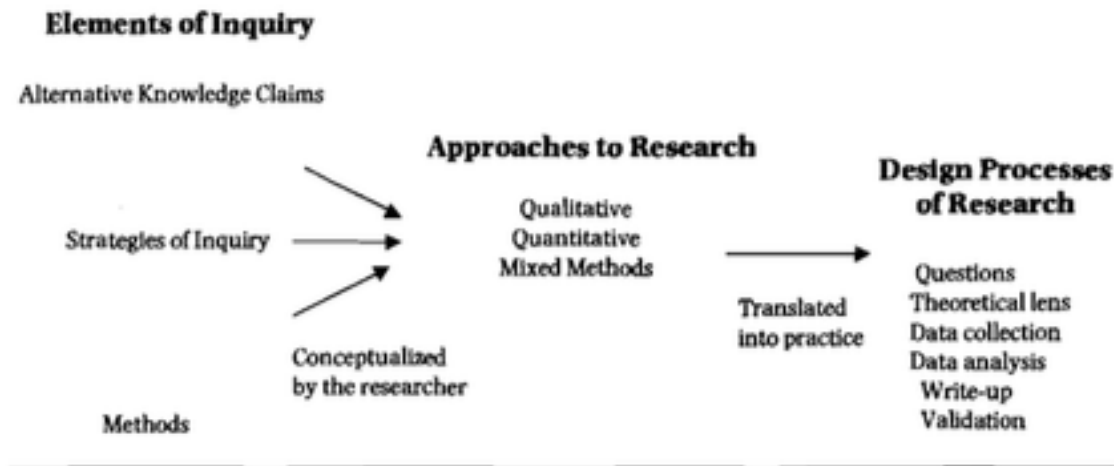


Figure 1.1 Knowledge Claims, Strategies of Inquiry, and Methods Leading to Approaches and the Design Process

Creswell, 2003

As a consequence, this research is using quantitative data. It would provide to the research assumption data on consumer behavior with online shopping of fashion with the literature review, and verify the relationship between online shopping and consumers (quantitative). Several researchers, including Creswell as his schema shown above, consider that mixed methods is the best research method. Creswell (2003) defined **mixed methods approach** as “one in which the researcher tends to base knowledge claims on pragmatic grounds (i.e: consequence-oriented, problem-centered, and pluralistic). It employs strategies of inquiry that involve collecting data either simultaneously or sequentially to best understand research problems. The data collection also involves gathering both numeric information (i.e: on

instruments) as well as text information (i.e: on interviews) so that the final database represents both quantitative and qualitative information”.

To be as accurate as possible with this study, the researcher used quantitative data based on hypothesis formulated after proofreading several articles and books on the topic. The following chapter describes the research question and hypothesis, methodology and associated methods and the research variables.

2. RESEARCH QUESTION AND HYPOTHESIS

Since the booming of the Internet, online shopping has becoming an option frequently used by consumers having access to a computer and Internet. Throughout the years, companies have seen an opportunity and some are now only focused on Internet sales. The chapter one demonstrated the patterns of online consumer behavior, relating it as a totally different experience than the offline behavior, emphasizing three different reasons to shop: utility, goal-driven motives or experiential motives. (Wolfenbarger & Gilly, 2000).

Moreover, four different behavioral patterns came out of this first chapter to explain which kind of consumers shop online: product-oriented, price-oriented, convenience-oriented and service-oriented consumers (Chen and Jiang, 2009). The researcher also found four factors explaining what makes consumers shopping online rather than offline: cost factors, convenience factors, enjoyment factors and risk factors (Oppewal and Huang, 2005). Due to limited recourses of this thesis, the researcher had to focus on one segment of the population. The goal of this thesis is to verify these theories towards a multinational population between 18 and 25 years old (the youngsters) and analyze them. Therefore this is why the research question is formulated as followed:

“Which factors encourage or discourage the online shopping of fashion for this segment of the population?”

The answers that will be provided will also give an insight for websites specialized in shopping of fashion, for them to gain even more market share and make their customers loyal. Thus, to go further, another problematic emerged from this research:

“How companies selling fashion online can improve and become more prosperous?”

Considering time and resource limitation, based on the analysis of existing literature, the researcher drew a model summarizing other researchers’ studies and involving four factors considered as decisive in the act of buying: product, price, enjoyment and convenience. Eventually, four hypotheses were formulated to investigate on:

Hypothesis 1: Consumers between 18 and 25 years old shop their clothes and apparel online because of the product and its features (quality, rarity, design).

Hypothesis 2: Consumers between 18 and 25 years old shop their clothes and apparel online because of the price (good value for money, cheaper than offline).

Hypothesis 3: Consumers between 18 and 25 years old shop their clothes and apparel online because it is a pleasure for them to surf the web and to get new fashion articles.

Hypothesis 4: Consumers between 18 and 25 years old shop their clothes and apparel online because it is the most convenient to them related to time, effort and stress.

The goal of these hypotheses is to provide better and clearer answers to the research question from the perspective of examining those factors of online consumer behavior. According to Rox (2007), for the same product or same type, online shopping customers will usually get a better deal than if they would have purchased it at store. But also it has to be taken into account that e-commerce made available all kind of product from all over the world, encouraging the development of local trends in fashion (Katawetawaraks and Wang, 2011). Also, some customers use online channels just to escape from face-to-face interaction with a salesperson because they feel pressurized or uncomfortable when dealing with salespeople and do not want to be manipulated and controlled in the marketplace and therefore find it more convenient

(Goldsmith and Flynn, 2005). Moreover, previous online shopping experiences will likely influence to renew the event; if a customer had a bad experience is it likely he won't shop online again.

Therefore, the goal of this thesis is to collect and analyze data and empirical evidence through conducting research and surveys to release the most-effective factors that websites of fashion can use for their further interests.

3. METHODOLOGY AND ASSOCIATED METHODS

Empirical research has been conducted in the framework in this thesis in order to verify the previous assumptions made by researchers and to verify the hypothesis. It could also be used as a basis for further research. The researcher composed an online survey with the help of Google Forms. Google Forms is an online tool offering to create surveys that anyone can design, and will then show the answers in a statistical way.

A first version of the survey was designed in April 2016, corrected by a native speaker student studying at the Prague School of Economics for a Bachelor's in Business Studies. According to Groves et al. (2009), a survey can be described as a systematic method for gathering information from a sample of entities for the purposes of constructing quantitative descriptors of the attributes of the larger population of which the entities are members. Matthews and Ross (2010) defines questionnaire as a logically structured set of question aiming to collect data in way that allow answers to be turn into numerical data. Today it is very easy to create and publish a questionnaire online, and sharing it using tools like emails or social networks. However a questionnaire can also be conducted through phone calls, video interviews or face-to-face interviews. In order to get the most answers possible and reach people aged 18 to 25 years old, the researcher chose to share her online survey through emails and social networks.

This questionnaire comports two major parts: one related to the respondent's identity with questions about the gender, the nationality, the age, the occupation. Usually, this type of questions is at the end of a questionnaire, but as the respondents are between 18 and 25 years old, this was not considered as problematic. Then still in this first part, the question becomes

more topic-oriented, with a question asking how much money do the respondents spend in clothing per year, both online and offline. In the second part of the questionnaire, answers are on a 4-point scale so there is no “in-between” answer; the respondent has to choose if the affirmations elaborated from previous research are closer to true or to wrong, ranging from Totally Wrong = 1, Quite Wrong = 2, Quite True = 3, Totally True = 4. It is supposed to evaluate the accuracy of previously formulated hypothesis. At the end of this part there is also some questions that can be answered by “yes” or “no” in for sake of clarity. The questionnaire was short and very simple; it would take between 5 and 10 minutes to any respondent to fill it.

The questionnaire was available online for one month and got 107 multinational respondents.

4. RESEARCH VARIABLES

The variables chosen for this research were designed from previous research on the topic online consumer behavior, but this time applied to shopping of fashion accessories and clothing. The director of the thesis also brought a lot of help to the researcher to design the questionnaire. The goal of this thesis is to demonstrate what can influence consumers to shop fashion online or not.

All the questions from the survey were designed by the researcher of the thesis, inspired by previous findings from chapter 1 and also a questionnaire designed within the framework of a Master’s Thesis of Business Administration (G. Hasnain, 2015). The first part of the questionnaire, from question 1 to question 4 is designed to obtain demographic information concerning the respondents, such as the age, nationality, occupation and gender.

The second part of the questionnaire is from question 5 to 11 and concerns the consumer habits of the respondent regarding clothes and fashion. The questions are about their spending habits, if they buy clothes online and offline and the frequency of their clothing purchase. The 11th question refers to the brand image, and which brand is familiar to the respondent when talking

about buying clothes online. The brands that were selected are the ones that predominately target the younger segment of the market, usually people from 18 to 25 years old.

