



E-dress for e-tailers success:

a study about young females' e-shopping of clothes



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Foreword

First of all we would like to thank every single one of our respondents for taking the time to let us interview them and provide us with useful information for our thesis. Their willingness to share their experiences, thoughts and actions have enabled us to conduct our empirical findings and thanks to the help from our respondents we have had the opportunity to study the behaviour of young female e-shoppers.

We would also like to thank our opponents during our thesis-seminars for giving us constructive criticism that has helped us through our process with our thesis and provided us with objectivity.

Furthermore we would like to show to our gratitude to our supervisor Johan Hagberg for sharing his knowledge on e-commerce and his guidance during the spring semester 2011.

Thank you!

Marija Alexandrovskaja

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Abstract

- Title:* E-dress for e-tailers success: a study about young females' e-shopping of clothes
- Author:* Vanessa Ergel and Marija Alexandrovskaja
- Supervisor:* Johan Hagberg
- University:* School of Business, Economics and Law at Gothenburg University
- Course:* Master Thesis in Marketing
- Purpose:* The aim is to study the behaviour of female online consumers, responding to the questions why, when and how they shop on the Internet. With this thesis our purpose is to look deeper into the consumer's lines of action when shopping online. Focus will be on how they search for information about products; if they receive information through social networks and blogs or if recommendations from friends and family still are the most trustworthy sources of information. An important question we address is what role the physical stores play in the growth of e-commerce. Since it might be difficult to get a truthful image of products online, it is possible that physical stores play an essential role as some kind of show rooms, where you have the opportunity to physically observe a product, before making the decision to purchase it online.
- Procedure:* To conduct the empirical framework for this thesis we use a qualitative research method consisting of semi-structured individual interviews with 12 respondents.
- Conclusion:* Through empirical research we noted that a normative social influence exists among our respondents. Friends, blogs and advertisements are highly influencing factors in young females shopping patterns. Those who are affected by the previously mentioned factors have a higher tendency to purchase their apparel online. The risks that are associated with e-commerce are mostly regarding product uncertainty. Payment security is not perceived as being an essential risk that creates an incentive to avoid shopping online. Our empirical research implies that values through attitudes affect behaviour to a great extent; this applies to both those who prefer e-tailers and those who prefer the offline channel.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we will shortly explain the background of our thesis accompanied by the aim.

Our intention is to give the reader an understanding of the rise of these phenomena, followed by the scope, use of references and ending with the outline of the report.

1.1 Background

Shopping clothes online is quite a new phenomenon and has developed enormously during the past 15 years. In Sweden this is exemplified by the rise of companies like H&M Shop, Nelly.se and Bubbleroom. H&M Shop online was founded in 1998 and consequently an initiate in the Swedish world of e-shops (Hennes & Mauritz, 2011). Nelly was established in 2004 and is formally called NLY Scandinavia AB and is part of the CDON Group. Their main focus is fashion and beauty (Nelly, 2011). Shortly thereafter Bubbleroom was introduced like an exclusive alternative in the e-market, since then the company has expanded into a broader assortment (Bubbleroom, 2011). Today these e-shops are rivals and competing for the customers in the Swedish market. Previously mentioned companies are the most well-known, nevertheless several physical stores are expanding their business with e-shops, thanks to the advantages and possibilities they enable. Two examples are Lindex and Gina Tricot which nowadays are possible to find online.

This new trend is called e-commerce and refers to the transaction of selling and buying products, services and information over the Internet. The activity is made possible by electronic networks and is gradually complementing the physical business. E-commerce is used to cut costs, improve quality and reduce the time spent on distribution. The phenomenon has enabled an enormous increase of collaboration within and between organizations (Turban, 2008).

In today's society the majority of the organizations have their own website and portals to facilitate communication between employees, associates and the public. A trend occurred during the 1990s; e-tailers started to focus more on consumers, meaning they went from B2B to B2C. Social networks were formed as well as wireless applications in 2005. Google has had the highest influence over the business since 2001, due to their expansive search engine. (Their main function is to simplify the search for information and at the same time being an excellent base for advertisement.). The growing marketplaces of today are portals, auctions and several sorts of self-services. Of course there have been a lot of failures within EC, Boo.com is an excellent example of a company with high ambitions but due to limitations with the Internet development they could not realize their vision and failed (Scribd, 2011). According to Turban (2008) these failures have mainly been due to scarce research and knowledge. Many organizations could not handle the shifting demand which is very hard to predict especially

regarding e-commerce. Foremost the work must be focused on decreasing the risks combined with e-commerce. But the rate of failures has decreased substantially (Turban, 2008). E-commerce is foremost used by people in the ages of 25–44 there is no obvious difference between men and women in the amount of shopping done over the Internet, what differs is what items they purchase online (Statistiska Centralbyrån,2010).

With our study we want to investigate how young women are shopping online and what the key determinants for this target group are when shopping online. By the words young women we refer to female students in the ages 20–30. Since consumption over the Internet is increasing in general and particularly within this target group, we consider it to be of great interest to investigate female shopping behaviour online. According to a survey made by Statistiska Centralbyrån (2010), 99 per cent of women who study use Internet frequently.

According to a survey made by Svensk Handel (2010), of all online consumption made by women, 29 per cent is in clothing. Due to this fact women are an important target group to seize; this could be possible by getting a deeper understanding of their way of thinking. The subject of e-commerce is remarkable now because 91 per cent of the Swedish population has access to the Internet in their home and buying over the Internet is a convenient way of shopping. (Statistiska Centralbyrån, 2010).

We have revised earlier research within this subject and a great deal has been done; therefore we want to contribute to the field by studying the subject from another angle; the customer perspective and what they believe to be the most essential features of an e-shop. We consider that an interesting perspective is how female consumers within the target group shop and how they receive information about products and what factors are important in the choice between the offline and the online channel. In the process of gathering literature for this study we came across a variety of articles concerning trust and loyalty. One of the articles that especially caught our attention is “E-commerce: the role of familiarity and trust” written by David Gefen (2000).

Gefen (2000) starts by explaining that the main factors for successful e-shops are trust and recognition. In the study this phenomenon is explained by consumers’ experience of buying books from amazon.com. The importance of trust is declared as a complexity reduction because it would be impossible to consider every potential eventuality. Furthermore, the author examines familiarity as a factor and he also considers it to be important for people who shop over the Internet. According to Better Business Bureau in Gefen (2000) trust should be an essential subject in all e-commerce due to the fact that people are concerned with the safety of their privacy and credit card information online. In e-commerce this is truly important because customers are exposed to a risk and do not have the chance to interact with a salesperson and can by no means control the transaction. As a

consequence of this familiarity becomes a way of feeling more secure with an e-tailer due to previous interaction and experiences. Gefen (2000) suggests that familiarity is about feeling convenient using a certain website when searching for information about products and navigating the site. Through experience and previous use familiarity enables for consumers to feel confident in a website and results in lasting trust. Trust, on the other hand, is more concerned with the final steps of the purchase process such as providing the e-tailer with sensitive information such as credit card number and personal details.

This makes trust and familiarity dependent on each other in the behaviour intentions of consumers.

Previous research has focused more on overall consumer behaviour in wider target groups and with different products. The majority of recent studies are concentrating on preferences connected to certain items: for example (Frambach et al, 2007) presents a description of channel preference. The authors explain different stages in the buying process; pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase, and what characterizes these stages. In order to find out which channel a consumer prefers, online and offline the authors made personal interviews with 24 respondents in different countries. This article and its results are focused on channel preference when buying home mortgage. Even though this “product” is not in our research area, we have found some similarities concerning consumer channel preference.

An article written by Chanaka Jayawardhena (2004) has another focus, namely the relationship between personal values and behaviour in e-shopping. It is based on several other studies on the same theme but foremost it is a development of “the social adaptation theory”. According to this theory values are defined as cognitions, which help us to acclimate to the environment. The value-attitude-behaviour hierarchy model states that values are affecting our attitude and thereby our behaviour in a specific situation. Consequently, the main task for e-tailers¹ is to find a way to affect a person’s values through certain strategies that conform to e-consumers beliefs. We believe this article will make it easier to understand the actions of e-consumers and why they choose e-shops over traditional shops.

Another article written more recently by Dennis et al. (2009) also describes e-consumer behaviour by analysing literature within the subject and presenting a model based on the Theory of Reasoned Action. This theory implies that people’s behaviour is directed by their beliefs, attitudes and intentions resulting

¹ *An e-tailer is someone who is selling products electronically. The process of selling and buying is thereby conducted over the Internet. (The Free Dictionary, 2011)*

in a specific behaviour. Consequently, they claim that the attitudes of the consumer affect their behaviour when shopping and ends up in a final purchase. In their study they are mainly concentrating on attitudes, trust, e-interactivity and situational factors as important components when shopping online (Dennis et al, 2009). This study will be a good framework for our thesis, where we will keep their theoretical framework but limit the study to investigate how young females in a larger city comprehend e-shopping. We hope that our study will help the companies that have business both online and offline to better understand the behaviour of female customers and thus be able to design better websites, which fulfill the customer's needs.

1.2 Purpose

The aim of our thesis is about studying the behaviour of female online consumers, responding to the questions why, when and how they shop clothes on the Internet. This study will be supported by theories concerning consumer behaviour, for example the process of decision-making leading up to purchases.

The purpose is to look deeper into the consumer's lines of action when shopping online. Focus will be on how they search for information about products; if they receive information through social networks and blogs or if recommendations from friends and family still are the most trustworthy.

An important question to address is what role the physical stores play in e-commerce. Since it might be difficult to get a truthful image of products online, it is possible that physical stores play an essential role as some kind of show rooms, where you have the opportunity to physically observe a product, before making the decision to purchase it online. We have decided the foundation of our theory will be the value-attitude-behaviour hierarchy model and further on be connected to our empirical study.

1.3 Problem Discussion

In a study made by Forrester Research the sales in the Swedish apparel online industry has increased from 400 to almost 1300 million Euros in five years, which is more than a triple expansion (E-mind, 2011). According to Statistiska Centralbyrån (2010), young people in the ages 25–34 is the cluster most active buying and selling products online and also adjoining age clusters are shopping online frequently, among them women are most frequent in buying apparel and men are purchasing electronics. (Statistiska Centralbyrån, 2010).

Due to these previously mentioned facts, our background discussion and our own interest in the subject. Consequently our aim is to investigate how young female students are purchasing clothes online and what is influencing them in the buying process. This thesis will contribute with

knowledge about what factors are important for online female consumers when creating effective e-shops

with regard to the customer experiences, beliefs and preferences. The recommendations will hopefully benefit newly started and established e-shops concerning guidance of layout and related services.

1.4 Delimitations

This study will have its focus on how young women shop clothes over the Internet, what thoughts they have before buying and what kind of behaviour characterizes the decision process when buying clothes online. With this said we also want to point out that this study will only focus on e-commerce between business and consumer (B2C)² since we find this type of business the most relevant for our study.

Our target group during our empirical studies is young female students in the ages between 20–30 years with similar budgets who shop both online and in physical stores. This study is made with female students living in Gothenburg.

Women were specifically selected since they buy more clothes online compared to men (e-handelsrapport, 2010). Besides, the subject on how this online shopping is performed and what behaviour characterizes it is not yet fully covered by previous research.

The delimitations of this study are the following:

- Focus on B2C in Swedish apparel e-commerce.
- Interviews with young female students living in Gothenburg.

1.5 Research questions

As mentioned earlier, previous research focuses mainly on the role of trust and security when shopping online. With our study we want to investigate basic perceptions of how young females experience using e-stores and what aspects are important when choosing between the offline and the online channels. According to Laroche in Dennis et al.(2009) e-commerce is quite a new activity and consequently online shopping is still considered as riskier than shopping in traditional stores.

² *B2C is short for business-to-consumer). Today this term is used mostly about business activities that occur online between a business and end-users. A definition that is provided about B2C is the following: "business that sells products and provides services to end-user consumers." (Marketing Terms, 2011).*

For the thesis we selected two main research questions and some subquestions to clarify our purpose and receive the information required.

