

The 3rd International Conference on Economics and Social Sciences
Innovative models to revive the global economy
October 15-16, 2020
Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania

**Effective Web Presence Solutions for Enhancing
e-Fashion Customers' Satisfaction**

Sorin ANAGNOSTE¹, Isabelle BICLESANU^{2*},
Claude CHAILAN³, Bianca NEGOIASA⁴

DOI: 10.2478/9788395815072-039

Abstract

Technology has been changing the way companies interact with their customers, this trend being emphasized during the COVID-19 pandemic. Traditional advertising tools are complemented or replaced by new marketing techniques, and companies are aiming to improve their reach by leveraging social media or the influencer trend. E-commerce makes it possible to browse and compare an ever increasing number of products, and to make purchases from any place with Internet access. Moreover, retailers who incorporate the online world into their business models might face less difficulty during adverse events. However, e-commerce is also defined by fierce competition among companies in their quest for gaining customer satisfaction and loyalty. Buyers can easily abandon their carts and switch to another seller, if the purchasing experience is flawed or another offer is more tempting.

In the fashion industry, e-commerce is particularly challenging, as colors, sizes and quality are still difficult to reproduce in the web-based world. Thus, creating the right customer experience through e-stores can make the difference between success and failure for online fashion retailers.

In this context, the paper is based on a quantitative analysis investigating the relationships between customer perception regarding the quality of product information, navigation ease, the online presence of the web store and customer satisfaction with the purchase.

Keywords: e-commerce, fashion, customer experience, customer satisfaction.

JEL Classification: L81, M1, M3, F23

¹ Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Bucharest, Romania, sorin.anagnoste@fabiz.ase.ro.

² Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Bucharest, Romania, isabelle.bn@pm.me.

* Corresponding author.

³ EM Strasbourg Business School, Strasbourg, France, chailan@unistra.fr.

⁴ Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Bucharest, Romania.

1. Introduction

The Internet is now reaching more than 4.57 billion people across the globe (Clement, 2020), facilitating the expansion of businesses' reach over frontiers.

The COVID-19 pandemic pressured companies to find new ways of operating, as can be seen in *Figure 1* on two of the most developed markets, the United States of America and the United Kingdom.

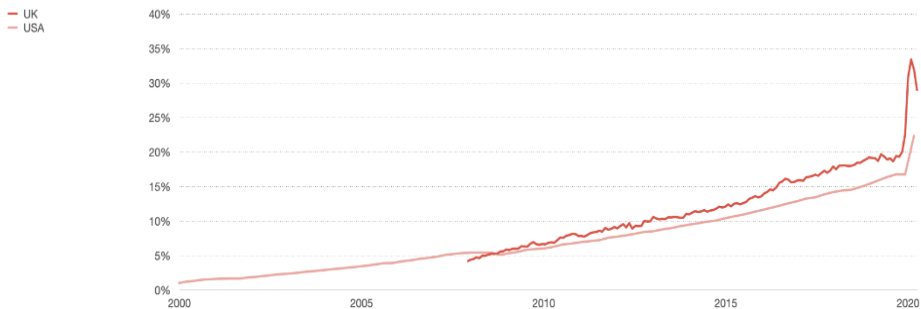


Figure 1. E-commerce as % of addressable retail⁵

Source: Benedict Evans, based on data from ONS and US Census

Within the fashion industry, the winners have been the ones that had digital capabilities, know-how and experience on how to effectively make use of their e-commerce platforms (Gonzalo *et al.*, 2020). Moreover, the effect of the pandemic over online retail could be long-drawn, as part of the consumers might prefer a contact-free approach even after all offline business activities will be permitted, especially helpful for SMEs in their process of surviving while learning (Bratianu *et al.*, 2020).

Authors such as Burgess, Sellitto and Karanasios (2009), Layon (2012), Kovalenko and Kuzmenko (2020), or Dima *et al.* (2018) have undertaken extensive research into web implementation and visibility strategies, developing comprehensive guides that could help companies transition to the knowledge economy, online environment and, more recently, smartphone e-shopping.