Finally the third part of the questionnaire, from question 12 to 25 is directed towards consumer behavior. The questions were designed from the hypothesis previously formulated and the answers available are ranged from 1 to 4 (Wrong to True), depending if the respondent recognizes himself in the proposed affirmations. Moreover some questions, for example, the number 14, were formulated to see what could repel a potential consumer to buy online. During the literature review, the researcher found some elements showing what could discourage to buy online and decided to investigate in order to analyze if a segment group from 18 to 25 years old would validate those affirmations. As the main objective of this thesis is to determine which factors encourage consumers to buy clothes and fashion accessories online and what can discourage them, in addition, some more questions were asked about the quality and the fact that consumers cannot try clothes when buying them online, to see if those variables actually are an issue that prevent consumers from buying.

The questions 22 to 25 were added at the end of May 2016, to go further in the research and try to define which factors can be preferred by consumers enjoying shopping in physical shops rather than online.

Finally the last question is asking to respondent if they have anything to add to the survey.

5. RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

During an online questionnaire, especially as the explanations are limited and cannot be detailed in depth, it is important to ensure that respondents understand each question clearly. In order to avoid any misunderstanding, the survey has been tested with different methods.

The language of survey is English, however participants are not all English-native speakers. Most of the time, it is a second language. Therefore the questions had to be simple to understand and short, and the vocabulary used could not be too sophisticated. This way, respondents from

different countries wouldn't have any trouble to understand them. The content of the survey was checked by a native speaker to correct any English mistake as the researcher is not a native speaker. Very small grammatical mistakes were corrected. When survey was almost ready, the researcher consulted the supervisor of the thesis to receive an expert opinion and make sure the topic was treated properly.

Another method to ensure of the readability of a questionnaire is to test it with the Fog Index. The Fog Index is a mathematical formula that calculates the ease and the readability of any text. It was created by Robert Gunning, a professor of mathematics specialized in analysis, in 1952. Newspaper journalists and article writers use the Fog Index. The score should be 7 or 8, if it is above 12 it is therefore considered too hard for most people to read. After calculating the Fog Index with an online tool, the results that came out was 8.435. It means that the questionnaire has excellent readability.

$$0.4 \left[\left(\frac{\text{words}}{\text{sentences}} \right) + 100 \left(\frac{\text{complex words}}{\text{words}} \right) \right]$$

Fog Index formula, Wikipedia, 2016

Moreover, before the questionnaire was released at the beginning of May 2016, four students from the Master's in International Business tested it. They are 22, 23, 23 and 24 years old respectively. It took them on average 2.13 minutes to fill the survey. When the researcher asked them what they think of the survey, the feedback was quite positive: the questionnaire was described as "quick and easy to do", "relevant", and the topic of the thesis was defined as "very interesting".

After the elaboration of the questionnaire and the verification of its relevance both by the supervisor and also potential respondents, the questionnaire was released on the 4th of June 2016 for a length of one month, by email, word of mouth and Facebook.

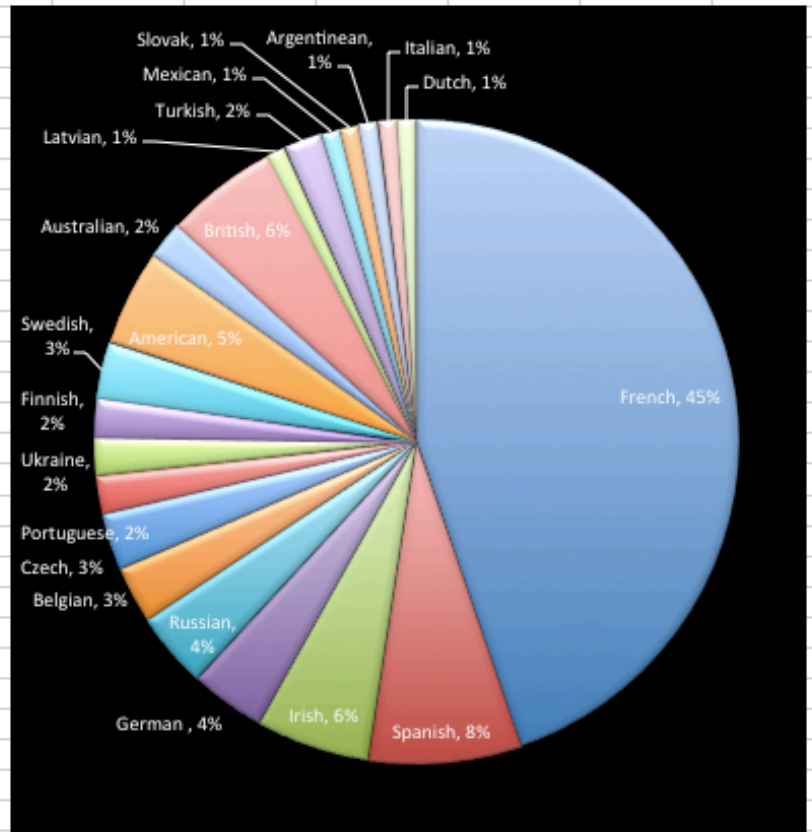
CHAPTER 3. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides a detailed description of primary data analysis obtained thanks to the questionnaire, and also a discussion of research findings. In order to analyze the collected responses, the researcher used the software Excel, as well as Google tools. Firstly, descriptive statistics will be provided with a focus on demographics of the respondents. Then, in the second part, the researcher will analyze the answer regarding directly the customer behavior towards online shopping of fashion and also offline. In the third part, recommendations, based from this analysis will be provided for online retailers.

1. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR DEMOGRAPHICS

Sample consisted of 106 respondents from different countries and continents throughout the world. Respondents were mainly from France, (47%), but also from Spain (8%), Ireland (6%), Germany (4%), Russia (4%), Belgium (3%), Czech Republic (3%), Portugal (2%), Ukraine (2%), Finland (2%), Sweden (3%), United States (5%), Australia (2%), United Kingdom (6%), Latvia (1%), Turkey (2%), Mexico (1%), Slovakia (1%), Argentina (1%), Italy (1%) and the Netherlands (1%). The high percentage of French respondents can be explained by the fact that the researcher is French. As the questionnaire was online, it was easy to distribute it across the different countries and made it possible to obtain data with all those different nationalities. This diversity enables the research to be considered as global, and for further research, it would be interesting to analyze the different answers according to the parts of the world respondents are from.

French	45%	47
Spanish	8%	8
Irish	6%	6
German	4%	4
Russian	4%	4
Belgian	3%	3
Czech	3%	3
Portuguese	2%	2
Ukraine	2%	2
Finnish	2%	2
Swedish	3%	3
American	5%	5
Australian	2%	2
British	6%	6
Latvian	1%	1
Turkish	2%	2
Mexican	1%	1
Slovak	1%	1
Argentinean	1%	1
Italian	1%	1
Dutch	1%	1
		105



Respondents by nationality, 2016

All the respondents belong to the same age group targeted, which is 18 to 25 years old. Detailed description will be presented on a table below.

The majority of participants were women (63.6%), whereas only 36.4% were men. However, since women have found to be more frequent shopper than men (Kolatt and Willett, 1976), the analysis can be seen as even more realistic. Moreover, some other studies have showed that women tend to shop online more than men, for instance in the United Kingdom, 72% of women have shopped online within the past 30 days (Paymentsense, 2016). In the Netherlands, 75% of women already have shopped clothes online once in 2015 (Telecompaper, 2016).

Questions	Option of answers	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	39	36.4%
	Female	68	63.6%
Age	18	3	2.8%
	19	1	0.9%
	20	6	5.6%
	21	10	9.3%
	22	35	32.7%
	23	23	21.5%
	24	21	19.6%
	25	8	7.5%
Occupation	Student	89	83.2%
	Professional	15	14%
	Other	4	3.7%
Nationality	French	47	45%
	Spanish	8	8%
	Irish	6	6%
	American	5	5%
	British	6	6%
	Czech	3	3%
	Belgian	3	3%
	German	4	4%
	Russian	4	4%
	Swedish	3	3%
	Others	16	13%

Table of Demographics, 2016

Most of them were students (83.2%) studying at universities, some were professionals (14%) and a smaller share described themselves as others (3.7%), which implies unemployed people, job seekers or also students with a job. Also, the respondents were more representative of the 20-25 years old, as 96.2% of them were from this age category. Only 3.8% were aged 18 or 19 years old. This is not necessarily a problem as this age category is often referred to as a whole, global category named as “youngsters”. More specifically, in the marketing field, this category is also called “college marketing”, to target college-age consumers, typically ages 18 to 24 years old (Valkenburg, 2011).