1.5.1 What are the main influencing factors when buying clothes online?

Information need:

- What factors are important in consumers' purchasing process?
- What importance does personal identity and beliefs have when it comes to shopping apparel?
- What is most essential for young females for a good online experience?
- How do young females choose between the online and offline channels?

1.5.2 What characterizes the online purchasing process for young females?

Information need:

- How do young females purchase apparel on the Internet?
- Does the female consumer behaviour differ when shopping online compared to the physical store?

1.6 Target reader of our thesis

The target readers for our study are foremost e-tailers that could benefit from getting superior knowledge about their customer preferences and how and why they prefer to shop online. Our aim is that companies will be able to use our study in creating an improved e-shop. Our empirical study will be based on personal interviews with young female students. Our secondary target group is researchers and students who are interested in the layout of e-shops. We hope that our study could be developed for future studies.

1.7 Outline of the report

In the following chapter we will present the theoretical foundation of our study. The purpose is to ease the understanding of the study and lay the foundation for our survey and analysis. The focus is on the primary factors of online shopping, based on scientific theories and articles, both present and older ones.

Chapter three describes our chosen methods for the conduction of this study. Our main purpose with this chapter is to illustrate our proceeding and motivate our chosen approaches for creating a reliable study.

The empirical findings in chapter four contain our semi-structured interviews. We have revised our empirical findings through our main theories that are structured according to the Value-Attitude-Behaviour Model.

The final chapter of the thesis is consisting of conclusions and recommendations based on our empirical findings and used theory.

2. THEORY

During the following chapter we will present the theoretical foundation of our study. The purpose is to ease the understanding of the study and lay the foundation for our survey and analysis. We have focused on the primary factors of online shopping, based on scientific theories and articles, both present and older ones.

2.1 The Value Attitude Behaviour Hierarchy Model

According to Jayawardhena (2004) there is a connection between personal values, attitudes and behaviour in e-shopping. E-shopping is defined as consumers shopping at e-tailors. This study is valuable for e-shops, in order to get an insight into the minds of e-shoppers. This kind of research has during recent years received an increased amount of attention. For example Keen et al. (2002) have observed the relation between preferences and product purchases online. They have also tried to find the key determinants in the purchase process.

Several studies have shown that there is a relation between personal values towards e-shopping and acceptance of shopping at e-tailors. Roekach in Jayawardhena (2004) defined personality as a system of values. The Value Attitude Behaviour Model has originally emerged from the Social Adaptation Theory, which focuses on social cognition that is used to simplify the adjustment to one's environment (Homer and Kahle 1983).

Homer and Kahle (1983) are also talking about cognition and the Value-Attitude-Behaviour Model Hierarchy. They are noting that values have emerged from cognitions, and direct people in which situations to enter and how to act in these situations. This process runs from values to attitudes and ends up in explicit behaviour; "Empirical findings imply that values may influence behaviour both directly and indirectly through attitudinal mediators" (Homer and Kahle, 1983. P. 644). Internal values are coexistent with self-fulfilment and these types of persons prefer to have full control over all features of life. This fact corresponds with e-consumers that through online shopping have a greater ability to monitor their shopping and scan the environment for the best offer on the market.

The definition of value attitude behaviour hierarchy is starting with abstract values to mid-range values and is then transformed to behaviour, which has a great influence over our actions and decisions. Values are defined as an opinion of the value of something abstract, and attitudes on the other hand are an approach towards a phenomenon (Nationalencyklopedin, 2011).

William, 1979, explained "that conceptualized values become the criteria for judgement, preferences and choice". This would mean that our personal values have a big impact on our behaviour in e-

shopping. Choosing this type of consumption instead of traditional consumption is due to stronger preferences for e-shopping.

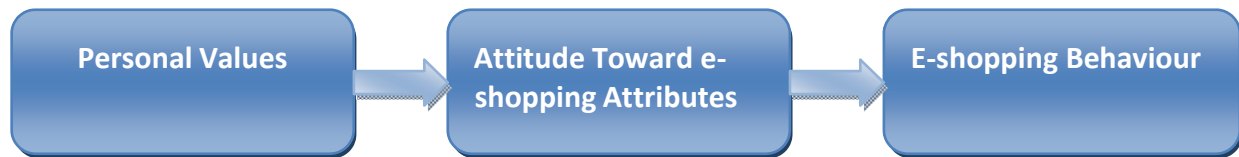


Figure 1. Jayawardhena. (2004). Hypothesised model. P. 130.

The study of Jayawardhena (2004) was made through the so called LOV scale, which consists of six variables; belonging, excitement, being well respected, accomplishment, security and self-respect. The respondents then had to grade each variable for how e-shopping could fulfil this task. This study was made online consisting of 1500 individuals. The response rate was around 43 per cent, which is quite a high rate in this kind of studies. The result of the study showed that an e-consumer appreciates self-direction, enjoyment and self-achievement more strongly than those who do prefer traditional shopping.

Homer and Kahle (1988) developed a theory of how values influence attitudes and in turn affect behaviour when shopping in physical stores. This was advanced by Jayawardhena (2004) and applied to e-shopping. In conclusion you can say that the survey made by Jayawardhena (2004) point towards e-tailers having the ability to affect consumer behaviour by strategies that please their personal values and this is supported by Dennis et al. (2009) in their article concerning e-consumer behaviour. This study highlights the importance of a careful selection of the target group, to subsequently finding common values and creating an e-shop that is appealing to the target group of the company. This could be accomplished by a strict research of desirable attributes of merchandising, service and assortment.

According to the same study e-consumers are attracted by enjoyment values. The experience of shopping online is enjoyable thanks to the possibility of finding new and needed products during a convenient purchase process. Other favourable attributes of e-tailing is easily being able to compare products, lower prices and a handy atmosphere. E-shoppers with a positive attitude towards online shopping are not likely to change e-tailors. This is a sign of strong e-loyalty that e-tailors should take advantage of. We have chosen to base our study on the Value-attitude-behaviour model in order to understand the total process from the desire of a product to the final purchase, and what is influencing the consumers through the different steps of this model. Therefore, our intention is to exemplify the

three main concepts; values, attitudes and behaviour, with more profound theories that we believe are relevant for this model.

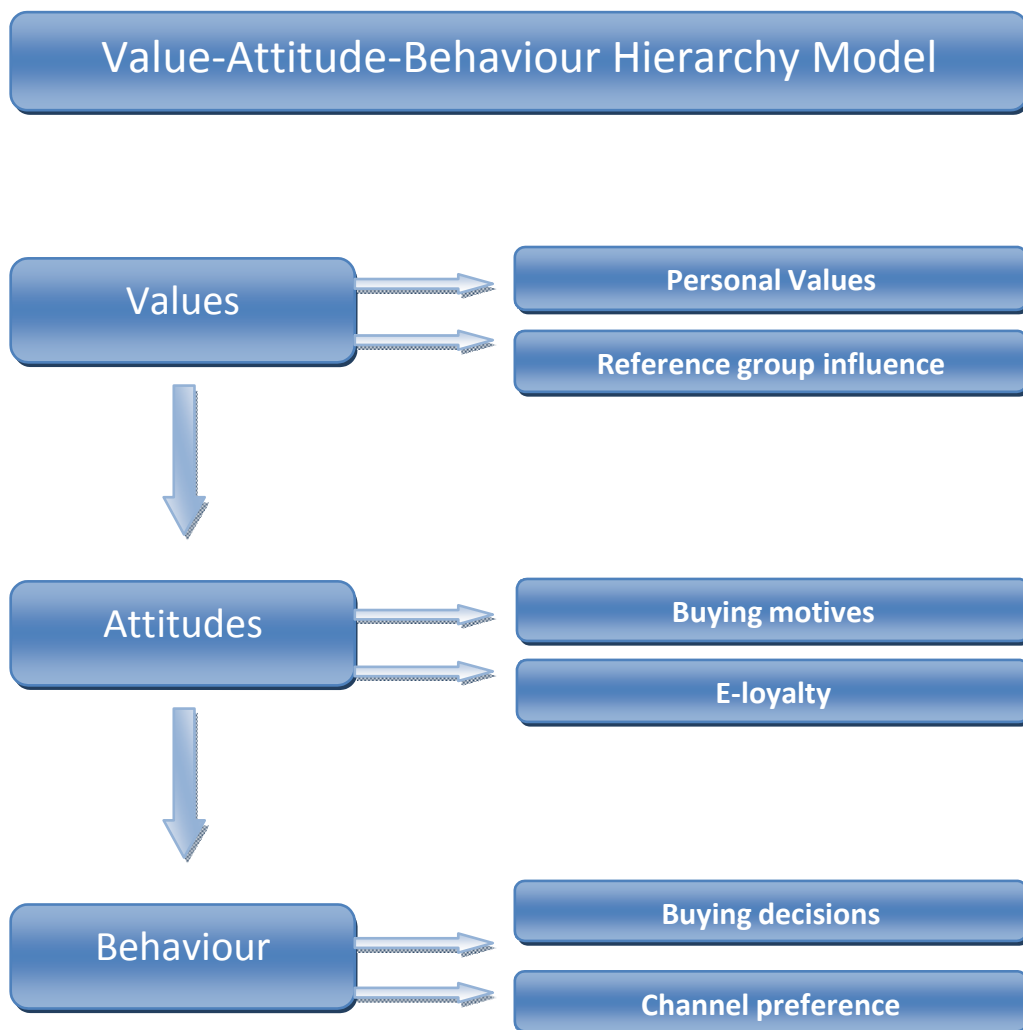


Figure 2 Based on the Hypothesised model by Jayawardhena (2004). P. 130.

2.2 Values

Values are the foundation of our attitudes and actions and therefore essential to observe in order to understand how attitudes are formed and how they in turn have an impact on the final behaviour of consumers. To be able to understand consumer values the following segment will address personal values and different types of external influences that have an impact on our values.

2.2.1 Personal Values

For a long period attitudes have been the dominating perspective when analyzing consumer behaviour. However, some studies have realized the importance of personal values which is the foundation for attitudes and then ultimately behaviour. Vinson et al. (1977) present three different categories of values but focus mostly on the psychological aspect according to Roekach in Jayawardhena (2004) p. 128: ". . . a value as a centrally held, enduring belief which guides actions and judgments across specific situations and beyond immediate goals to more ultimate end-states of existence."

According to Vinson et al. (1977) values influence in which way and with what kind of methods people use to accomplish their goals. Personal values can be described as the frame for people's choices concerning person, products and ideas. Personal values can be used to explain why people prefer one brand over another based on their perception of different product attributes. The authors also reflect upon how national values can affect consumption patterns. To understand the impact of values the authors group personal values into three different subgroups:

- Deep-rooted personal values
- Generalized/Global consumption values
- Beliefs relating to product attributes

Deep-rooted personal values are referred to as those created by experiences in different situations thereto influenced by family, group interaction as well as religion. Global values, on the other hand, are more generally constructed and guide people in their everyday life. These values form the foundation of the individual value system and coexist together with deep-rooted personal values in the creation of preferences. The last subgroups of values are equalized with beliefs and the evaluation of desired attributes. These kinds of beliefs are essential but differ from person to person. Every individual can have thousands of beliefs, hundreds of personal values and a dozen global ones. All the groups of values are harmonized with no specific hierarchical order. This is illustrated in the model below where an inter-connection between the different categories of a person's value system exists.