The experience provided by fashion brands influences the brand love, brand loyalty and customer satisfaction (Ferreira *et al.*, 2019). However, for e-fashion, the highly competitive online environment, as well as the struggle in bringing the products as close as possible to the customer by providing correct information through the website, make it challenging to achieve customer satisfaction and loyalty. Any flaw in the purchasing experience is a step closer to cart abandonment. Thus, online fashion retailers should devote particular attention to creating a satisfying customer experience.

⁵ Excluding cars, car parts, fuel, bars and restaurants. Seasonally adjusted. Quarterly US and monthly UK data.

2. Context

The global market share of the fashion industry has been estimated to reach \$1.52 trillion in 2020 (Statista, 2020a). As for e-commerce, fashion is the largest business to consumer (B2C) market segment (Statista, 2020b), with an expected market size of \$713bn by 2022 (Research and Markets, 2019).

Fashion is one of the industries facing the '*buying before trying*' consumer skepticism (Blázquez, 2014) due to the key role of the point-of-sales experiences (and trial) for goods such as clothes and accessories.

The world of fashion e-stores manifests high complexity in matters of providing correct information regarding the product's size, quality and other product details which might still be difficult to reproduce through the online environment. This partially explains why the fashion industry was not among the first to transition to e-commerce (Blázquez, 2014). However, it was noted that even the traditional, offline retailers of luxury fashion products are pushed by the new consumption trends to integrate the online environment into their business model (Harba, 2019).

According to McKinsey (2019), the younger generations seem to be open to new approaches when it comes to the fashion marketplace with two driving forces having a particular influence on the future of the global e-fashion industry, namely: (1) young consumers' preferences for new products and services, and (2) the developments in technology and social media.

For instance, digital innovation transforms the way companies sell online, as artificial intelligence (AI) makes it easier for consumers to find and purchase the items they see. McKinsey (2019) and Anagnoste (2018) suggest that e-fashion companies should start adopting robotic process automation (RPA) and application programming interfaces (APIs) in order to integrate cloud-based services, and follow machine learning algorithms that build customer profiles based on both geographical location and individual preferences, chat solution integrations (e.g. Alexa, Siri), mobile app push notifications that keep the customers engaged, secure payment systems and fast delivery. In the years to come, developments in augmented reality could ease the difficulty of providing correct product information.

Furthermore, the younger generations' openness to new online fashion retail approaches makes way for diversified marketing techniques. While advertising on social-media has become common to many brands, the use of social-media to interact with the customers, engage them, get to know them, and build a community is not yet fully mastered by vendors, despite, for instance, of the strong positive correlation found between the number of Instagram posts and customer engagement (Balan, 2017). Also, an extensive presence on social media is often correlated with the relatively new trend of marketing through influencers (Khamis, Ang and Welling, 2017; Stubb, Nyström and Colliander, 2019), which was found to be one of the most successful ways of driving sales (SocialPubli, 2019).

The role of aesthetics in the online shopping environment has also been studied. The website is the main interface between the brand and the consumer, the quality of its design and functionality being critical in producing the right level of

customer experience. Szymanski and Hise (2000) were among the first to notice that website design enhances customer satisfaction, while Kim and Eom (2002) explored the importance of usability in achieving customer satisfaction. Furthermore, authors studying the psychology behind online shopping show that online stores are not only used as facilitators of knowledge, goods or services, but also as places for recreation and entertainment (Ganesh *et al.*, 2010). Therefore, experience becomes the enabler of consumer satisfaction, which positively correlates with the purchasing intention and, more importantly, with consumer long-term loyalty (Dedeke, 2016; Hasan, 2016).

3. Research Aims

The study investigates the link between the quality of product presentation, navigation ease, online presence and customer satisfaction with their purchase from the online fashion store, by testing the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: A higher level of navigation ease within the online fashion store concurs with a higher level of quality regarding the visual and product information design.

Hypothesis 2: A higher level of quality regarding the visual and product information design within the online fashion store drives a higher level of self-reported satisfaction with the order.