About the budget spent in clothes and fashion accessories per year, it appears that 4.7% of respondents spend between 50 and 100€, 15.9% spend between 100 and 200€, 23.4% spend between 200 and 300€, 26.2% spend between 300 and 400€, and finally, the biggest share, 32.7% spend more than 400€. It is important to notify here, as more than 80% of respondents were students, that their buying power is important or at least that the share spent on clothes and fashion is considerable, if we assume that students are non earners.

2 ANALYSIS OF RESULTS IN-DEPTH

This second part will provide an in-depth analysis of the answers from the questionnaire. After the demographic information, questions were divided in several parts:

1. From question 5 to question 11, the questions were a first approach to online shopping of fashion, regarding a global behavior towards it as well as the consumer habits.
2. From question 12 to question 21, the questions could be answered on a scale from 1 to 4, with 1 for wrong, 2 for quite wrong, 3 for quite true and 4 for true. They were mostly based on previous research made by scholars, as described in the literature review and their findings. Some questions concern shopping online and some other, shopping offline.

3. From question 22 to question 25, these questions were added in a secondary time, to compare the shopping online and offline and see which patterns could be identified. The results will provide recommendations for both online shops as well as brick-and-mortar shops. A practical question related to returns has also been asked.
4. Finally, the last question is asking the respondent if he or she has anything to add to the survey.

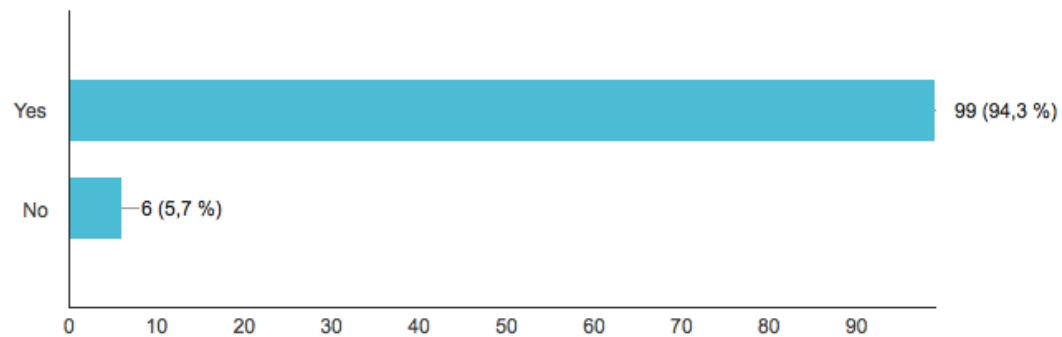
This part will be divided in two subparts: one will be the analysis of results regarding the consumer behavior for online shopping of fashion. In other words, it will describe the answers from questions 5 to 21, except the questions 8 and 10. The second part will analyze answers from questions 8 and 10, 22 to 25, and will determine which factors are important for consumers who shop offline.

2.1 ANALYSIS OF RESULTS REGARDING CONSUMER BEHAVIOR FOR FASHION ONLINE

Unsurprisingly, 94.3% of the segment has already bought clothing online. This can be explained by the rise of the Internet and the marketing of online brands, which can be seen on the Internet but also on television with the brand Boohoo or Missguided. Founded in 2006, the brand Boohoo saw its profit increasing by 185% between 2013 and 2014¹. Boohoo is advertising online but also on TV, with scenes representing fashionable youngsters in amazing surroundings, and uses songs that are very famous and catchy to their target segment (16 to 24 years old).

¹ *The Guardian*, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2014/mar/07/boohoo-sale-company-shares>

6. Have you ever bought any clothes online? (105 réponses)

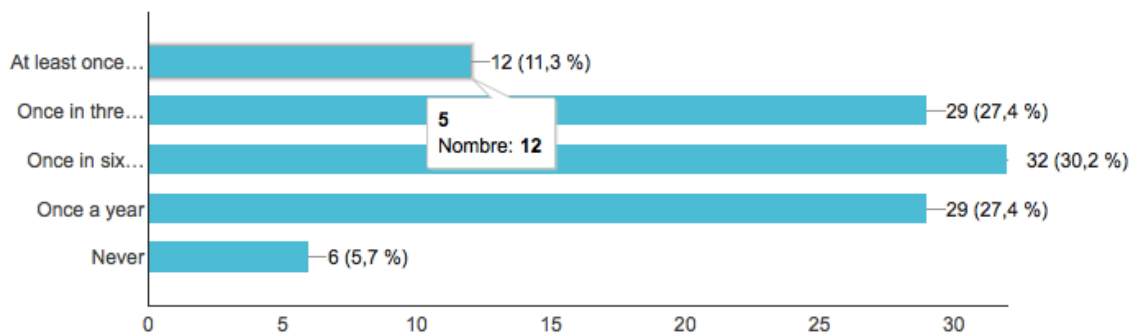


Source: Author, 2016

Asking to the respondents how frequently they buy clothes online, the answers could vary.

7. If you have, how frequently do you buy clothes online? (if no, please select "Never")

(106 réponses)



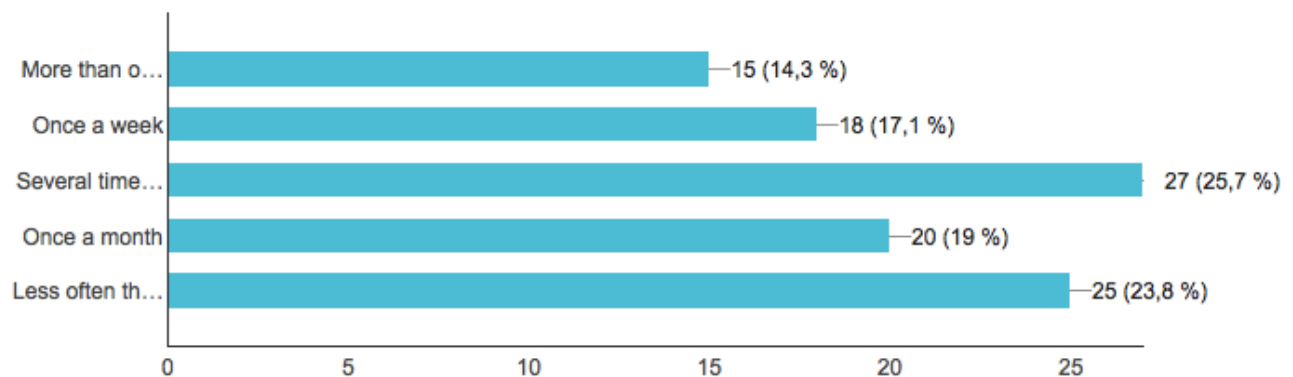
Source: Author, 2016

The most important shares that are 30,2%, 29% and 29% respectively correspond to the answers once in six months, once in three months and once a year. In other words there is no linearity in the answer. However, still 11.3% of respondents state they buy clothes online at least once a month. The smallest share, 5.7% represent the respondents who never have

bought clothes online. This can be explained by cultural differences, as Ebru Cuhadar², from Turkey, explains: “In my country, clothes are very cheap, and we like to take the time to go shopping. What’s more, we are often small and curvy, and we prefer trying before buying anything. Often, the clothes sold online are not adapted to our body, we have to buy from the Big Size section, and it is embarrassing!”. This could be a reason to explain why some youngsters never bought online.

When asked how frequently respondents look at clothes online, once more the answers vary and had a lot of disparities.

9. How frequently do you look at clothes online? (105 réponses)



Source: Author, 2016

To analyze these answers and take it from a different point of view, 31.4% of respondents take a look at clothes online once a week or more. 44.7% of the segment looks at clothes online at least once a month, or more. Last but not least, 23.8% of respondents look at clothes online less often than once a month. The respondents going on fashion retailer’s websites once a month or more therefore represent the main share.

² Miss Ebru Cuhadar, 2016, personal communication

The 11th question was referring to the brand image. With intense advertising online and sometimes on TV, online brands are working hard to be printed in youngsters' minds. To simplify the question to the respondents, the author did some research to see which online retailers were the most often quoted online and were coming first when typing "Online Shopping Young Fashion" excluding the ones targeting an older population.