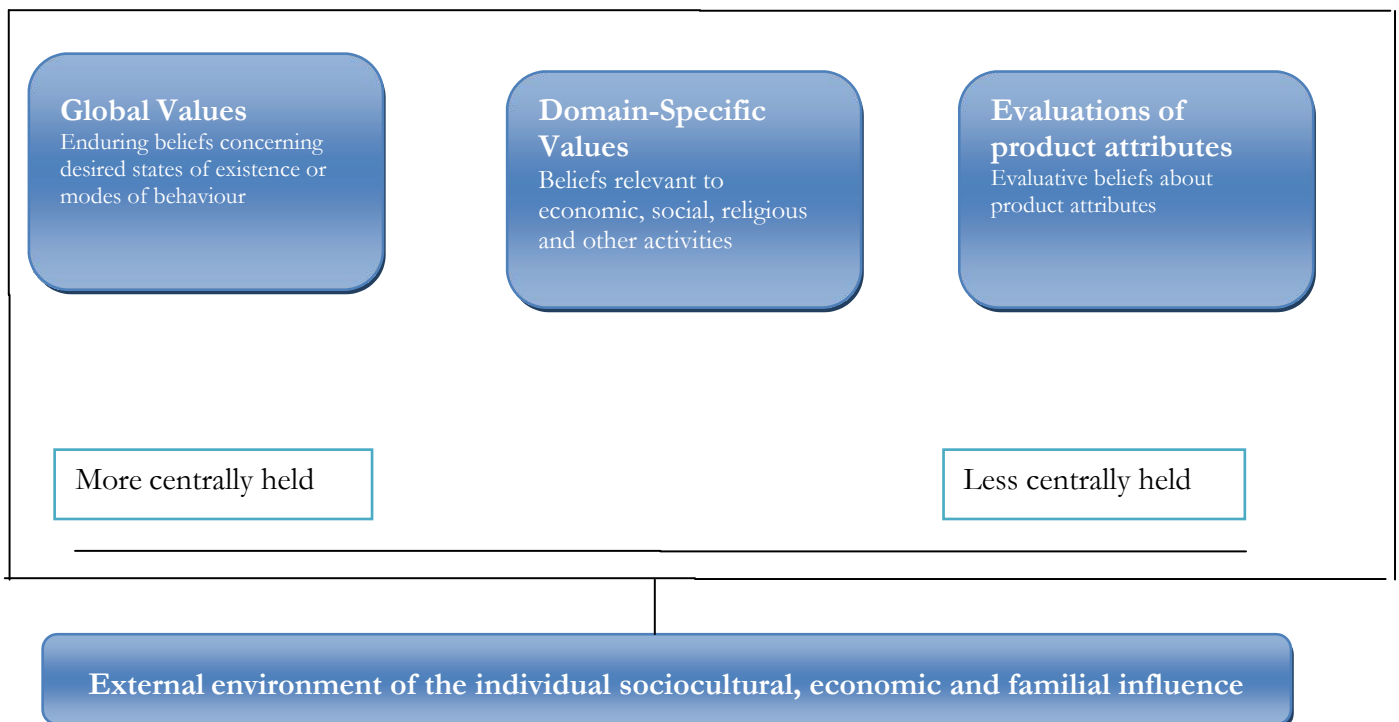


Figure 3. Vinson et al (1977), Organization of the Consumer's Value Attitude System. P. 46

2.2.1.1 Socio-cultural process

Vinson et al. (1977) propose that it is the socio-cultural process that affects what kind of values an individual will acquire and based on these acquired values individuals with different cultural backgrounds will have different preferences when it comes to the selection of brands or products. This hypothesis was tested on two culturally different groups, to investigate how the differences in values affect their attitudes towards automobile and the significance of the attributes. In addition, they also studied social issues, like environmental concerns. The study demonstrated clear differences between the two groups, specifically in their attitudes towards social issues. "...Values are centrally held cognitive elements which stimulate motivation for behavioural response."(Vinson et al, 1977. P. 45).

Vinson et al. (1977) claim that there is an advantage in having knowledge about consumer value orientations, to be able to create an effective marketing program. Changes in consumer preferences and values are important to observe in order to quickly adjust attributes and marketing activities. A promotional strategy should please and enhance the consumers' centrally held values. The result of engaging personal values could possibly be that consumers become aware of attributes that earlier were not reflected on. The conclusion of this study consequently notes that values are culturally and socially learned.

2.2.2 Reference group influence

A reference group is a group of people, or in some cases only one person that an individual relies on when it comes to social norms and values but also concerning information about different products (Grimm, Agrawal and Richardson, 1999). Although there is a lot of information technology available today for sharing information and opinions about products, relying on other peoples evaluations and judgements about products is not something new. In Bearden and Etzel, 1982, Burkrant and Cousineau showed in 1975 that an important source of information for individuals is in fact other people's review about certain items.

2.2.2.1 Information social influence

Grimm et al. 1999, introduces us to two different influences on consumers that dominate in reference groups. The first one is information social influence. This influence refers to the fact that people are inclined to perceive information that they get from other people as a statement about reality. Therefore, before buying consumers want to find out what experience and opinions previous buyers have with a certain product and also see what other alternatives they might suggest. Consumers wish to make the right decision and when they are faced with an uncertainty they will want to make an informed decision and therefore search for information (Bearden and Etzel, 1982). This said, consumers do not blindly believe in anything that is said, a source of information, whether it is another consumer or a salesperson, must have credibility in order for consumers to embrace that specific information. (Bearden and Etzel, 1982).

From an advertising perspective it is useful to employ perceived experts for affirmation of products because consumers are seeking assurance that they are making the right decision (Grimm et al, 1999).

2.2.2.2 Normative social influence

Normative social influence is the second influence that is presented by Grimm et al. (1999). According to this influence people want to adjust themselves after the expectations of a group or another person. The characteristics of this influence are dependent on whether the individual is agreeing with the group voluntarily or involuntarily. If the agreement is voluntary it means that by identifying him- or herself with a reference group, an individual wishes to strengthen his/her self-image. Park and Lessing in Grimm et al. (1999), refer to this influence as "value expressive". In an advertising concept this can be applied by using famous people in commercials, such as celebrities or other noted spokespersons since the customers associate the products that are marketed with the desired attributes of the spokesperson

or model. Consumers will then want to identify themselves with these commercials in order to enhance their self-image according to the value expressive influence theory. This is supported by Bearden and Etzel (1982) saying that marketers and advertisers use this knowledge about the different influences on consumer behaviour from reference groups when they produce their communication to the market by employing conspicuous and attractive people to promote products in congenial situations.

An involuntary group agreement is characterized by the power that a group holds to hand out punishments or keeping back rewards to individuals that adjust to the norms of the group or not. Individuals obey the wishes of other individuals or a group to achieve rewards or to avoid being punished (Bearden and Etzel, 1982). This is also referred to as “utilitarian influence” and is in a marketing context used to show how by using a product an individual can prevent him- or herself by being an outcast in different situations and avoid being embarrassed for not using this certain product (Bearden and Etzel, 1982 and Grimm et al. 1999).

2.3 Attitudes

Attitudes are the vital linkage between values and behaviour and are therefore necessary for the understanding in the formation of our opinions in online shopping. In the article written by Dennis et al. (2009) the attitudes of the consumers could partly be influenced by the customer views of an e-tailer’s image, products selection, service and delivery. As mentioned before attitudes are defined as an approach towards a phenomenon (Nationalencyklopedin, 2011). The motives behind purchasing clothes are essential for the formation of attitudes. This in turn creates a feeling of fulfilment and a positive attitude which is expressed through loyalty towards a specific e-tailor. Thus, this shows an evident connection between attitude and behaviour.

2.3.1 Buying motives

According to Holmberg (1998) there are a lot of factors that underlie motives for buying, such as economy, different valuations, attitudes, influences from the surrounded environment, needs and motives and more. Biological needs are what fuels human motives and these motives arise when the person is trying to satisfy a certain desire. A desire of this kind occurs when a person’s physical or psychic balance is disturbed by something and the person then reacts to this by a sensation of loss or need of some kind and the consciousness about that sensation is what is called desire.

In Holmberg (1998) a desire for buying is important in the buying process and the background to what motivates people to make a purchase, but other characteristics and personal traits are essential too. A person’s cultural background is one example, even personal character; family life and education are all

factors that play a crucial role in the buying process and decide how intense an individual's social and psychological needs will be. An individual strives to be accepted by his or her surroundings but there is a factor called "learned instincts" that are hard to change since they are shaped by an individual's culture. According to Holmberg (1998) buying motives consist of two motives;

- Operative motives
- Social psychological motives

Products are bought by people to satisfy their motives; both operative and social psychological.

2.3.1.1 Operative motives

Operative motives are defined as motives that are connected to the product; what consumers expect from the layout and formation of the specific product. An example that Holmberg (1998) mentions is that it is implied that you buy a hammer to hit on a nail with it. Holmberg (1998) mentions how sellers can improve their selling technique when having this knowledge about people's motives and buying decisions and when facing operative motives he suggests that sellers put emphasis on the functions of the product.

2.3.1.2 Psychological motives

When an individual buys a product because he or she associates the item and owning the item with a socially and psychologically positive feeling, it is called social psychological motives. Buying a product can for some people be associated with boosting one's image, both to one's self and to the surroundings.

Holmberg (1998) discusses the impact of social pressure in a consumers buying decision. People are very much affected in the buying decision about what their surroundings and references groups think about the choice they have made. It can be a family member or a co-worker, the group of people that an individual identifies him- or herself with is a reference group and he or she wants to make decisions that are in line with the norms of that group. Depending on the situation and product an individual can identify him- or herself with different reference groups that he or she feels a connection to and value that groups norms. The decision that the individual later makes is strongly connected to the fact that individuals desire to associate themselves with a reference group. Holmberg (1998) also points out that the decision to buy something has multiple motives and rarely just one.

2.3.2 E-loyalty

There are some big differences between brand loyalty and e-loyalty. In the classic way of shopping brand loyalty enables higher pricing, greater bargaining power with channels, reduced costs and creation of stronger barriers-to-entry (Reichfeld and Schefter, 1996). E-loyalty is more focused on the distribution-driven, consumer controlled and technology-facilitated ideas (Corstjens et al, 2000).

According to Reichfeld and Schefter (2000), acquiring customers on the web is a lot more expensive than in traditional shopping. If an e-tailor lacks loyal customers not even the most advanced e-business will function. Even in e-tailing building long-term trust is about creating a superior alternative to the competitors. Thanks to loyal customers the cost of serving customers decreases and hopefully their purchases increase.

Loyalty and habit have a close relation according to Beatty and Kahle (1988). Habit is stated as an essential factor in the attitude-behaviour process. By the same authors habit is defined as a well-learned schema with a behavioural component. They accent the link between habit and brand commitment, meaning that commitment can be seen as an emotional or psychological connection to a brand. This type of commitment arises from involvement with the product or purchase decision, this appears when important values or one's ego are involved. Due to these facts they see a strong linkage between ego involvement, purchase involvement and brand commitment. Brand commitment is regarded as loyalty (Beatty and Kahle 1988). The result from their study shows that a person with high commitment is engaged in reasoned actions, actions related to intention and subjective norms, which means that values and attitudes are crucial when choosing a brand.

Semeijn et al. (2005) emphasizes aesthetics and web site navigation as the most important features for a popular e-shop. Aesthetics is described as e-scape and refers to layout, colour, pictures and font size. The customer should preferably easily find what they are looking for through well-preformed search engines. It is also stressed that it is crucial with an e-tailor that provide online service when the customer is in need for it. E-tailers with these features are considered as providing more customer value than others and resulting in higher level of e-loyalty (Semeijn et al., 2005).

2.3.2.1 Recommendations

Reichfeld and Schefter (2000), highlight a trend in e-commerce; the customers often find one e-tailer that they prefer and purchases from this supplier then becomes a regular procedure. Their study also showed that the most essential attributes for the consumers are not low price or a broad selection, but rather "a web site I know and trust". To gain this trust the authors have found the key for success which is recommendations since word of mouse is spreading a lot faster than word of mouth. Today it

is possible to send recommendations through e-mails, blogs, twitter and many e-tailers also are providing the service of endorsing products from their site. Most loyal customers found their way to the site through recommendations and not advertising. E-bay has made a study in this area which proved that serving a recommended customer is a lot cheaper, as they often turn to their referents for guidance and help. This implicates that working to please customers is one way of succeeding in e-business, because the outcome is good references. Göteborgs Posten (February 9, part 1, 2011) states that in a British survey made among 10000 e-shoppers, approximately 50 per cent of the respondents said that they choose one specific e-tailer because they were familiar with the brand earlier.