Hypothesis 3: A higher level of ease of navigation within the online fashion store drives a higher level of self-reported satisfaction with the order.

Hypothesis 4: The online presence of the fashion web store and the self-reported satisfaction with the order are positively related, mediated by the quality of product information and the navigation design of the online fashion store.

4. Research Methods

A quantitative analysis of data collected through a self-administered online survey addressed to a randomized sample of respondents from Romania was used for hypothesis testing. The sample resulted in 140 valid answers, meeting the requirements for a maximum margin of error of 7% and a confidence level of 90%.

The survey is structured around two sections. The first section is based on 4 items aimed at gathering descriptive data (i.e. gender, age, preference for online vs. offline fashion shopping, frequency of online fashion shopping). The second section is entirely constructed around 30 Likert style items, for assessing the sample's preference regarding some particularities of online fashion shopping. The rating was done on a scale from 1-to-5 with only the ends defined (1 = "strongly disagree"; 5 = "strongly agree"). For answering the questions, the respondents were asked to consider their experience with the most recent online fashion store they placed an order on. The analysis was made through SPSS by performing a factor analysis using the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) extraction method with Varimax rotation, and a reliability analysis. The results were checked against a parallel analysis, and a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was further employed

through AMOS, in order to validate the measurement model, ending with the construction of a structural model.

5. Findings

The 140 valid answers come from 57 males and 83 females. Most of the respondents are aged between 25-34 (54%) and 16-24 (30%), followed by 9% 35-44 year olds, 4% 45-54, 2% over 54 and 1% under 16. Concerning their preference for online fashion shopping, 39% of the respondents said they like both online and offline fashion shopping, 36% preferred to shop from physical stores, instead of online, while 25% preferred online fashion shopping over the traditional way. Furthermore, most of the respondents said they shop online for clothes and accessories a few times a year (56%), followed by 37% doing so at least once every month, and 7% at least once a week.

As a result of the factor analysis procedures conducted for the Likert section of the survey (i.e. PCA, CFA, parallel analysis), as well as aiming to maximize the Cronbach’s Alpha reliability values for each factor, 14 items were deemed unnecessary and removed, as they did not manage to capture valuable and reliable data for the constructs. The remaining 16 items were split into 4 factors, representing the following areas of interest concerning online fashion retail: (1) the quality level of the media and information design used for presenting the products – named “visual”, (2) the level of navigation ease when using the website – named “navigation”, (3) the online presence of the web store – named “marketing”, (5) the satisfaction and trust the respondent has regarding the online fashion store – named “satisfaction”. The standardized regression weights for each item and the Cronbach’s Alpha values, based on standardized items, for each factor are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Factor analysis results

Factor	Item	Standardized factor loading	Cronbach’s Alpha
Satisfaction	Based on my past experience, the goods I buy from this store look exactly like on the website (S1)	.734	.863
	I am satisfied with my decision to purchase from this website(S2)	.812	
	Based on my past experience, I believe that the online store is trustworthy (S3)	.575	
	I intend to continue using the online fashion store for purchasing clothing in the future (S4)	.796	
	I would strongly recommend the online fashion store to others (S5)	.821	
Visual	The website of the online fashion store looks professionally designed	.762	.800
	The website of the online fashion store uses high-quality media (pictures and videos) to showcase the products	.693	
	The website of the online fashion store looks clean and harmonious (colors, boxes, menus)	.780	

Factor	Item	Standardized factor loading	Cronbach's Alpha
	In the online fashion store every product has original and detailed information (details on fabrics used, fashion advice)	.599	
Navigation	The website of the online store provides good filters and other navigation tools to search the content	.792	.856
	It is easy for me to navigate the website of the online store	.853	
	The functional layout of the website is user-friendly	.870	
	The website's interface is adapted for smartphones	.603	
Marketing	I have discovered the online fashion store through online advertising	.750	.786
	The online fashion store uses influencer marketing (influencers are presenting products from this brand)	.687	
	The online fashion store has a significant presence on social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter)	.788	