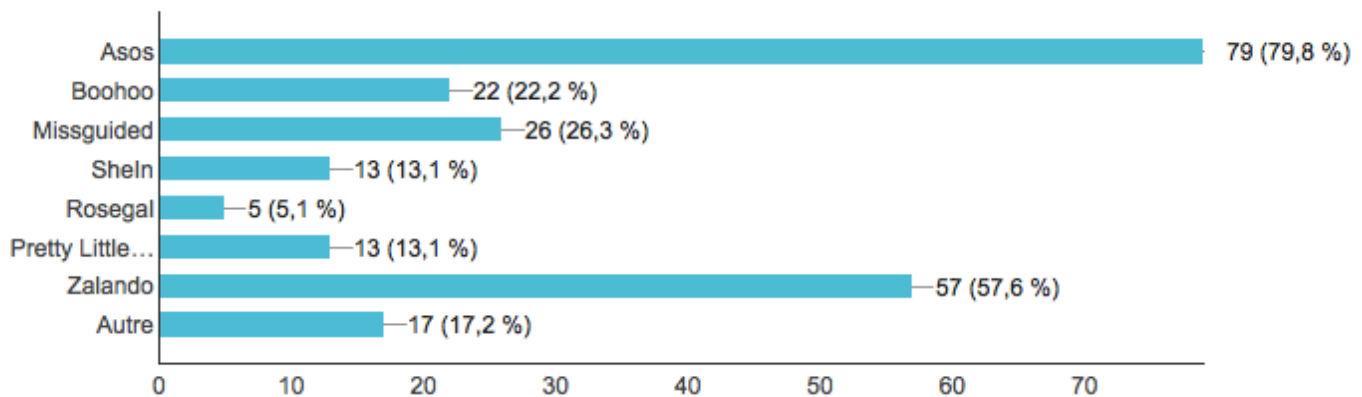
According to MarketerGizmo (2016), as Brand Awareness increases, so does Brand Preference. In other words, the more target will hear the name of your brand and know it, the more likely it is for them to go on your website when they will need something you sell.

The retailer Asos, which claims to be the leader in his field, was known by 79.8% of respondents. The second is Zalando who got 57.6% of brand recognition. It is important to note that both brands do not use the same media: Zalando's target are women, from 20 to 35 years old³ whereas Asos targets both genders who are fashion-lovers, and are in their early twenties.

Missguided and Boohoo respectively got the 3rd and 4th ranks, with 26.3% and 22.2% of respondents knowing their brands. The Chinese retailer SheIn got 13% of brand recognition and PrettyLittleThing, which is famous in the UK and Ireland got the same score. Finally the brand Rosegal got only 5.1%. This can be explained by two factors: Rosegal does not advertise or use an extensive marketing strategy and is only known by fashion lovers. Secondly, the brand was at first specialized in vintage-like type of clothes, which corresponds to a specific segment and taste. However today, their range of products is very similar to the website SheIn. 17.2% of respondents know other brands.

³ Source from Zalando Corporation, March 2015,
https://corporate.zalando.com/sites/default/files/mediapool/06_advertising_services_1.pdf

11. Which of these brands are you familiar with? (99 réponses)



Source: Author, 2016

The fact that those brands don't benefit from the same brand recognition can be explained by several factors:

- Respondents were from all the continents, except Africa. Some brands like Zalando are big at a European scale, but wouldn't be famous to inhabitants from the American continent for example.
- Knowing one brand or more is probably correlated to the amount of time one spends on the Internet looking for clothes online or their sensitivity to follow influencers and bloggers. The brand Boohoo is using this strategy intensively to increase the brand awareness: they chose bloggers from each country to advertise their product. In France, the Youtube blogger Sananas is the ambassador of the brand, and she regularly posts about their products, on Youtube, Instagram and Facebook, directly or through product placement.
- If those brands have a quite similar target group (consumers between 18 and 25 years old), they do not use the same strategy, maybe for financial reason. Sheln uses very low price to attract consumers and do advertising online using other platforms such as Facebook. Rosegal does not advertise but rely on word-of-mouth. Zalando uses radio,

television adverts and social media to raise brand awareness. All these differences can explain the fact that the brands are not known on a similar basis.

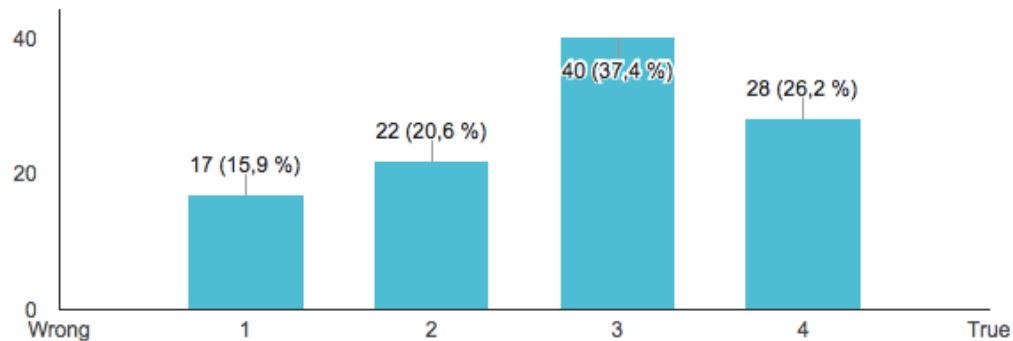
The questions 12 to 21 were researching the factors leading respondents from 18 to 25 years old to buy online instead of offline. The different questions have for themes the price, the features of the product (originality, quality), the convenience, and the enjoyment considering Internet as leisure. In order to understand factors that could repulse consumers to choose to buy online, some questions were asked about the safety of purchasing online, the customer service, the returns, the impossibility to try and the quality.

When the respondents were asked if they buy online because it is cheaper than in store, 37.4% answered “Quite True” and 26,2% answered “True”, which is a total of 63.2% of consumers who are attracted by the low prices often offered by online retailers. However, still 36.8% answered “Wrong” or “Quite Wrong”, implying that some respondents are whether not regarding about the price, whether in their country, the brick-and-mortar shops also offer very cheap prices for clothes. Helena Vazquez⁴, from Spain, justifies: “In my country, brands from the group Inditex⁵ sell the same product than elsewhere for a cheaper price. If I shop online, it would be because the product is original and corresponds to what I want, not because of the price. The cost would be quite similar to offline actually.”

⁴ Miss Helena Vazquez, 2016, personal communication

⁵ Inditex is a Spanish group which possesses Zara, Bershka, Pull and Bear, Stradivarius, Oysho and more brands highly appreciated by consumers in their early twenties.

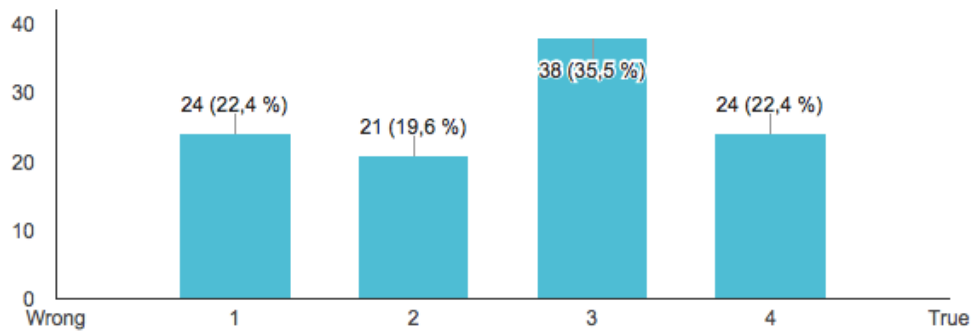
12. I buy online because it is cheaper than in store. (107 réponses)



Source: Author, 2016

The 13th question was referring to the originality of products, implying that the chosen product could not be found anywhere else than on the online retailer website. There was a lot of disparity in the answers: 22,4% argued it was Wrong, 19.6% said it was Quite Wrong, 35.5% said it was Quite True and 22.4% said it was True. Even if the majority is Quite True, it is important to notify that the same percentage of respondents have answered Wrong and True. However, it is today more and more common to find on websites such as SheIn or AliExpress the exact same clothes sold than in Zara, because of illegal patterns are sold in Asia, which enables companies to fabric the same clothes and to sell them online for a cheaper price.