2.3.2.2 Trust and security

Creation of e-loyalty is about high performance in areas of trust, privacy and security. A positive attitude towards the brand is a huge advantage for achieving new loyal buyers (Baldinger and Rubinson, 1996). Satisfaction is often a contributing factor for loyal consumers although not something taken for granted. According to Schultz (2000) a satisfied customer is more often loyal than a customer whose consumption is restricted by time and information. It is harder to create behavioural loyalty in e-commerce since the customer has access to a larger amount of information, for example price comparison, before making the buying decision.

2.3.2.3 Selection of target group

Creating loyalty is truly hard work pursuant to Reichfeld and Schefter (2000), since many companies become greedy in the race for customers. Then the most essential aspect is often forgotten, the careful selection of customers, which is the foundation of loyal customers. In similarity with the Value-Attitude-Behaviour model is constructade by Homer and Kahle (1988) the selection of a target group is crucial. Since building loyalty is about creating attributes which convey trust for your specific customers, adding too much attributes to the website will result in a slow and complex e-shop. According to Szymanski and Hise (2000) the most wanted attribute is convenience, this implicates that too many features is never the right way to go. Important attributes of a site are fast loading, quick shopping, practice navigation, access to FAQs, online services and an easy check-out-process (Smith, 2000). The Internet is a gold-mine for gathering customer information and purchase patterns. Knox (1996) also highlights this trend of customized products, corresponding to the customers' preferences. This enables companies to tailor their sites and offerings. Thanks to interactive communication between the producer and customer, customization is made possible. Here Dell is a terrific example of a well-known brand and products which are customer-tailored.

Using your own brand name on the Web is important as a “brand name extension”, to prevent losing the core of the business. Reichfeld and Schefter (2000) note the significance of integrating the physical store with the website. Citing Vanguard in Reichfeld and Schefter (2000) when describing the web business; “A tool not a strategy”.

Due to the fast evolution of e-commerce, the improvement of the products, sites and service must keep up the same pace. Otherwise, the customer base will quickly decrease, since there is no tolerance for discrepancy and indifference. In conclusion “Building superior customer loyalty is no longer just one of many ways of boosting profits. Today it is essential for survival”, a quote from Reichfeld and Schefter (2000).

2.4 Behaviour

Through behaviour consumers express their values and attitudes. The composition of values and attitudes create actions that are defined by decisions and pervaded through the different stages of the purchasing process. The purchasing process describes the behaviour of the consumer which are rooted in their values and attitudes and therefore they have different preferences during the purchasing stages.

2.4.1 Buying Decision

Dittmar, Long and Bond (2007), have identified four types of buying behaviour in physical shops and stores such as instrumental and economic aspects of buying but also emotional, social-experiential and identity-related. Emotional buying and identity-related buying are the two motives that Dittmar et al.(2007) focus on since their study has much to do with compulsive buying behaviour and these motives have a strong connection to that kind of shopping disorder. They also believe that emotional and identity-related buying is important for conventional buying behaviour since purchasing material goods can be used by consumers to improve or repair their emotions and/or their identity.

2.4.1.1 Emotional buying and Identity-related buying

Emotional buying motives are strongly related to the feeling that a consumer gets from purchasing a certain item (Dittmar et al., 2007). Buying for some consumers can provide a pleasant feeling and enjoyment and when that occurs shopping is used to improve one’s mood. If a consumer has a shopping disorder these feelings are more enhanced both before and after a purchase. Identity-related buying motives characterize modern buying decisions and refer to people’s need for self-expression and what kind of social and personal identity an individual has. This identity-related buying motive is also concerned with the need that individuals might experience to improve their self-image.

Dittmar et al. (2007) propose that the feeling that material goods can improve one's mood and social status is an essential part of both of these buying decisions. If that is so, the more consumers believe that material goods in fact can have a positive effect on their image and mood, the more they should be motivated into making purchases in order to maintain that good feeling.

In their conclusion, Dittmar et al. (2007) say that shopping over the Internet is not much different from buying in physical stores when it comes to what buying decisions are the most important ones. Consumers have the same motives on the Internet as they have in conventional stores; in both these channels they want to satisfy their emotional and identity-related psychological needs.

2.4.2 Purchase process

In the process of buying a consumer goes through three stages (Devaraj et al, 2002; Frambach et al, 2007). The purchasing process is a part of consumer behaviour and dividing this process into three different stages enables retailers and e-tailers to adjust their services and marketing depending on where the consumers are in the purchasing process. Consequently, the retailers and e-tailers have a possibility to influence the attitude of the consumer. The three different stages are (Devaraj et al, 2002; Frambach et al, 2007):

- pre-purchase
- purchase
- post-purchase

The pre-purchase stage is used by the consumer for finding products and searching for information about the product that they are interested in and it is important for the chosen channel to provide sufficient information to satisfy the consumers need for information. At this stage consumers can also do some comparison between products before purchasing (Devaraj et al 2002). Information seeking can be both time-consuming and costly, especially when it comes to complex products and services with different attributes. Therefore the online channel is usually preferred at this stage since it is a much cheaper option and also time-saving, rather than doing this using the offline channel. Consumers who are not used to using the Internet do not feel comfortable with searching for information online and are therefore more likely to conduct this search in the offline market instead.

The next stage is the actual purchasing stage when an order is placed by the consumer and a transaction is made between the customer and the company. In this stage the consumers should receive a receipt of the product or service that he or she has purchased (Devaraj et al, 2002). Before purchasing the customer puts his/her focus on the alternatives that have been created from the searching process in the previous stage. The online channel is usually not the option here because of the disadvantage of

missing personal interaction with a salesperson that can help a customer answer any question and contribute with knowledge that the consumer does not possess. A salesperson with knowledge can help individuals to make the right choice which is important for a consumer especially when it comes to more complex products.

Post-purchase is the last stage in a consumer's buying process and it is essential since it can influence if the customer becomes a loyal client or not. If it is a complex product or if the consumers intend to make another purchase with the same company, the consumers might want to maintain a relationship with the company that sold them their product or service. In this stage it is important for a company to provide support and service for their customers. The channel that is preferred at this stage is the one that customers feel most comfortable with, so for those with Internet experience the online channel is the preferred option. This also goes for the pre-purchase stage; the channel that customers feel most comfortable with is the one that they are most likely to choose (Devaraj et al 2002).

The study by Frambach et al (2007) shows that this is not the case for the purchase stage. In this stage the offline channel is the preferred one, no matter what experience consumers have with Internet usage. The research in this article explains that in the pre-purchase stage it is the Internet experience that is the deciding factor when it comes to choosing the online channel. This is also something that characterizes the post-purchase stage but not in the purchase stage itself. Here instead it is the factor of how easy it is to use the offline channel that is the determinant. "A good experience with the Internet substantially drives the online channel usage intentions in both the pre- and post-purchase stage, but much less so in the purchase stage." In other words, consumers that have experience with using the Internet will feel more comfortable choosing online as the preferred channel, while others with less experience will avoid the online channel because they associate it with higher risk and insecurity (Frambach et al 2007). Convenience is also an important aspect when it comes to whether a consumer will prefer the online channel or not when shopping, but when that decision is made a smooth and fast transaction is also of importance for the overall experience that a customer will get from shopping online (Devaraj et al, 2002).

2.4.2.1 Selection of channel

The channel that a consumer will choose depends on at which stage of the buying process he/she is, and as shown above the consumer can choose the channel that fits him or her the best concerning Internet experience and what kind of product or service is intended to be purchased. It is not unusual that consumers switch between different channels throughout their buying process (Frambach et al, 2007). For customers to choose the online channel more than once, this channel has to provide satisfaction for the user. Satisfaction itself is an evaluative feeling that the consumers experience after the purchase has been carried out. The level of satisfaction is determined by how the consumer has

perceived the service that has been provided throughout the different purchasing stages, how comfortable and convenient it has been to go through the shopping process and how reasonable the transaction costs have been.

For consumers to be satisfied with the online channel and continue to choose it for future purchases, they have to perceive online shopping as being convenient, money-saving and time efficient. How the service is provided by the retailers online is also important for the level of satisfaction that consumers experience, and in addition to that consumer's want to shop with an e-tailer that they feel comfortable with and that they can rely on. When all of those qualities in the online channel are perceived by a consumer, it is more likely that they will see the benefits of using this particular channel for subsequent purchases (Dejavar et al, 2002).

In order for a customer to continue to choose the online channel for his or her purchases the customer has to believe that this channel provides the best alternatives and makes it easy for the consumer to make the best choice. Experience is also a ruling factor since the channel decision a consumer makes is dependent on their previous shopping experience with a chosen channel. If a consumer did not have a pleasant or satisfying experience with the online channel it is less likely that he or she will choose this channel again for future purchases (Dejavar et al, 2002).

2.5 Justification of theoretical framework

The following text is a motivation of our theoretical framework, for better understanding the selection of our theories. Our first sections is about the Value-Attitude-Behaviour Model, which describes the process from values through attitudes to the final behaviour, which companies effectively can influence through certain strategies. We find this theory applicable since it is a well-known model, that has been improved and elaborated during several decades and during the last few years often has been used to explain how values and attitudes are possible to affect. Many authors have contributed with their research for making the model complete and adjusted to the characteristic of today's e-consumption.

Knowledge about basic attitudes of the consumers' buying motives is important in order to understand the incentives for consumption. As mentioned in the section about buying motives and decisions a lot of factors can influence the final purchasing decision and in our interviews we want to investigate what drives our participants to buy clothes, whether they are buying them online or offline. As well as with the Value-Attitude-Behaviour model, basic theories about consumers' buying motives and decisions are still accurate since they are well-known and fundamental in this subject.

E-loyalty is an essential attribute for successful e-tailors. In the section of e-loyalty we describe how e-tailors can create long-term loyalty and why it is necessary for a prosperous business online. The main

features for e-loyalty is creating recommendations, trust, and a strict selection of the target group as well as offering the services requested.

When the decision of buying is made and an identity for the customer could be settled, the next choice is then whether to make the purchase online or offline. We believe that channel preference is an important subject since consumers today have various choices on where they want to make their purchase and with these choices comes different pros and cons that a consumer must have in consideration before purchasing.

3. METHOD

In this chapter we will describe our choice of method and declare why we think it suitable for our research and the reliability of our study. Our main aim is to illustrate our proceeding.

