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## The relationship between young consumers' decision-making styles and propensity to shop clothing online with a smartphone

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### Abstract

Consumer behavior in retail is changing due to the adoption of technologies such as the Internet and the smartphone. This study focuses on studying the relationship between young consumers' decision-making styles and their propensity to shop clothing online with a smartphone. The Consumer Styles Inventory (CSI) is used as base for a survey with young adult students. The results indicate that four out of eight CSI measurements, namely brand consciousness, fashion consciousness, impulsiveness and recreational shopping behavior, positively correlate with the respondents' frequency to look at and/or buy clothing online with a smartphone. These findings are important for retailers that strive to increase economic earnings from mobile technology solutions. Managerial and practical implication are discussed, together with future research.

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*Keywords:* Apparel; online shopping; consumer styles inventory; smartphone

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## 1. Introduction

According to a survey by Accenture [1], global online consumers go more often online to purchase apparel, 76% in 2015 versus 80% in 2016. Furthermore, according to the same survey online apparel shoppers more frequently use smartphones to find what they want, 41% in 2016 versus 34% in 2015, and 26% of them expect to purchase more via a smartphone this year. This puts an increased pressure on clothing retailers to deliver new online and smartphone customer experiences. According to Accenture [1] 70% of global apparel retailers now have smartphone apps with shopping capabilities. The fashion retail sector is moving towards new technology based shopping experiences [2] and the whole retail industry towards omni-channel experiences, where the distinction between physical and online experiences is being blurred [3, 4]. Smartphone ownership and growth of mobile Internet penetration are two contributors to this change [2].

Much research has addressed online shopping in a broad sense, but the apparel industry has its special characteristics and should therefore be studied separately from other merchandise [5, 6]. Furthermore, there are several studies that have focused on the adoption of mobile commerce and different factors that drive that adoption [7], but less research seems to take into account consumers' decision-making styles specifically for shopping clothing with mobile devices. Therefore, the objective of this study is to use consumer decision-making characteristics by Sproles and Kendall [8] to determine whether these characteristics have a relationship with young consumers' propensity to use a smartphone to shop clothing online. Knowledge about this topic contributes to retailers who seek to increase sales by using smartphone apps or similar solutions.

## 2. Consumer decision-making styles

A consumer decision-making style is defined by Sproles and Kendall [10 p. 13] as “a mental orientation characterizing a consumer's approach to making consumer choices.” Sproles and Kendall [8] developed and validated measures for eight consumer decision-making characteristics, called consumer styles inventory (CSI); (1) perfectionistic, (2) brand conscious, (3) fashion conscious, (4) recreational shopping conscious, (5) Price-value conscious, (6) impulsive, (7) confused by over-choice, and (8) habitual-brand loyal (see Table 1).

Table 1. Consumer decision-making characteristics [10]

Consumer characteristics	Attributes
Perfectionistic/High-quality	Getting very good quality is very important to me. When it comes to purchasing products, I try to get the very best or perfect choice.
Brand conscious	The well-known national brands are best for me. The more expensive brands are usually my choice.
Fashion conscious	I usually have one or more outfits of the very newest style. I keep my wardrobe up-to-date with the changing fashions.
Recreational/Hedonic shopping conscious	Shopping is a pleasant activity to me. Shopping is one of the enjoyable activities of my life.
Price-Value conscious	I buy as much as possible at “sale” prices. The lower priced brands are usually my choice
Impulsive	I should plan my shopping more carefully than I do. I am impulsive when shopping.
Confused by over-choice	There are so many brands to choose from that often I feel confused. Sometimes it's hard to choose which stores to shop.
Habitual-Brand Loyal	I have favorite brands I buy over and over. Once I find a product or brand I like, I stick with it.

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