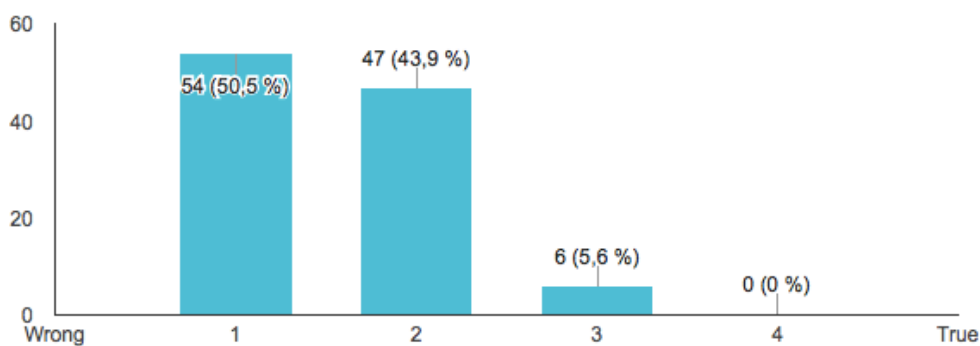
13. I buy online because the products sold are more original. (107 réponses)



Source: Author, 2016

Respondents had to answer to a question about the quality of the products sold online. There the results were very clear as 94,4% of the respondents answered Wrong or Quite Wrong. It seems that the quality of the clothes sold online are not a convincing factor for consumers, which implies that consumers between 18 to 25 years old would rather pay a low price for a low quality than the opposite. But this statement will be confirmed or infirmed after a more in-depth analysis.

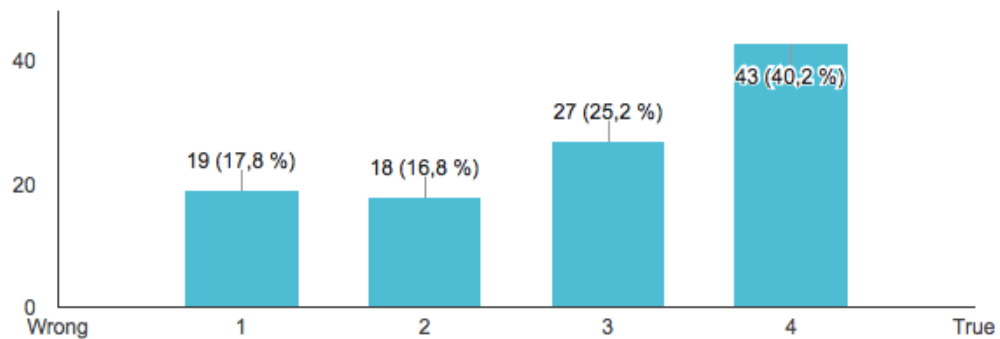
14. I buy online because the products sold are of a better quality. (107 réponses)



Source: Author, 2016

The 15th question concerns the convenience of buying online. Indeed, buying online is available for customers around the clock comparing to traditional stores as it is open 24 hours a day seven days a week (Hofacker, 2001; Wang et al., 2005). Here, the respondents are 40.2% to answer True, and 25.2% to answer Quite True. This is surprising as one could think students would have spare time and would appreciate spending time in shops with their friends. This result shows that shopping of clothes is changing to a new dimension for youngsters.

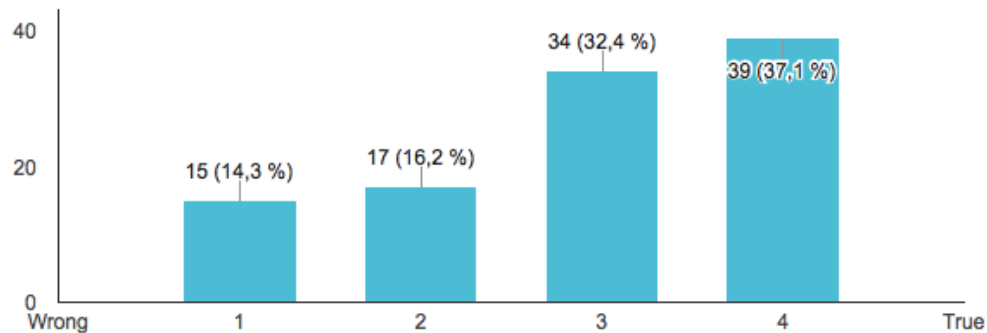
15. I buy online because I find it more convenient than going to a store.
(107 réponses)



Source: Author, 2016

16. I buy online because I enjoy browsing on the Internet and looking for something.

(105 réponses)

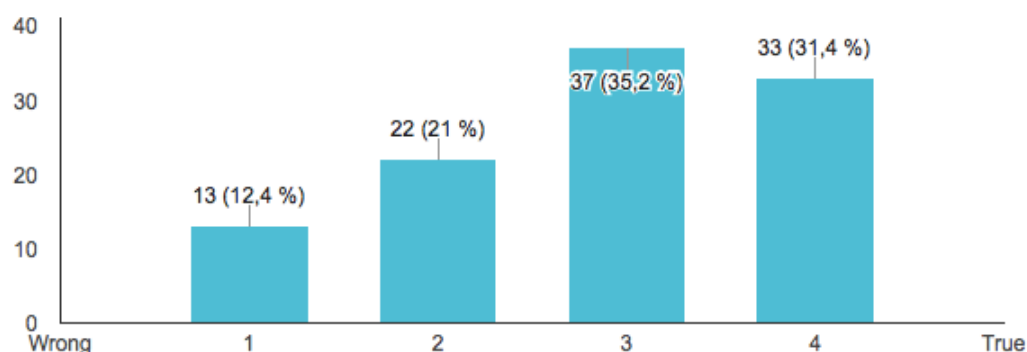


Source: Author, 2016

When asked if they enjoy browsing on the Internet and looking for something, 69.5% of respondents answered Quite True or True. This important percentage proves once again that for the young adults, Internet became a habit and leisure. According to a survey from the Telegraph, young adults between 16 and 24 years old in the UK spend up to 27 hours a week on the Internet, which is a considerable amount. Indeed, today with a mobile phone, a laptop, it is easier than never to go on the Internet.

An assumption often emphasized by some researchers was that consumers were reluctant to give their bank details online (Oppewal, 2005; Elliott & Fowell, 2000; Dange & Kimar, 2012). Surprisingly, this survey shows that the young adults don't feel concerned about this. Indeed, 66,6% of respondents stated that they have no problems giving their bank details online, with the most important share (35.2%) answering Quite True. Still 33.4% of respondents answered giving their bank details online feel wrong or quite wrong, which could be a point of improvement for online retailers.

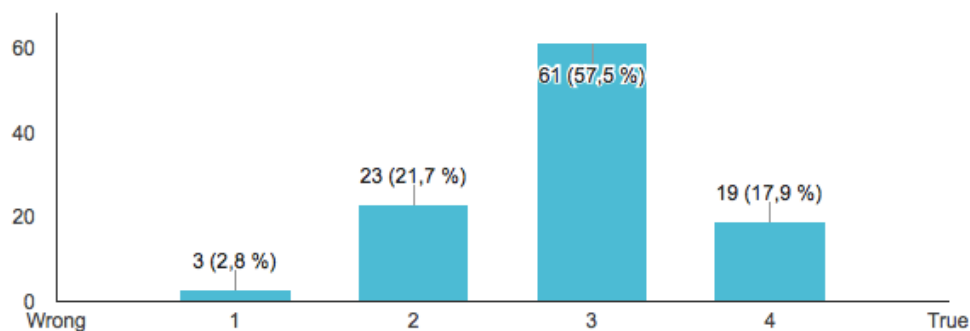
17. I have no problem giving my bank details online. (105 réponses)



Source: Author, 2016

The 18th question was referring to the online customer service provided by online retailers. Customer service according to most researchers is a major point in buying. Every online retailer disposes of a customer service, in order to ensure delivery, returns and other questions. Results showed that 18 to 25 years old are mostly satisfied with customer service: 57.5% of respondents answered Quite True and 17.9% answered True. It is an important share especially that when consumers have a bad experience, they tend to remember it and share it with their peers.

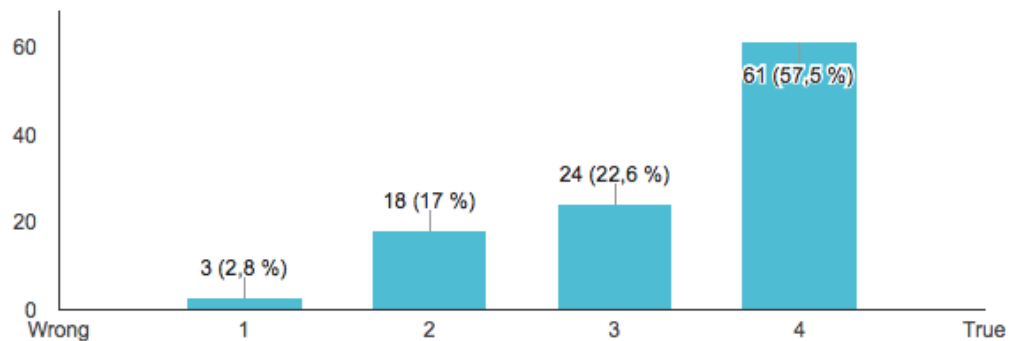
18. I am satisfied with the online customer service provided in general. (106 réponses)



Source: Author, 2016

One common problem of online shopping is that consumers cannot try clothes before buying. And when asked if they prefer trying on clothes before buying them, 57,5% answered True, and only 2.8% of respondents answered Wrong. The online retailer Asos has a strategy of free returns, which can encourage the consumer to buy because he considers that if the clothes don't fit, he or she can send them back for free. However, this can be considered as a waste of time and a bad experience for some consumers. This could also be a point of improvement for online retailers.