3.1. Research Design

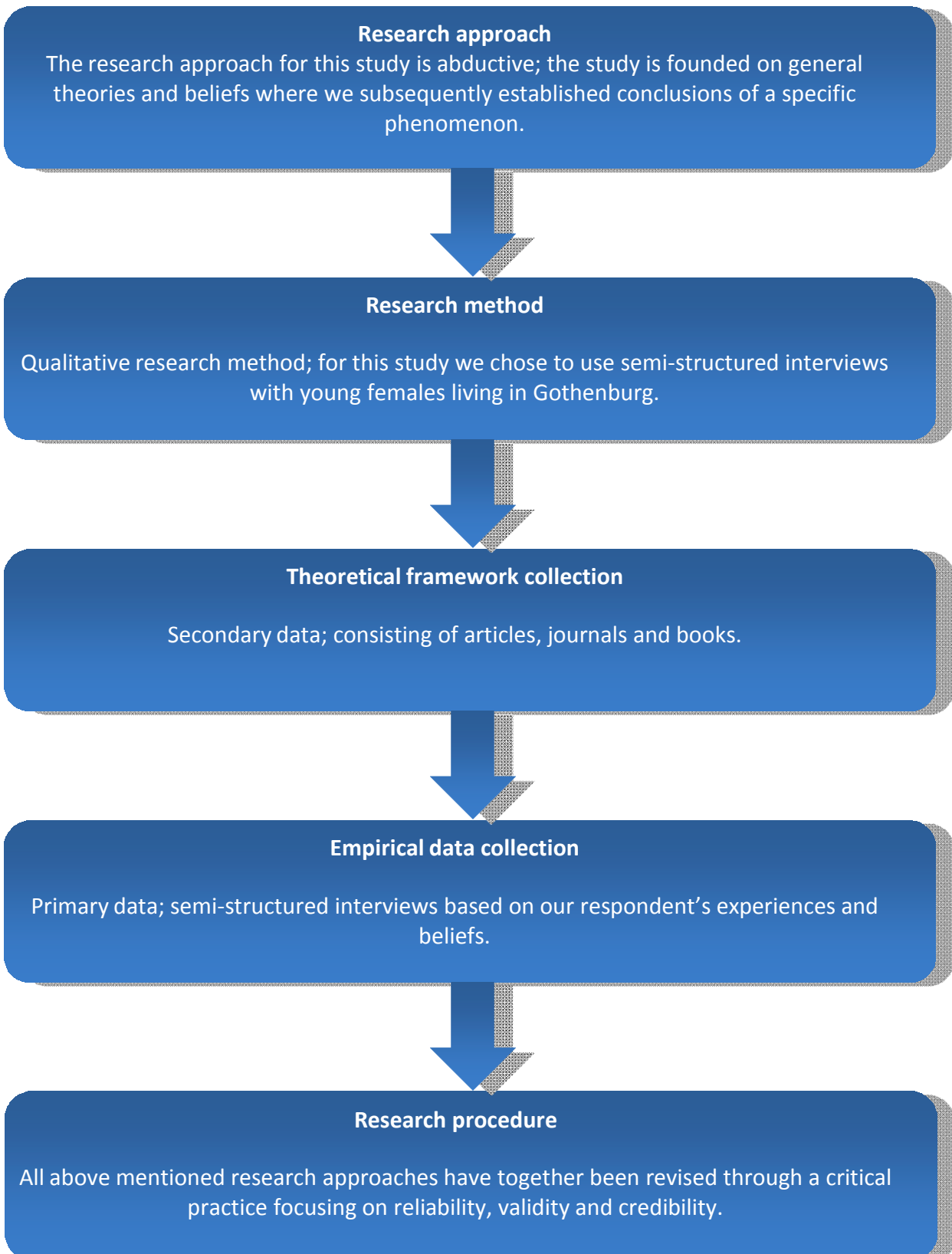


Figure 4. Research Design Model.

3.2 Theoretical Research

The aim of our study has been to develop recommendations for e-tailors; consisting of how to create a convenient e-shop determined by customer preferences (young females). Accomplished by finding existing theories (primarily founded on the value-attitude-behaviour model) and investigating how consumers shop online and how they would prefer to shop online.

The deductive approach uses common practices to apply to separate occurrences. The approach is often called “top-down”, beginning with a theory, narrowed down to hypotheses that are tested through certain observations, ultimately leading to a confirmation where the hypothesis is tested and confirmed with the theories chosen (Social Research Methods, 2011). This is in line with Jacobsen (2002) where he states that deductive research can be described as going “from theory to empirical findings”. The first step is to create expectations through previous research and theories about how the world is composed and then collect empirical data to get a perception of whether the expectations are in accordance with reality. The inductive approach is more focused on the process of testing hypotheses. By induction; an area of real activities are investigated with the purpose of finding patterns to conclude in specific concepts. There is no need for a theory to exist before the empirical study is done, this theory could be developed during the study (Björklund and Paulsson, 2003).

The chosen research style is a combination of the deductive and inductive approach, the abductive, which describes the process of creating a descriptive hypothesis where new ideas could be generated and developed. In the abductive approach the result is processed by unexpected empirical findings as well as theoretical understandings gained during the progression of the thesis (Dubois and Gadde, 2002). Our hypothesis is separated into six research questions united with our key theory and empirical findings. We believe that a lot of prior studies concerning how values are transformed to attitudes finally concluding in a specific behaviour, are appropriate for how young female consumers act when shopping online. The theoretical framework was chosen to give the study a peculiar positioning. Afterward, we attached the theory to the empirical findings; the semi-structured interviews.

3.3 Research methods

The study proceeds from a hermeneutic approach; a method based on understanding. The aim is to investigate how people create and interpret their reality. The benchmark is generally a study of how people act and reflects upon certain situations, meaning that there is no single reality but rather different comprehensions of reality. The reality can only be explored by gaining insight into social trends and understanding (Jacobsen, 2002), consequently the choice of a hermeneutic perspective was

given, since our purpose is to understand how female consumers act when shopping online and how their preferences are formed during that process. Thus, we decided on doing in-depth interviews to avoid missing out on important elements of their beliefs and actions. According to the hermeneutic approach every phenomenon needs to be adapted to the specific time and context. Therefore, the theories selected are adjusted regarding the phenomenon of e-commerce and considered from this perspective. During the whole process our ambition has been to represent a study concerned with reliability, validity and credibility. With this kept in mind we created our interview guide consisting of open questions, to avoid any external impact and truly capture their interpretations. We believe that credibility is the most essential feature for our kind of qualitative study and to gain credibility we have revised earlier studies and publications to make sure that we have good knowledge of the subject. Guba and Lincoln (1981) suggest that credibility is achieved by carefully clarifying chosen methods, so that another author simply could carry out the exact same study. Neutrality is another aspect, where researchers preferably should reduce their impact on their empirical findings in order to achieve a high level of credibility (Guba and Lincoln, 1981). To attain these criteria we have recorded the interviews, tried to minimize our influence during the interviews as well as describing our procedure carefully.

3.4 Description of data

A primary source is generally describes as a firsthand data/information of a subject. There are several different types of primary data; such as experiences, surveys, interviews, letters, artefacts, questionnaires, memoirs, pictures etc. Often they contain a person's thoughts or observations (Hamilton, 2005) this kind of data have never been published before. In "Primary and Secondary Sources: Guidelines for Authors," written by Elizabeth Winslow (2009) she tries to straighten the vague definitions of research projects' primary and secondary data; if research is done by the author writing the paper it is a primary source. On the other hand, if there is a survey the author found and quoted it is a secondary source. The purpose of our empirical research was to have a well-grounded body for our primary data, thus we decided to do a qualitative study and therefore we chose semi-structured interviews as a primary data source. Since this would contribute with more detailed information of their thoughts and beliefs.

3.5 Qualitative Method

Our main method for acquiring empirical data for this study is using qualitative methods. This method focuses on a smaller amount of sources but explores every source more deeply than is possible with a quantitative method. A qualitative method is more focused on using the uniqueness with every source

of information and by using this method an interviewer can study emotions and explore experiences of the source (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The most common ways of performing qualitative research is through interviews and observations. These are especially effective when the interviewer wants to catch certain feelings about a phenomenon, study the process of a person's thinking or learn about the emotions that the subject of the interview might experience. Through a qualitative research method it is also easier to explore how culture and social surroundings are perceived (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Using qualitative research methods can be both time- and resource-consuming. This regards both collecting data and also analysing it. The benefits of using qualitative research methods are that it allows you to get a greater understanding of a happening, an event, object or a phenomenon. This information can be obtained by using follow-up questions and allows the interviewer to be more flexible with his or her questions and with the overall problem formulation. As mentioned above, the downside with using qualitative methods is that they require a lot of time and resources. An interview itself takes time to perform, but preparing for it and doing background research is also very consuming (Jacobsen, 2002). Another downside that Jacobsen mention is that with qualitative methods there can be a problem with how representative the person that is being interviewed or observed is, but at the same time these sources of information can provide unique data that for example a survey will have a hard time capturing. Jacobsen (2002) continues by saying that using qualitative research method is useful when a researcher wants to see a connection between an individual and a context, or observe how people interpret and understand a specific situation that they are being exposed to. Using this kind of research method is also beneficial when a researcher believes that being open to unexpected happenings is important for the result of the research or when he or she wants to create clarity in a concept or a phenomenon.

3.5.1 Individual interviews

Personal interviews have been used to go deeper into every person's experience and opinions. According to Jacobsen (2002), general individual standpoints are easier to highlight when taking the time to thoroughly analyse fewer units. Individual interviews as a qualitative research method is applicable when the research is limited in time and will thus not be able to investigate many entities, but it is still important to keep in mind that with every new person that is interviewed or investigated, the amount of new information that can be obtained is decreasing. An interview can either have a very open structure where the interview is more of a free dialogue between two persons or it can be very structured by the interviewer with a firm set of questions that will not allow the answers to step away from the subject. Jacobsen (2002) recommends using a semi-structured interview, meaning that the interviewer has selected some subjects that he or she wants to discuss during the interview. It is good if the interview is prepared in some form, such as choosing specific subjects, without creating too

many limitations for a free discussion. Having an unwavering set of questions will limit the possibility for unexpected information to arise. As mentioned before, performing qualitative research can consume a lot of resources and also time. To minimize the cost, a telephone-interview can be used. Using this method can be beneficial when the respondents want to be anonymous. Having a face-to-face conversation can create trust between the interviewer and the respondent allowing for more sensitive subjects to be addressed. With a telephone-interview it is not possible to observe the respondent the same way that you can do when talking to someone in person. Also, when performing an interview over the telephone it is not appropriate to have very open questions, here it is better to use more guided questions that will allow for shorter and more specific answers (Jacobsen, 2002). We have chosen to use personal semi structured interviews along with one telephone interviews due to the respondents' inability to participate physically.

3.5.2 Interview guide

In our study we chose to use semi-structured interviews that would allow us, the interviewers, and our respondents to speak more easily about the subject. The questions that were used as foundation for our interviews were divided under subcategories according to the Value-Attitude-Behaviour model in order to make sure that we saturated our information need on each level of the model. To increase the validity of our study we made sure that the questions that were asked were clear and objective by testing them on “test-respondents”, to minimize any external influence. Our respondents were able to answer freely and motivate their answers. This enabled a free discussion and reflection between the interviewers and the respondents.

We created 23 questions that were intended to be used as an outline for our interviews. It is important to state that we did not limit ourselves to the questions; instead the respondents to our interviews were able to speak freely and we, the interviewers, were given the opportunity to ask attendant questions. The twelve interviews were performed in Swedish and translated by us into English. When translating the quotes in the section of the empirical findings we have been very strict in order to preserve the same meaning.

The framework for the interviews can be found in appendix 1. The questions that are presented here are translated from Swedish. The interviews were performed in group rooms at Gothenburg University during three weeks in the middle of March. The interviews took on average one hour and began with a deeper presentation of e-commerce, the study and the purpose of it. Each interview was recorded with the approval of the respondent, to make us responsive auditors and simplify the subsequent transliteration.

3.5.3 Selection of participants

To draw attention to our study and attract participants for our interviews we posted information about our subject and upcoming interviews on Facebook and put up posters at three universities in Gothenburg; The School of Business, Economics and Law at Gothenburg university, Chalmers and The Faculty of Education at Gothenburg University. The final respondents on our interviews were selected randomly among those who actively contacted us through e-mail.

3.6 Analysis of chosen method

Literature research is our first step in gaining knowledge and gathering information, both about e-commerce itself and also about consumer behaviour and the process of buying. We used books to gain basic knowledge about these subjects but put more focus on scientific articles since we believe that they usually are published later and thus are more accurate about this subject. E-commerce is something that has expanded over the last couple of years and is constantly evolving so therefore articles are more relevant for understanding current situations and development.

To proceed with our study we have chosen to conduct qualitative research. Qualitative research was performed through personal interviews with young women in the ages between 20-30 years. The subjects of e-commerce and shopping clothes online has been covered by previous surveys by different scientific articles as well as university studies, so adding another survey on top of that would not contribute further to this subject, instead we can use these previous results and compare them with our findings.

Statistical reports made by different associations about the use of the Internet and e-shopping are also an important source of information for this study. These reports are often made on a regular basis making them more truthful than other sources of information and thereby useful when talking about shopping online. The main methods for this study:

- Book about e-business consumer behaviour and the buying process.
- Scientific articles about e-commerce and the subjects mentioned above.
- Interviews for discussions about behaviour behind e-commerce.

4. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

The next chapter contains the empirical findings from our twelve semi-structured interviews. We have analysed and revised the findings with regard to the main theory, the Value Attitude Behaviour Model. We have observed both similarities and differences between the behaviour and beliefs of our respondents. This chapter exposes the crucial factors for young female consumers shopping behaviour online.

4.1 Introduction

The empirical data has been collected through semi-structured interviews. The chosen respondents have been selected concerning homogenous characteristics such as gender, age, city and current occupation. In the intention of simplifying the comparing analysis of our data, the aims of the interviews are to gather information to be able to answer the study's research questions.

To answer our research questions we have performed these individual interviews to create a greater understanding for important influences in young women's shopping process. The interviews are based on the Value-Attitude-Behaviour model and contain questions that concern each part of the model.

The number of respondents is twelve, since our information need at that point was saturated. We believe that additional interviews would not contribute to our study. The empirical material is divided into three separate parts according to the Value-Attitude-Behaviour model and connected with the research questions. We have processed the material connected to values, attitudes and behaviour, with the purpose of creating a solid understanding for the reader. Some information has been precluded because it did not conduce the quality of the study. The respondents of the study were a mixed population of those who are regularly online shoppers and those who always preferred the physical store. This was not a pre-determined factor, although it creates a greater foundation for insight into consumers' preferences.

4.2 Values

What are the main influencing factors when buying apparel online?

The respondents answered that they were influenced by friends and by fashion magazines. When they saw something nice in an advertisement it could sometimes trigger a shopping desire. Seeing something nice on a friend could also influence our respondents to shop. Christine, 24, says that what influences her to buy is that a company has a good supply and variety of items and that they also have good marketing of their products. She often shops when she is in the mood for adding something new to her clothes or if there is a special occasion like a wedding or a job interview. Working part-time in a

clothing store the past five years has definitely had an impact on Christine's interest in clothes and fashion.

Even though the majority of the respondents confess that friends, marketing and fashion blogs have great importance in the creation of their shopping desire both Charlotte, 23, and Daniella, 24, say that they are not affected by their surroundings and that their own taste and feeling is what is important for them when they go shopping. Another aspect that they have in common is that neither of them follows trends of the season in the apparel industry.

Jessica, 27, is a fashion-blogger herself and during her interview she mentions that she is very inspired by what kind of products other blogs are presenting and that it can make her want to shop for the same items. She is also affected by what the staff at a certain store is wearing and believes that it can be beneficial for the company if the staff represent the collection that they have in the store at the moment. Jessica, 27, has studied economics at the School of Business, Economics and Law at Gothenburg University, but after receiving her bachelor degree she applied for a one-year master's degree in fashion at Borås University. Her approach towards clothes differs a little from our other respondents, Jessica, 27, is very up-to-date with high-fashion and is aiming for a career within this area.

Several of the responses go in line with the reference group theory where Grimm et al (1999) present two influences; social and normative social. Relying on family, friends and blogs for advice on products can be related to the social influence where consumers desire to know other's opinions and experiences with a certain product before committing to purchase it. Consumers interpret the information that they receive from their reference group as being reality and will trust that information in the case that they find the source having credibility (Grimm et al, 1999). Only half of the respondents mentioned during their interview that advertisement and fashion magazines affected them and it is therefore hard to draw a conclusion whether shopping for new apparel has to do with wanting to improve one's self-image or to adjust after the expectations of a certain group or person which is part of the normative social influence (Grimm et al, 1999). Today's consumer society offers endless possibilities for consumption but as we found out through our interviews it is difficult to realize whether that is affecting consumers in their shopping patterns. Only a third of the respondents acknowledged the fact that they indeed felt influenced by the consumer society. Philippa, 23, is one respondent that we performed a telephone-interview with since she is currently spending a semester abroad. She is a student at Gothenburg University who studies Marketing and Communication. To the question "What makes you go shopping? Do you believe that you are affected by today's consumer society?" Philippa, 23, answers the following:

“I want to be updated and keep up with the fluctuations in fashion.

I believe that it [clothes] makes me more attractive.

And of course I am influenced by today's consumer society, who isn't?”

As mentioned above, normal social influence is concerned with people wanting to adjust themselves after the expectations of a person or a certain group. Whether the consumer society can be such a “group” or not is not debated yet and with the responses on this question it can be said that it is a challenge to find out what role the consumer society is playing on creating shopping desires, especially when consumers themselves do not admit that they are affected by the consumer society.

In the theory of personal values we are presented by Vinson et al. (1977) with three different kinds of values that have been identified in people. Attitudes, which we have studied further on, have been highlighted in research and more studied than values have been. Personal values is the root to attitudes and from a scientific point of view it is therefore important to “take a step back” and look at the influences values have on a person's decisions.

Basically all of our respondents told us that clothes mean a lot to them and that it is fun to shop. Most of them also told that they use clothes as a way to express their personality and help them build their identity. An interesting result from our interviews was that clothes proved to have a positive impact on a person's mood. Finding a nice piece of clothing that fits and feels comfortable promoted a positive mood in most of our respondents. For Jessica, 27, it is the other way around:

*“Clothes mean a lot to me. But my mood affects how I choose to dress,
which varies from day to day. If I don't want to be seen one day I will dress in sober colours.”*

Our empirical study showed that not only do clothes themselves influence a person's mood but shopping for apparel is by most of our respondents used to enhance a positive feeling or to quell negative emotions. This is illustrated by Christine's, 24, answer;

*”Sometimes I shop consciously, in other cases to quench some feelings that I have.
If I'm sad I shop to feel happier, but I might as well shop to reward myself when I have performed well, like passing an exam.”*

Even though consumers found that shopping gave them positive emotions they are still aware that this feeling does not last for long. One of our respondents referred to this positive feeling as experiencing a rush when buying something she wanted. Satisfaction was the term that most of our respondents used when we asked them to more closely describe what kind of feelings shopping gave. Hanna, 25, said that if her purchase was a spontaneous one the feeling of satisfaction would not last for long, but if she had planned on buying something for a longer period the purchase of that item satisfied her for a longer

period of time. She says that clothes is not so important for her. Of course she likes to buy nice clothes but this is not prioritized in her life. For Jessica, 27, on the other hand, clothes is happiness as she herself mentioned. Spending money did not give her the same anxiety as it gave our other respondents. She works part-time at a jewelry store to be able to afford her shopping expenses. Since our interviews were conducted with students we found it interesting to see whether living on a student budget was a constraint when shopping. Almost all of our respondents said that even though they got a positive feeling from shopping, this feeling was soon taken over by feeling anxiety for spending money when having a tight budget, especially when the purchase was not a planned on. Hanna, 25, plans most of her clothing purchases in order to stay within her budget but admits that she occasionally indulges in some impulse shopping.

Through the process of our interviews we found out the importance that clothes have when forming and identity. The majority of the respondents say that they use clothes to create an identity for themselves, but they continue this with saying that the tight budget right now is an obstacle.

Hanna, 25, is one of the respondents who believe that creating an identity through your outfits is strongly related to what kind of budget you have;

*“I wish that I could create my identity more through clothes,
but for me it is an issue of money.*

Identity creation will come with my first pay-check!”

Lisa, 23, on the other hand, does not consider money to be the biggest obstacle when it comes to creating and identity with clothes;

*“I think that I have the intention to express my identity and my mood through my clothes.
But mostly I probably fail.*

*Often I wish that my clothes would express another person than I really am.
I guess it is about wishing to be someone that you're not.”*

Global consumption values and deep-rooted personal values together create people's preferences for different products and attributes. They are formed by previous experience, reference group influence and work as a guide in everyday life (Vinson et al, 1977).

Today some big clothing companies such as Lindex and H&M work with ethical and social issues. By having charity campaigns they want to raise money for different causes. We asked our respondents whether they were affected in their purchasing process by these charity campaigns and also if they were scared of buying from a certain company if they experience some ethical differences such as child labour. The response to this question was mostly that consumers do not think about whether a

company is involved in a scandal or if it in contrast had done something nice in the world (such as H&M sending 100 000 garments to victims in Japan (Metro Göteborg, Mars 2011)). Pernilla, 24, says that a scandal would prevent her from buying from a certain company but that she probably would forget it quickly and that in the end it would not affect her in choosing to shop from that certain retailer. Hanna, 25, says that she does not have time or money to spend on caring about a company's ethical stand point at the moment. She continues by saying that she will probably care later on, when she has the time and money. The majority of the respondents said that they even though they might be aware of scandals or unethical behaviour by companies, this did not affect them in their overall shopping process this does not affect them.

Charlotta, 24, has another opinion about this;

"I avoid a retailer if they are part of a scandal. But if they are doing something good I want to support them, like when part of the profit goes to a good cause, like for example to researching for breast cancer. I am only motivated to help if a certain percentage goes directly to a good cause, not when a company is just being "good".

Overall our empirical research showed that scandals or good ethics are not that important if consumers find a piece of clothing that is appealing to them. Charlotte, 24, who is a sport management student at Gothenburg University says that scandals are not crucial because the piece of clothing is already produced. If she finds clothes that she really likes she does not pay attention to what ethical standpoint that certain retailer has.

4.3 Attitudes

In the study we have defined attitudes as guidelines for how to act in different situations. Personal values create a foundation for attitudes. Consequently, the attitude is described as an approach to a certain phenomenon. Attitudes are used for guidance towards self-actualization. A majority of the attitudes are held unconscious, but still control our choices, preferences and actions. Studies have confirmed that a positive attitude towards e-commerce implies that the person has a desire to control their life. Therefore e-commerce is a suitable choice because you could make the choice of when, where and how you like to shop. Many attitudes lack a solid base and thus are formed as preconceived attitudes. This is mostly due to the absence of knowledge. Our attitudes often comport with satisfaction; meaning that the shopping is entertaining, convenient and amusing.

By the interviews we found that in the choice between a physical store and e-shop; the majority of the respondents did not hesitate when choosing the physical store, with the explanation of the ability to

actually be able to try the garment before purchasing. Several of our respondents however added that they willingly could buy the garment online if they had the opportunity to try the garment in the physical store at first. The big determinant and disadvantage of the e-shops are the lack of dressing rooms. To enhance the online shopping this must be solved at the earliest with an equal complement.

The quote from Charlotte, 24, describes the general point of view;

"I mostly shop at a physical store.

Sometimes I choose to do some purchases online, but that is only if I truly know that the garment will fit me.

To elude the risk of having to send it back. Often I know that the garment is cheaper online."

Daniella, 24, has a great interest for clothing and fashion and studies textile-economics in Borås and she mentioned during her interview the importance of having an e-shop; as a clear statement for a modern and creative company. She argued that it is an essential feature for every company, almost a necessity to appear as a successful and improving company. This corresponds with the analysis made by Frambach et al. (2007) that various firms that only have had offline business and then took the step into the online business world have actually strengthened their offline business and made it stronger than before.

The reasons to primarily choose the physical store were also quite consistent. The preference of the physical store was mainly due to the chance to feel, try, and evaluate quality and colour as well as no delivery time. Again this indicates the significance of dressing rooms. The majority declared that they often had a specific need for the garment at the moment and as a result of that, not the patience to wait for the delivery. The quote mentioned below frames an example from one of the respondents. Madeleine, 24, who frequently used to shop over the Internet, realized that she missed trying the clothes before purchasing;

"In the physical store you get the garment immediately and you have the possibility to try it. Before I bought a lot more over the Internet, but then you are missing the nice feeling of going shopping, with the process of fitting and the time for reflection."

This quote notes an essential factor, since shopping today is an activity almost like a hobby for young females. This will be lost when shopping online; the social interaction which contributes to the amusing feeling of shopping. This statement is supported by Devaraj et al. (2002), who declare that the online channel is often excluded because of the disadvantage that it misses personal interaction with a salesperson that can help a customer to answer any question and contribute with knowledge that the consumer does not possess. A salesperson with knowledge can help individuals to make the right choice which is important for a consumer especially when it comes to more complex and expensive products.