Source: Analysis of the dataset in SPSS and Amos

The model has reliability values greater than 0.7 for each of the latent variables, with standardized factor loadings $>.5$ for each indicator variable. It presents adequate inter-item-correlations to allow for factor analysis according to the Bartlett's test of sphericity having a p-value $<.001$, and a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test for sampling adequacy value of $.853 >.5$. The four factors explain 66.2% of the variance, and the unstandardized regression weights for all items are significant at the .001 level. As available in Table 2, the constructs show no validity concerns, with critical ratios (CR) higher than .7 for all latent variables, and average variance extracted (AVE) values $>.5$ and higher than their respective maximum shared variances (MSV).

Table 2. Measurement model validity check

	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	mk	visual	nav.	satisf.
marketing	0.786	0.552	0.089	0.792	0.743			
visual	0.803	0.507	0.355	0.816	0.217	0.712		
navigation	0.864	0.619	0.341	0.889	0.298	0.491	0.787	
satisfaction	0.866	0.567	0.355	0.881	0.241	0.596	0.584	0.753

Source: Authors' own calculations

The measurement model shows satisfactory fit, according to the ranges suggested by Awang (2012, as cited in Al-Mamary and Shamsuddin 2015), with chi-square = 136.06, df = 98, CMIN/df = 1.388 < 5 , CFI = .962 $>.9$, TLI = .953 $>.9$, RMSEA = .053 $<.8$, NFI = .877 $>.8$, GFI = .888 $>.8$.

Following with the structural model, a satisfactory model fitness is also observed, with chi-square = 136.93, df = 100, CMIN/df = 1,369 < 5, CFI = .963 >.9, TLI = .955 >.9, RMSEA = .052 < .8, NFI = .877 > .8, GFI = .888 > .8. The magnitude of effects between the structural model's factors is presented in Figure 2.

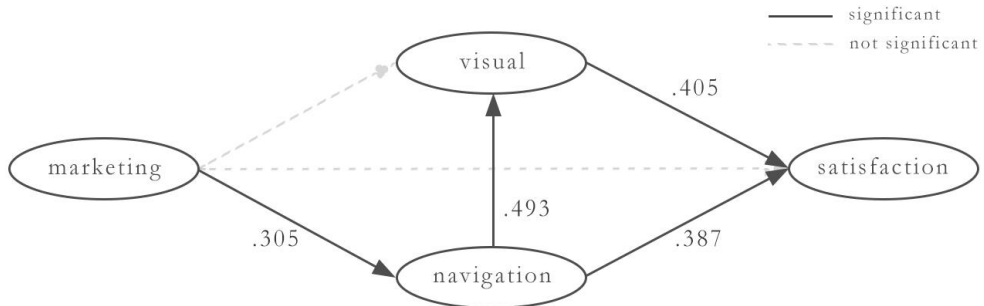


Figure 2. Structural model - standardized path coefficients

Source: Authors' own calculations

The level of *navigation* ease within the online fashion store influences the level of the *visual* presentation of the information, having the highest impact among all structural paths in the model, with a beta coefficient of .493, 95% confidence interval (CI): [.268,.673] $p=.011$, and, along with the moderate positive correlation between the *navigation* and *visual* latent variables of .491, it is supporting *Hypothesis 1*.

The next largest effect runs from the quality rating of the *visual* and product information design of the online fashion store to the self-reported *satisfaction* of the respondent with their order, beta coefficient = .405, 95% CI: [.157,.613] $p=.012$. This is supporting *Hypothesis 2*, along with the moderate positive correlation of .596 between the *visual* and the *satisfaction* constructs.

The *navigation* ease within the online fashion store directly influences the self-reported *satisfaction* of the respondent with their order, beta coefficient = .387, 95% CI: [.167,.606] $p=.006$, and also with a standardized indirect effect = .199 through the *visual* factor. Along with the moderate positive correlation of .584 between the *navigation* and *satisfaction* factors, the findings are supporting *Hypothesis 3*.