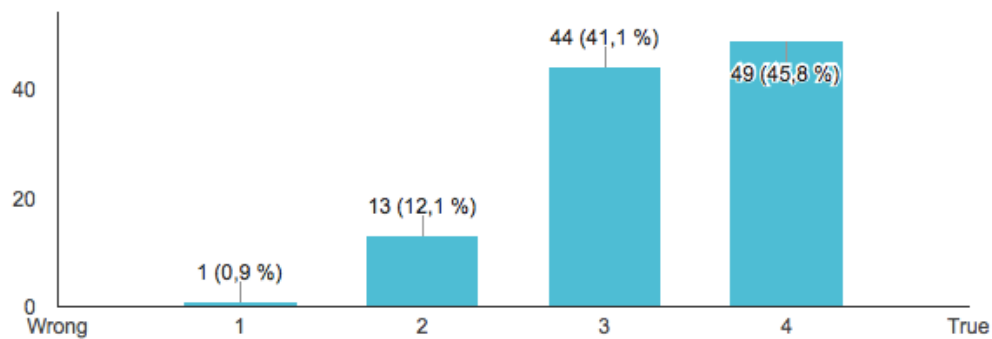
19. I prefer trying on clothes before buying them. (106 réponses)



Source: Author, 2016

The 20th question asked to the respondents if they care about the quality of the clothes they buy. The results of the 14th question showed that consumers between 18 and 25 years old were buying online, but not because of the superior quality. However, here, respondents were 86.9% to answer that is it Quite True or True. If the quality is not a factor for consumers between 18 and 25 years old to buy online, they are still sensitive and care about the quality.

20. I care about the quality of the clothes I buy. (107 réponses)



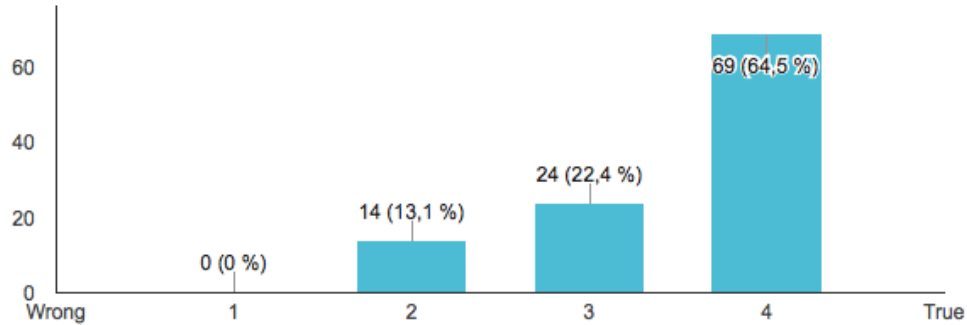
Source: Author, 2016

The 21st question determining the factors that encourage consumers between 18 and 25 years old was concerning the size and if it would fit them. 64.5% of respondents answered it was True. Despite online retailers' efforts to be as specific as possible in measurements, for consumers, it doesn't make it easier. Elise Faradji⁶, 24 years old, from France, explains: "Online retailers often put tables with the size you should pick according to your measurements. But I don't even have a measuring tape... Moreover, the measurements are not always accurate, as it doesn't take into account the hips and the size of the thighs. The biggest problem is to buy some jeans online." This is one more point of improvement that could be helpful to online retailers.

⁶ Miss Elise Faradji, 2016, personal communication

21. When I buy clothing online, I am worried the size won't be the right fit.

(107 réponses)

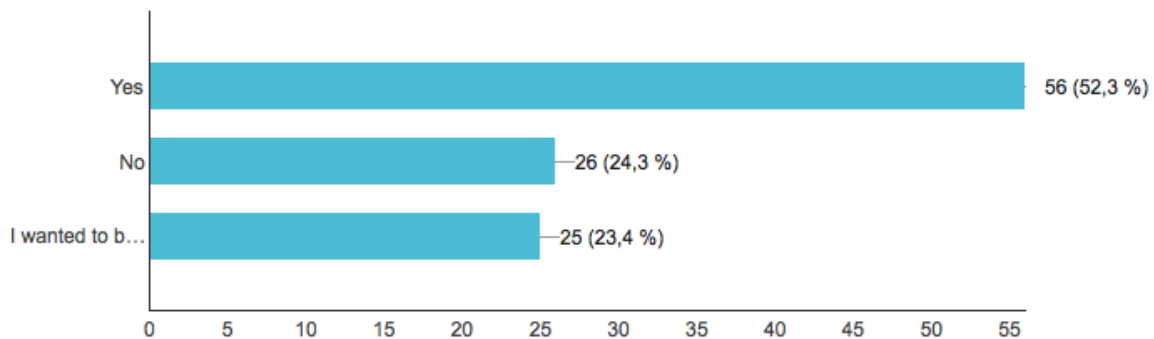


Source: Author, 2016

Finally, the last question for this section was the number 25th, and was asking to the respondents if they had already returned an order because they were not satisfied. 52,3% of consumers have already done it and 23.4% wanted to do but hadn't for diverse reasons (no time, complicated to do...) This could also be a point of improvement for online retailers to simplify the return process to its easiest so consumers would return their orders easily.

25. Have you ever returned an order because you were not satisfied?

(107 réponses)



Source: Author, 2016

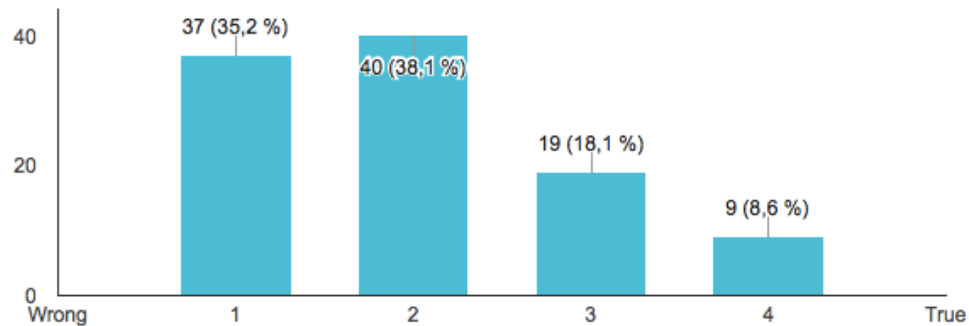
2.2 ANALYSIS OF RESULTS REGARDING CONSUMER BEHAVIOR FOR FASHION OFFLINE

The three questions added in a second time were trying to analyze and determine the factors making the consumers between 18 and 25 years old loyal to offline shops and retailers.

It seems that consumers between 18 and 25 years old don't especially appreciate the social contact with salespersons or other customers as 73.3% answered that assumption was Wrong or Quite Wrong. The social contact is therefore not a main factor that convinces young adults to buy in brick and mortars shops.

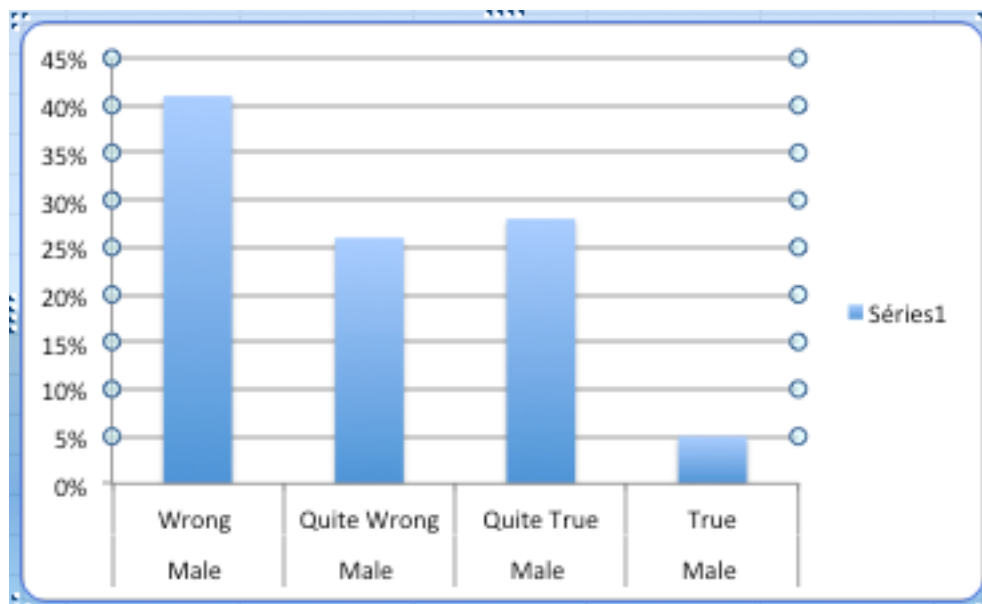
22. I enjoy buying my clothes in shops because I appreciate the social contact with salespersons or other customers.