In our study the disadvantages of e-shopping master the advantages. The advantages were not uniform, although the majority concerned the lower pricing, the convenient and easy process of online shopping, time saving, easy to compare different products, favorable offerings and the ability to choose a payment by invoice. These factors indicate a positive attitude, based on values in favour of e-shopping. The disadvantages were more evident; the delivery time, the shipping cost, the return cost, the difficulty of finding reliable e-shops, the distinction between fake and original, the creation of a shopping addiction as a lack of reality as well as security issues. The most outstanding was the shipping cost and the problematic process of returning the product which in some cases could turn out to be an expensive spending. Due to the previously mentioned factors our respondents favor the physical stores in most scenarios. Since the risks and uncertainties related to purchase and payment are less apparent in physical stores this channel is favored among our respondents. Daniella, 24 learned a valuable lesson when she purchased from the international website Asos.com;

“Buying from Swedish sites, the shipping and return cost does not bother me that much because they are not so expensive. But for New Year’s I wanted to have something special and bought some dresses from Asos.com. The shipping costs were a bit more expensive than I was used to but still superable. When I decided to return some dresses I had to pay over 400SEK! That was a mistake that I will never repeat!”

To enhance online shopping the convenience must be prioritized, the shipping cost should not be severe and the procedure of returning an item should be uncomplicated. Naturally ”the channel that customers feel most comfortable with is the one that they are most likely to choose” (Devaraj et al., 2002). Therefore convenience is the watchword; the challenge is to change the attitudes to e-commerce. Many consumers just need a positive experience from purchasing online to changing their attitude. Referring to a study made by Ruud T. Frambach (2007); *“A good experience with the Internet substantially drives the online channel usage intentions in both the pre- and post-purchase stage, but much less so in the purchase stage.”* Dejarvar et al. (2002) notes that for a consumer to be satisfied, the experience must be convenient, time efficient, money saving and based on reliance. When these needs are fulfilled the consumer will realize the benefits with online shopping and thus receive a positive attitude.

As a consequence one could believe that there is a lack of knowledge in online shopping. But within our homogenous group of respondents the experience and knowledge online is quite high, as a result of everyday usage. The opinions of our respondents are quite alike, the process of shopping online is very easy and a procedure that the better part of the population could manage, thus it is important to critical study the reliability of the web shops. One pronouncement by Charlotta, 24, that described this well was the one quoted below;

“Experience online creates security, since you know which websites to visit and not. If you have knowledge online you often have the ability to appreciate whether the website is serious or not. I have to confess that I was fooled by a company a while

ago. The company seemed serious and answered to my e-mails professionally. But when I received the garment I knew that something wasn't right. After some searching online I realized that it was a fake. I did not return the jacket but I send them a detailed and angry letter."

To avoid this kind of web shop it is favorable for the company to create a well-known reputation, by using certain safety certificates, customers' recommendations and available service staff since some of our respondents felt insecure with online payments. Using payment alternatives such as Pay Pal, invoice, e-bank etc. could also promote security.

The respondents agreed that buying shoes and jeans were almost impossible online, since the fitting is essential for these products. Buying online was generally done when they either knew their size or had tested the garment in the physical store, to later order it online with favorable offerings. In most cases the products were sold out in the store and therefore the natural choice became the web shop. In conclusion the web shop was overall the second choice. According to a theory by Holmberg (2008) there are two distinct motives when purchasing; operative motives and social physiological motives. The operative motives consist of a desire and are concerned with the features and functions of the product. Physiological motives, on the other hand, are associated with identity and the feeling of belonging. Based on our interviews the respondents are not influenced by friends, background or education when choosing to use the offline or online channel for clothing purchases. Their friends' shopping online does not influence their own consumption patterns. But recommendations from blogs, adverts in papers and TV can inspire them to visit a specific web-shop, but it is not a determinant for the final buying decision.

Jessica, 27, says that she is influenced by recommendations on blogs to a certain extent;

"If I see that a blog recommend a web-site I will definitely visit the web-site to see what it offers. I might even add it to my bookmarks but this does not mean that I will commit to purchasing right then and there."

An element that had a big impact was the layout of the page. An attractive website was described as nice-looking, easy, professional, trendy, stylish and welcoming. According to the respondents these features together indicated a trustworthy web shop. There were also several requirements for how to display the clothes. The pictures of the clothing should preferably be both on a model and without, from different angles. At best presented by a video to see how the garment is moving. Reviews added by the consumers were also a desired and facilitating resource. Our respondents mentioned Nelly.com as a good example that is fulfilling the needs of the customers by the above mentioned factors. This e-store was the only Swedish company mentioned by our respondents as having a good web-layout and an extraordinary product presentation.

4.4 Behaviour

What characterizes the online purchasing process for young females?

Our actions online are controlled and influenced by values and consequently attitudes, this implies that our behaviour is shaped through our values. Hence it is essential that the strategies are created to interact with the values of the target group. The selection of target group is required to be homogeneous and share the same attributes to enable the creation a consistent strategy.

The underlying cause behind a buying decision appears to be a purchase made by impulse. Even if our respondents have a tight budget as students, the majority is not planning their consumption of clothes. They consider their impulsive behaviour an invented need or something that emerges gradually when surfing the web. Nina, 23, describes her shopping behaviour as characterized by unplanned purchases, while more expensive clothing demands some planning and reflection. This type of behaviour could be explained by the emotional buying motive presented by Dittmar et al. (2007), which is associated with the pleasant feeling and satisfaction the consumer receives after buying a garment. Charlotte, 23, expresses her opinion about what typifies her clothing acquisitions;

“My purchases are a big mixture, consisting of both impulsive shopping as well as pre-planned. In some cases a desire is created while I’m looking for something else.”

The buying process online is a phenomenon with fairly little attention. Our respondents had some similarities along with some quite different proceedings. They generally started by surfing their favourite websites, scanning the assortment, initially the news. Some preferred to compare different sites, concerning prices, but this was made briefly. Jessica’s. 27, process deviated from the rest;

“I’m visiting a specific site, beginning by looking at “new-in”. I put everything that is tempting in the shopping bag. Then I select the garments that I really feel a certain attraction to, and complete the purchase process. In some cases I save some clothes for future purchases, just in case.”

In certain situations our respondents preferred to use the online channel rather than the physical. The causes were mainly lack of time, bored by browsing the web at night time, favorable offerings such as sales or discount codes or if the garment is not available in the physical store. Philippa 23, had another reason for shopping online and favored the web-shop for more festive occasions like weddings, to guarantee herself of being the only one with THE dress. The most commonly used alternative of payment was credit card and invoice. Altogether they felt secure leaving the personal information since they only made purchases at well established companies. However, Daniella 24, would if possible choose PayPal or payment through e-certificate, with the explanation that;

“I think PayPal is the most secure alternative, since the amount of money is transferred when the garment is sent and then you have the possibility to locate the garment until it is at your door.”

As Reichfeld and Schefter (2000) declare, loyalty towards e-tailers is important for their success. Loyalty is a part of brand commitment that according to Beatty and Kahle (1988) is a consequence of consumers having a high level of commitment towards the brand. Above we have discussed the importance of values and attitudes that are the foundation for behaviour and also crucial when choosing brand.

When a brand offers consumers the choice between purchasing online and offline, what determinants decide what channel is going to be the primary one? For Madeleine, 24, who recently moved to her own apartment and now has to be more careful with her budget, it is all about the price;

“The determinant for me is the price when I have the option of choosing both channels. If the same item is cheaper on the Internet with or without a discount or promotion, I will buy it there [on the Internet].”

The majority of the respondents said that they primarily chose the offline channel for purchases because of the previously mentioned issue like size and material uncertainty. Other beneficial factors for physical stores are that consumers can take their item with them after the purchase and that having a shopping day is a fun and social event. It is not unusual that young females search the Internet for a product that they first saw in a physical store but could not find their size. The ultimate determinant for our respondents varies; for some it is mainly about the price, for others about pleasure and for some it is about assortment. Promotional discount and offerings about free shipping is not unusual for consumers to receive from e-tailers, weather it is in the form of an e-mail or a classic letter in the mailbox. Only two of our respondents reported that they were not attracted by these types of offerings, they simply discarded them without truly paying attention. Madeleine, 24, has a slightly different approach towards promotions and discounts;

“I’ll maybe browse a website to see whether I can find something to use the promotion on but usually I actively look for discount codes when I’m buying over the Internet.”

For Charlotta, 24, Swedish websites do not attract with their small discounts, as she puts it. She is only attracted when a foreign e-shop offers a promotion because, according to Charlotta, 24, foreign promotions are superior to Swedish ones. Madeleine, 24, has also tried a few foreign e-stores but only European ones since she feels insecure with extra charges that may occur when buying from an American e-store.

Most of the respondents stated that they were intrigued by different forms of promotions and that they would definitely have a look at an e-shop if they receive a discount of any kind. The overall assumption

about promotional offerings is that they create an interest in consumers, but do not necessarily lead to a purchase.

Loyalty toward e-tailers is a trend according to Reichfeld and Schefter (2000). When consumers find an e-shop that they feel comfortable and safe with they will preferably shop from that specific e-tailer. Our respondents mostly had a sample of favourite web shops that they browsed through occasionally. They felt more comfortable buying from e-tailers that they were familiar with, either from physical stores or from buying at the e-shop previously.

For Jessica, 27, it is about product familiarity;

“I have some web shops that I am loyal to. I do visit some others sporadically but rarely buy from them. The benefit of buying from familiar e-tailers is that you always know what you will get.”

This quote supports the recommendations from Beatty and Kahle (1988) where they endorse that companies should put focus on creating attributes that creates trust in their target consumers. This trust is the foundation that generates loyalty.

5. CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

Through the theoretical investigation and perceived interviews we have gained knowledge of how young women purchase online and what are the main influencing factors. These facts can hopefully be used as an insight into emending and improving the e-shops of today to better correspond with young female consumers preferences. The conclusions presented in the following chapter are a recap of the results from our empirical findings as well as some personal aspects on the subject.

5.1 Research question 1: What are the main influencing factors when buying apparel online?

The intention is to briefly summarize our theoretical findings connected to our theoretical framework. Through our interviews we established a link between values and behaviour. Personal values constitute the foundation of our actions through attitudes. The interviews demonstrated beliefs, approaches and actions that are coexistent with the Value-Attitude- Behaviour model, however there was also a few interesting deviations.

A variety of factors are important when it comes to the creation of a shopping desire, but the most obvious findings in our research proved to be that friends, family, blogs and to some extent magazines and advertisements have a great impact on the formation of shopping desire. This is in line with information social influence where a reliance on others' previous experiences and opinions for product information is in focus. Consumers want to be reassured by experts and other users' views on certain products before committing to a purchase and with this Grimm et al, (1999) recommend employing experts that can provide reliable information for curious consumers. Can it be that blogs and friends are the "new experts"? Many of our respondents seem to rely on these groups for opinions and are to some extent affected by them during their purchasing process. That friends and family are an important and reliable source of information might not be so surprising in our opinion, the closeness of the relationships makes them more reliable than an expert who gets paid for his or her opinions. The most interesting aspect is blogs, who our consumers do not have a close relationship with but still are affected by. Why have blogs such an influence on young females' purchases? Can it be that they are perceived as being impartial when it comes to product opinions since they are not openly employed by any company? An implication from our empirical findings is that blogs are given great possibilities to affect their readers and that they are perceived as a reliable source of information. One of our respondents is a fashion blogger herself and she states that she is affected by blogs when it comes to the creation of purchasing desire.

That today's generation lives in a consumer society is well-known to most people. One of our respondents supposed that everyone is actually affected by today's consumer society even though they

do not admit it. This might really be the case; are consumers' today so unaware of what effect society has on their shopping patterns? Is it even possible to measure to what extent the consumer society is an influential factor? The rest of our respondents did not admit to being affected by the consumer society, most of them replied that they were aware of its existence but that it did not play an important role in their shopping decisions and processes.