The *marketing* latent variable has no significant direct relationship with the *visual* and *satisfaction* ones, however, it has a direct standardized path coefficient of .305, 95% CI: [.086,.533] $p=.012$, with the *navigation* factor, and an indirect effect of .179 over *satisfaction* through the *navigation* and *visual* factors. The *marketing* variable shows low positive correlations with the *satisfaction* (.241), *navigation* (.298) and *visual* (.217) factors. Therefore, the online presence of the fashion web store has a small indirect positive impact over the self-reported satisfaction with the placed order, mediated by the quality level of the visual,

product information and navigation design of the online fashion store. This validates *Hypothesis 4*.

The predictors for the *satisfaction* factor (i.e. *visual*, *navigation* and *marketing*) accounted for 46.8% of its variance, the predictors for the *visual* factor (i.e. *marketing* and *navigation*) accounted for 24.3% of its variance, while the predictor for *navigation* (i.e. *marketing*) accounted for 9.3% of its variance.

Table 3. Correlations between the *satisfaction* factor's items

	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5
S1	1.000				
S2	.578**	1.000			
S3	.479**	.605**	1.000		
S4	.608**	.648**	.715**	1.000	
S5	.528**	.488**	.521**	.495**	1.000

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Authors' own calculations

The *satisfaction* factor's items present moderate positive Spearman's rho correlations, all significant at the .01 level, as available in Table 3. The strongest correlation is .715, showing that *the intention for repurchase* (i.e. S4 as coded in Table 1) has the highest tendency to vary in the same direction with *the trust* the respondents place in the online fashion store (S3), followed by *the satisfaction with previous orders* (S2: .648, S1: .608), and *the intention to recommend* the online fashion store to others (S5: .495).

6. Conclusion

The research confirms the key role of the web store experience, with the *visual*, *navigation* and *marketing* aspects being linked with the *customers' satisfaction* with the purchase.

More specifically, the four hypotheses were validated, showing that the online fashion stores that provide a higher level customer experience associated with the quality of product information, visual and navigation design can drive higher levels of customer satisfaction, retention and generate leads through customer recommendations. Furthermore, the web store's online presence has no particular direct effect on customer satisfaction, however, it has a small indirect influence over satisfaction through the mediation of the *visual* and *navigation* design of the store.

The limitations of the study come in the form of having an unbalanced mix of respondent ages and genders, as well as a narrow geographical reach. The research may be expanded by investigating the influence of new paths over customer satisfaction, such as the store's policy concerning delivery and payments, or the psychological and affective variables of the customers.