(105 réponses)



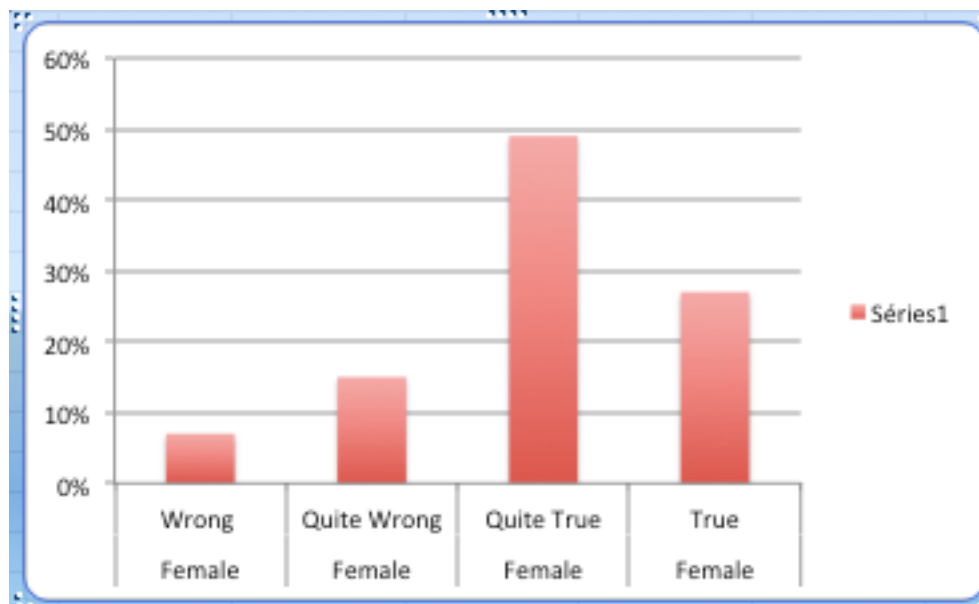
Source: Author, 2016

The 23rd question was questioning if consumers between 18 and 25 years old consider shopping as leisure. For this question, the answers were sorted by gender and treated with Excel.



Source: Author, 2016

To sum up the findings, 41% of male respondents between 18 and 25 years old do not consider shopping as leisure. 26% of them think the assumption of going to shops for leisure is quite wrong. However, a percentage of 28% of male respondents say it is quite true. Only 5% consider shopping as leisure.



Source: Author, 2016

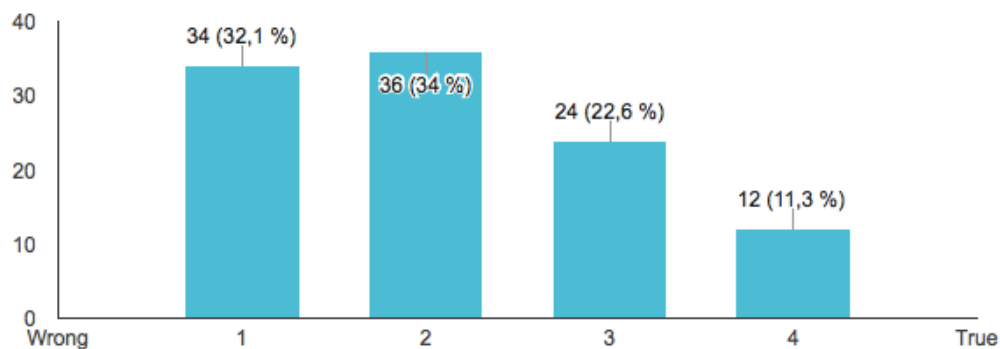
Female respondents were 7.2% and answered that shopping was not leisure, 15% said that this assumption was quite wrong. However, 49% of female respondents say it is quite true that they enjoy going to the shops because they consider shopping as leisure, and 27.5% answered it is True.

Therefore, the male gender between 18 and 25 years old, could be more easy to convince that shopping online is more convenient as they are not really keen on going to the shops. It makes them an ideal target for online retailers.

Finally, the 24th question was asking to the respondents if they enjoy buying their clothes in shops because they are loyal to them. Most respondents do not feel loyal to the shops as 32.1% answered Wrong and 34% answered Quite Wrong. It seems like it is not priority for young adults consumers to stay loyal to shops as it could be for older generations.

24. I enjoy buying my clothes in shops because I am loyal to the shops I am used to.

(106 réponses)



Source: Author, 2016

Recommendations will be provided in the next part. However, when asked when the respondents had anything to add, and among the 26 comments, some of them were relevant. Two of them added that Asos' customer service was perfect thanks to the free return option. One also added "I bought some things online, but I don't like it that much, because of the unnecessary resource waste, that comes with the shipping". Two respondents also said that they bought online if their sizes are not available in stores. Five respondents answered that the survey was "a good one" and "interesting".

2.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ONLINE RETAILERS

With the results coming from this survey and analysis, the author is now able to provide some recommendations to online retailers, in order to make their business more profitable and increase the loyalty.

Price: it seems that consumers between 18 and 25 years old buy online because of the cheap prices, without caring too much about the quality. This is a logical behavior for consumers with no wages. Therefore, online retailers should keep their prices the lowest possible, as long as they respect ethic measures. Any scandal linked to workers conditions or working environment would cause high damages to the business. Another idea is to do discounts regularly, or promotions.

Fitting Problem: online retailers should find solutions to solve the problem of trying on clothes. It is a waste of time and a disappointment for customers when they receive some products that don't fit them. To do so, online retailers could create an application where the consumer would have to enter his measurements just once, with very precised data, like the length of every body part in addition to the traditional measurements. Then, from this data, the retailer could directly orientate the customer to the appropriate size from the shop. This would be time saving for the customer and would make shopping online easier.

Customer Service: a good customer service is very important. Retailers like Asos understood that, and this is why online retailers should implement free returns. Besides that, they could optimize the communication by putting an online chat tab on their websites. If the consumer has a question regarding an order, a product, or anything, he would receive an answer within a short time, which could convince him to buy.

CSR: In respect of the corporate social responsibility, online retailers should develop a strategy to ensure good working conditions, especially in countries where labor law is ambiguous or not well established. Moreover, optimized deliveries could reduce gas emissions and would contribute to a cleaner planet. They could also use some recycled papers to envelop and deliver packages. All of those little things would help the planet while keeping a good brand image in the consumers' eyes.

Quality: It seems like the consumers between 18 and 25 years old mostly care about the quality of their clothes. Therefore, online retailers could create a premium range with clothes from good quality and it may encounter some success. An in-depth market study would of course be required beforehand.

Adaptability: as seen during the analysis, some consumers whose measurements differ from others do not feel confident in buying online, worried deservedly that the clothes won't fit them. Online retailers should find a solution to that. Some of them tried, by creating a Plus Size Range, but the problem is that those consumers do not considered themselves as "plus size" as in their country, it is normal to have shapes. Asos named its range "Curve", translated into Big Sizes in French. They should use a neutral word or call their collection with another name. This would help gaining market share.

Advertising and Brand Image: most of online retailers do not have important brand recognition to young adults. Therefore, a high presence on social media is recommended, through which online retailers can show the personality and spirit of their brand. Young consumers appreciate the direct communication. Basically, online retailers should advertise where the consumers between 18 and 25 years old are, including social media, universities and popular places.

CONCLUSION

The impact of the Internet in society's daily life cannot be denied, it has taken an important place even for some everyday buying. If the ecommerce is a topic often studied by researchers, there was no study specially focusing on the shopping of clothes and fashion accessories for young adults between 18 and 25 years old.

After conducting a survey using quantitative research methods, it is necessary to summarize findings and draw conclusions. The purpose of conducted studies was to test research hypothesis. The goal of this thesis was to determine the factors encouraging or discouraging young consumers between 18 and 25 years old to buy their clothes online. Two research questions were formulated:

“Which factors encourage or discourage the online shopping of fashion for this segment of the population?”