References

- [1] Al-Mamary, Y., & Shamsuddin, A. (2015). Testing of the Technology Acceptance Model in Context of Yemen. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 6, pp. 268-273. DOI: 10.5901/mjss.2015.v6n4s1p268.
- [2] Anagnoste, S. (2018). Robotic Automation Process – The operating system for the digital enterprise. *Proceedings of the International Conference on Business Excellence*, 12(1), pp. 54-69.
- [3] Balan, C. (2017). Does brand posting behaviour influence follower engagement on Instagram?, *Proceedings of the International Conference on Business Excellence*, 11(1), pp. 687-697. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1515/picbe-2017-0073>.
- [4] Blázquez, M. (2014), Fashion shopping in multichannel retail: The role of technology in enhancing the customer experience, *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*. DOI: 10.2753/JEC1086-4415180404.
- [5] Bratianu, C., Prelipcean, G., and Bejinaru, R. (2020), Exploring the latent variables which support SMEs to become learning organizations, *Management & Marketing. Challenges for the Knowledge Society*, 15(2), pp. 154-171. DOI: 10.2478/mmcks-2020-0010.
- [6] Burgess, S., Sellitto, C., and Karanasios, S. (2009). Effective Web Presence Solutions for Small Businesses: Strategies and Successful Implementation, *IGI Global*. DOI: 10.4018/978-1-60566-224-4.
- [7] Clement, J. (2020). *Global digital population as of July 2020*, Statista. Retrieved from: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/617136/digital-population-worldwide/>.
- [8] Dedeke, A. N. (2016). Travel web-site design: Information task-fit, service quality and purchase intention, *Tourism Management*. DOI: 10.1016/j.tourman.2016.01.001.
- [9] Dima, A. M., Begu, L., Vasilescu, M. D., Maassen, M. A. (2018). The Relationship between the Knowledge Economy and Global Competitiveness in the European Union. *Sustainability 2018*, 10, 1706.
- [10] Evans, B. (2020). *The ecommerce surge*. Retrieved August 31, from <https://www.ben-evans.com/benedictevans/2020/8/18/the-ecommerce-surge>.
- [11] Ferreira, P., Rodrigues, P., & Rodrigues, P. (2019). Brand Love as Mediator of the Brand Experience-Satisfaction-Loyalty Relationship in a Retail Fashion Brand, *Management & Marketing, Challenges for the Knowledge Society*, 14(3), pp. 278-291. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2478/mmcks-2019-0020>.
- [12] Ganesh, J. et al. (2010). Online Shopper Motivations, and e-Store Attributes: An Examination of Online Patronage Behavior and Shopper Typologies, *Journal of Retailing*. DOI: 10.1016/j.jretai.2010.01.003.
- [13] Gonzalo, A., Altable, C. S., and Villepelet, C. (2020). *Fashion's digital transformation: Now or never*, McKinsey & Company. Available at: <https://rb.gy/my4x7r>.
- [14] Harba, J. (2019). New approaches to customer experience: where disruptive technological innovation meets luxury fashion, *Proceedings of the International Conference on Business Excellence*, 13(1), pp. 740-758. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2478/picbe-2019-0066>.
- [15] Hasan, B. (2016). Perceived irritation in online shopping: The impact of website design characteristics, *Computers in Human Behavior*. DOI: 10.1016/j.chb.2015.07.056.

- [16] Khamis, S., Ang, L. and Welling, R. (2017), Self-branding, “micro-celebrity” and the rise of Social Media Influencers, *Celebrity Studies*. DOI: 10.1080/19392397.2016.1218292.
- [17] Kim, E. B., and Eom, S. B. (2002). Designing effective cyber store user interface, *Industrial Management & Data Systems*. DOI: 10.1108/02635570210428276.
- [18] Kovalenko, A., and Kuzmenko, Y. (2020). Online marketing.impact on micro-enterprises: an insight through visibility in search engines, *Management & Marketing. Challenges for the Knowledge Society*, 15(1), pp. 38-58. DOI: 10.2478/mmcks2020-0003.
- [19] Layon, K. (2012). *Mobilizing Web Sites. Develop and Design*. Berkeley: Peachipit Press. Retrieved from: <https://rb.gy/nezred>.
- [20] McKinsey (2019). *The State of Fashion 2020*, McKinsey & Company. <https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/mckinsey/industries/retail/our%20insights/the%20state%20of%20fashion%202020%20navigating%20uncertainty/the-state-of-fashion-2020-final.ashx>.
- [21] Research and Markets (2019). *Global Online Apparel & Footwear Market Report: Insights, Trends and Forecast (2019-2023)*, Research and Markets. Retrieved: <https://www.researchandmarkets.com/reports/4825111/global-online-apparel-and-footwear-market-report>.
- [22] SocialPubli (2019). *Influencer Marketing Report: A Marketer's Perspective*. Available at: <https://socialpubli.com/blog/2019-influencer-marketing-report-a-marketers-perspective/>.
- [23] Statista (2020a). *Value of the apparel market worldwide from 2005 to 2020*, Statista. Retrieved from: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/821415/value-of-the-global-apparel-market/>.
- [24] Statista (2020b). *E-commerce report – Fashion*, Statista. Retrieved from: <https://www.statista.com/study/38340/ecommerce-report-fashion/>.
- [25] Szymanski, D. M. and Hise, R. T. (2000). E-satisfaction: An initial examination, *Journal of Retailing*. DOI: 10.1016/S0022-4359(00)00035-X.