“How companies selling fashion online can improve and become more prosperous?”

From those two research questions, some hypothesis were formulated using the existing literature, that was analyzed thoroughly:

Hypothesis 1: Consumers between 18 and 25 years old shop their clothes and apparel online because of the product and its features (quality, rarity, design).

Hypothesis 2: Consumers between 18 and 25 years old shop their clothes and apparel online because of the price (good value for money, cheapest than offline).

Hypothesis 3: Consumers between 18 and 25 years old shop their clothes and apparel online because it is a pleasure for them to surf the web and to get new fashion articles.

Hypothesis 4: Consumers between 18 and 25 years old shop their clothes and apparel online because it is the most convenient to them related to time, effort and stress.

From the results of the survey, the researcher can draw those conclusions:

- Hypothesis 1 is not confirmed, as consumers between 18 and 25 years old do not buy online for the quality, however they appreciate the originality of the products sold online compared to offline shops.
- Hypothesis 2 is confirmed, however as mentioned in the findings, this doesn't obviously apply in countries where clothing is especially cheap, where sometimes if the price can encourage the act of buying, it is not a decisive factor.
- Hypothesis 3 is confirmed, a great number of respondents consider it is a pleasure to browse on the Internet.
- Hypothesis 4 is confirmed, the convenience for consumers between 18 and 25 years old seems like an important factor.

The great number of 94,3% of respondents that already bought some clothes online shows that it became a popular and common act. Young adults are also extremely suggestible and sensitive to the word-of-mouth. They are also sensitive to fashion and want to belong to a group, as seen in the literature review. Therefore, it can be said that online shopping of clothing has a prosperous future, especially if the online retailers take into account some recommendations provided in the last chapter, such as adapting their products, improving their customer service and efficiency, and respecting ethics and corporate social responsibility.

However, while writing this thesis, the researcher had a conversation with the owner of the shop Luciole⁷, in Narbonne, France, which is going to close down soon. She explained that she also sells online, and that it increased considerably since the terrorist attacks that happened in France. “People are scared now to go out, to go shopping. With what happened lately in Nice, it is going to be even worse. They feel safer to order online and to avoid crowded places.” Further research could determine if the actual context, especially in France, could be one more factor that encourages young consumers to shop online instead of offline. Internet grew so rapidly those past years that further investigation could also determine if in 50 years time, all consumers’ purchases would be made online.

⁷ Miss Raphaela Morel, 2016, personal communication

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE

Why do consumers aged 18 to 25 y.o choose to buy clothing and apparel online?

This survey has been created in order to write my master's thesis about consumer behaviour towards online shopping of fashion.

1. What is your gender?

☐ Male

☐ Female

2. What is your nationality?

Votre réponse

3. What age are you?

- ☐ 18
- ☐ 19
- ☐ 20
- ☐ 21
- ☐ 22
- ☐ 23
- ☐ 24
- ☐ 25

4. What is your occupation?

- ☐ Student
- ☐ Professional
- ☐ Other

5. How much do you spend on clothes and fashion accessories per year?

- ☐ less than 50€
- ☐ 50-100€
- ☐ 100-200€
- ☐ 200-300€
- ☐ 300-400€
- ☐ more than 400€

6. Have you ever bought any clothes online?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

7. If you have, how frequently do you buy clothes online? (if no, please select "Never")

- ☐ At least once a month
- ☐ Once in three months
- ☐ Once in six months
- ☐ Once a year
- ☐ Never

8. How frequently do you buy clothes in shops?

- ☐ At least once a month
- ☐ Once in three months
- ☐ Once in six months
- ☐ Once a year

9. How frequently do you look at clothes online?

- ☐ More than once in a week
- ☐ Once a week
- ☐ Several times in a month
- ☐ Once a month
- ☐ Less often than once a month

10. How frequently do you look at clothes in shops?

- ☐ More than once in a week
- ☐ Once a week
- ☐ Several times in a month
- ☐ Once a month
- ☐ Less often than once a month

11. Which of these brands are you familiar with?

- ☐ SheIn
- ☐ Boohoo
- ☐ Asos
- ☐ Zalando
- ☐ Pretty Little Thing
- ☐ Rosegal
- ☐ Missguided
- ☐ Autre : _____

12. I buy online because it is cheaper than in store.

	1	2	3	4	
Wrong	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	True

13. I buy online because the products sold are more original.

	1	2	3	4	
Wrong	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	True

14. I buy online because the products sold are of a better quality.

	1	2	3	4	
Wrong	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	True

15. I buy online because I find it more convenient than going to a store.

	1	2	3	4	
Wrong	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	True

16. I buy online because I enjoy browsing on the Internet and looking for something.

	1	2	3	4	
Wrong	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	True

17. I have no problem giving my bank details online.

	1	2	3	4	
Wrong	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	True

18. I am satisfied with the online customer service provided in general.

	1	2	3	4	
Wrong	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	True

19. I prefer trying on clothes before buying them.

	1	2	3	4	
Wrong	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	True

20. I care about the quality of the clothes I buy.

	1	2	3	4	
Wrong	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	True

21. When I buy clothing online, I am worried the size won't be the right fit.

	1	2	3	4	
Wrong	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	True

22. I enjoy buying my clothes in shops because I appreciate the social contact with salespersons or other customers.

	1	2	3	4	
Wrong	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	True

23. I enjoy buying my clothes in shops because I consider shopping as a leisure.

	1	2	3	4	
Wrong	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	True

24. I enjoy buying my clothes in shops because I am loyal to the shops I am used to.

	1	2	3	4	
Wrong	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	True

25. Have you ever returned an order because you were not satisfied?

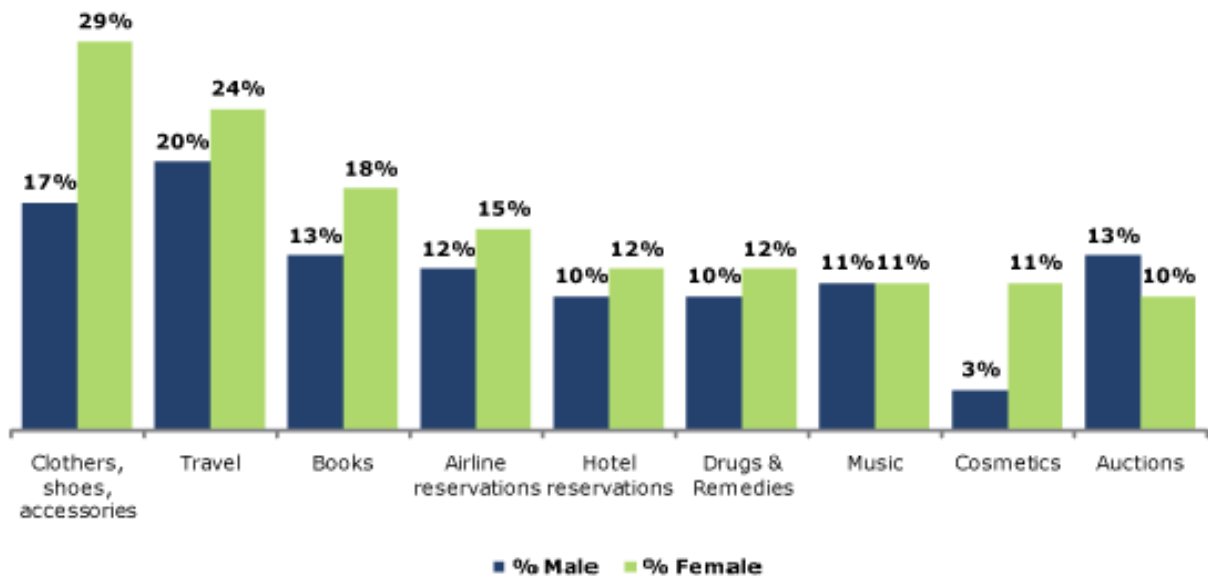
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I wanted to but I didn't have time/I was lazy/it was complicated

26. Do you have anything to add to this very interesting survey?

Votre réponse

APPENDIX B: TOP ONLINE SHOPPING CATEGORIES

Top Online Shopping Categories, by Gender



Source: Imgrum, 2016

APPENDIX C: REASONS WHY INTERNET USERS DO NOT BUY ONLINE

TABLE 6.7 WHY INTERNET USERS DO NOT BUY ONLINE	
Want to see and touch before buying	34%
Concerns about personal financial information	31%
Delivery costs are too high	30%
Concerns that returns will be a hassle	26%
Prefer to research online, then buy in a store	24%
No need to buy products online	23%
Can't speak to a sales assistant in person	14%

Source: EMarketer, 2012

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