Personal values are not always easy to measure and in research attitudes have been prioritized. We find it important to go back to basics and explore what personal values are connected to clothes and the process of purchasing them. For the majority of our respondents clothes is important and is often used as a tool for creating and expressing personal identity. Some of our respondents use clothes as a mood indicator while others say that living on a student budget does not allow them to be as expressive as they want to. Many of our respondents believe that they will be able to use clothes in a greater extent for identity creation when they no longer will feel constrained by a tight budget. Regarding the creation of personal identity money seems to be a big obstacle for our respondents and many of them believe that when their income increases they will be able to use clothes to a greater extent when creating personal identity.

Ethical questions are part of personal values in our opinion; how people perceive companies with a certain ethical standpoint is interesting to explore when talking about apparel purchasing. We asked our respondents whether it is important for them in their buying decision that a company has a good ethical attitude and the majority of our respondents replied that overall it is important but if they were to find the perfect garment the ethical values would not be significant in their final decision. It became more appealing to our respondents to purchase from a certain retailer if they knew that a part of the profit would benefit a special cause. Here we draw the conclusion that a personal value very well corresponds with an attitude but does not have to be a determinant for the final behaviour.

All of our respondents prefer to shop in physical stores compared to e-store mainly based on the possibility to try, see and feel the clothes before making a purchase. However, if they are given the opportunity to try the clothes beforehand in a store, they could very well proceed with the purchase online. A notice in Göteborgs Posten (2011) describes a new customer behaviour where items are tested in the store and then customers bought the product online instead of proceeding with the purchase in the physical store. The notice mentions the winter sport section of the retail business as being most affected by this behaviour although we believe that this may soon affect other parts of the

retailing business, such as apparel. Different types of marketing activities such as discounts and promotions may encourage this kind of behaviour and might affect physical stores negatively. Companies that have both offline and online business might benefit from this kind of behaviour since having an e-shop enables companies to reduce costs compared having offline business. Department stores and shops that sell different type of brands can experience loss of income since designer brands might be cheaper online and customers might use physical stores solely as show- and dressingrooms. If e-commerce will increase this problem might need for the physical stores to react and counteract to impede this kind of behaviour.

Through our interviews we also found out that shopping is seen as a social activity performed with friends and family and that this aspect is lost when buying clothes online. One of our respondents believes that it is important for a company to have an online store even if their main business ideas are physical stores. Having a store online is a great opportunity for customers to get acquainted with the collection and get to know the company more. This in line with the research made by Frambach et al (2007) where he states that extending the business online can strengthen the offline business.

Our responders are a homogenous group and use the Internet daily, so for a company to be attractive for that group we believe that it is important to be active on the Internet and give customers the opportunity to choose between several purchasing channels. An interesting aspect when it comes to channel preference is that the factors that affect the purchasing process such as friends and family do not affect the channel decision to the same extent. Most our respondents said that they had friends and family that bought a lot on the Internet but that it did not affect them in the same direction. They are consistent with the fact that they prefer physical stores and stick to those most of the time. Blogs, which were an affecting factor for creating a shopping desire, can provide inspiration to visit certain e-shops but this visit does not necessarily lead to a purchase. This shows that when reading blogs it is easy to click your way forward to another website since you already have access to Internet. We discuss this a bit further in recommendations, that it is crucial for a company to develop marketing activities that capture the potential customers that visit an e-shop.

Through the disadvantages with shopping online that our respondents reported it is obvious that the overall attitude towards e-shopping is quite negative. The biggest concerns that our respondents have with shopping apparel online is the high shipping and return cost and that these activities can in some cases be quite a hassle. Different varieties of advantages were mentioned as well and through this we draw the conclusion that convenience is an important factor when it comes to pursuing shopping online. We believe that companies need to work with attitude changing activities in order to attract more people to shop on the Internet. When creating these kinds of activities their main focus need to convenience for the customer and a high level of service. This corresponds with Semeijns (2005)

recommendations for e-tailers to provide superior online services, in order to create e-loyalty.

5.2 Research questions 2 – What characterizes the purchase process for young females?

We discovered that most of the purchases were described as unplanned. Among our respondents online shopping is mostly characterized by a need that gradually emerges when browsing the web. This implies that the purchases are rarely planned in advance, with the exception of big expenses.

The majority of our respondents had a quite similar proceeding when shopping online: starting with surfing the favourite e-tailors, scanning the collections initially for news. Some respondents also compared different sites with focus on variety of pricing, mostly concerning well-known brands. Only a few of our respondents had a specific goal when browsing the e-shops.

Owing to our research and result from interviews one feature has been elucidated; for young females shopping apparel online is still a complement to the physical store. E-shops are for most of our respondents a second-hand choice, when the physical store is inaccessible or due to lack of time, bored at night time, favourable offerings, discount codes etc. The question that has to be asked is how could e-tailers change this type of behaviour and make the e-shop equal to the general stores? One part of the solution is to create an e-shop that is appealing to customer's values and preferences.

The most mentioned drawback for e-shops were uncertainty over the appearance and fit of the product, by reason of this the majority avoided online purchases. This is due to the inconvenience of sending the garment back which the majority believed was costly and circumstantial. To start with the primary approach towards e-commerce it needs to be transformed. By talking to our respondents we found that this could easily be changed through a good experience where their expectations are fulfilled and more thereto. Subsequently this would create a sense of e-loyalty since they feel comfortable and familiar with this specific e-tailer.

5.3 Conclusion

As our empirical findings state; the majority of our respondents are affected by a combination of blogs, advertisements and friends. However, some are only following their own personal preferences and emphasize that they are not affected by any of the above-mentioned factors or any other external factors. The majority of our empirical findings imply that a normative social influence exists among our respondents. Homer and Kahle (1983) present how cognitions are transformed to values and how these values play an important role in the creation of attitudes and later on are a determinant for which situations to enter and how to act.

Our empirical findings provides us with evidence that young females who are influenced by blogs, advertisements or/and friends have a higher tendency to purchase their apparel online. For those who claim that they are not affected by the mentioned factors are buying online less frequently compared to the earlier mentioned group.

Through our empirical research we realised that for young females personal identity is of great importance and that clothes constitute an essential instrument when creating your identity. For many of our respondents' clothes enables them to express their personality and is associated with positive feelings such as happiness and a sense of self-fulfilment. In Roekach in Jayawardhena (2004) personal identity is defined as a system of values and personal values create preference for different products and product attributes and works as guidance in life (Vinson et al, 1977). Therefore the choices that young females make in the purchasing process is highly coloured by their basic values. Through our interviews we noted that many of our respondents prefer purchasing their clothes in physical stores because they associate purchasing online with great risks, mostly concerning incorrect size or unrealistic product images. This is in line with their basic values and affects their attitudes and behaviour towards e-commerce.

When asking our respondents to provide us with some pros and cons with e-commerce the overall answer regarding pros was that shopping online is convenient and time-efficient, although these pros did not make up for the negative aspects regarding e-commerce. The most apparent factor is the missing personal interaction and the amusing feeling of going shopping since this is a social activity for many young females. The drawbacks of e-commerce are to our respondents predominant and the advantages do not compensate for the perceived risks.

We did not observe any indications that the attitudes regarding e-commerce change during the three stages of the purchasing process; pre-, purchase- and post stage. A negative attitude will remain until our respondents have a positive experience of purchasing apparel online. During our interviews we noted that after a pleasant and smooth experience with a specific e-tailer the tendency to continue purchasing online from that same e-tailer increased. This shows that attitudes can change due to experience and that behaviour will change in accordance with attitude. In gaining a positive feeling with purchasing online the characteristic factors were short delivery time, acceptable shipping- and return costs. High level of security, nice and professional layout as well as a good reputation were also relevant features for our respondents to continue being a loyal customer towards an e-tailer.

A study made by Homer and Kahle (1988) and Shim and Eastlick (1998) stressed that e-tailers have the ability to influence consumer behaviour by strategies that please the personal values of targeted

consumers. To succeed in e-commerce an e-tailer needs to choose a specific target group and appeal to that group's common values.

The first step is to identify the abstract values of the customers which is the foundation of attitudes that later on transform into behaviour that control our decisions and actions (Homer & Kahle, 1983). An obvious mode of behaviour among our respondents is that the majority of their purchases are made by impulse; either in a physical store or browsing the web without any evident intention to buy.

Our empirical research implies that values through attitudes affect behaviour to a great extent; this applies to both those who prefer e-tailers and those who prefer the offline channel.

Previous research has mostly concentrated on what types of product we are most frequently shopping online and how often. Several examinations have been carefully revising a specific e-shop, for example nelly.se and amazon.com.

The purpose of our study was to find the underlying causes of why young females are shopping online; thoughts, beliefs and values that are determining the final purchasing decision and what is affecting them along the way. Therefore we have chosen the Value-Attitude-Behaviour model as a framework for our findings and want to see whether it could be applied to the behaviour of online shopping (Jayawardhena, 2004).

Briefly the model proceeds from our personality which is defined as a system of values. This implies that our values have emerged from cognition, and are constantly directing people in which situations to enter and how to act in different situations. The theory starts with values, transformed into attitudes, ending up in explicit behaviour. To successfully attract a certain group of customers the e-tailor would preferably create an e-shop that is appealing to their personal values.

After having completed the study we found strong indicators that there is a connection with the Value-Attitude-Behaviour model and the specific conduct of how young females are shopping apparel online. Since the behaviour generally can be tracked back to their primary values. A crucial factor has appeared to be their basic interest in clothes, as part of their personality and consequently their personal values. A great interest in clothes in general causes more time spent on projecting their personality through their clothing resulting in an openness to several distribution channel, among them e-commerce. Surely we encountered some exceptions from the theory, however generally speaking, we believe this theory is applicable to apparel online shopping and could be used prosperously to enhance the e-shops of today.

5.4 Recommendations

Through the study we have discovered a lot of interesting facts concerning young female consumers shopping patterns online as well as the main influencing factors contributing to their consumption. This knowledge could definitely be used to enhance the existing e-shops and the creation of future ones to conform to the customer's needs and beliefs. The purpose of the recommendations is to be used as a supplement to further improve and rationalize the online apparel industry.

As mentioned by some of our respondents, being available online is nowadays extremely important, close to mandatory for reputation and success. Consequently, an e-shop implies that the company is modern and a part of the progressing evolution, thus states a serious and professional position.

Among our respondents the most apparent weakness for the general e-shop is still the uncertainty of fit, form and material of the garment. To elude this issue you could reduce the perceived reservation, for example by introducing videos where the garment is worn. This would hopefully give a genuine image of what the garment looks like and make the customer less hesitant. The company could besides this add a guarantee of free pre-paid return cost in case the garment would differ from the product description. Since the e-shop lacks the personal contact with a salesperson a live chat would be beneficial, where the customer would be able to ask any possible question immediately.

It is as in any other business essential to find a specific target group and put the focus solely on this cluster. Subsequently, it is necessary to study their preferences and requests and thereby design the e-shop according to the produced results. Henceforward, it is more efficient to create a niche for the e-shop and attract a smaller amount of congenial people than attempt to please the majority. In the strategies of promotion it has proven to be prosperous to select a spokesperson for the company, in this case maybe an actor, model or blogger, who attracts the same homogenous group. This coincides with the theory of information social influence; to receive a reference from an expert on his/her experience or opinion in order to verify the choice of the product. According to this theory it is recommended to hire a perceived expert for product affirmation. Thus, our interviews showed that blogs had an impact in the early stages of the purchasing process, therefore it could be valuable to use a blogger as a promoter of the e-shop. Through our personal experience we have observed that bloggers today are used to promote or review a certain product. Our recommendation is that the companies in the future take it one step further and hire a specific blogger to be a spokesperson for the company. The blogger would then act as a shopping window towards a specific target group and attract new customers.

We are aware that the previous mentioned recommendations could be costly for e-tailers, therefore there is a need to thoroughly consider the cost and revenues these services could generate.

5.5 Suggestions for future research

Conclusions from our thesis are valid for our selection of respondents, which represents young females in an urban city. This implies that the results could differ enormously in another area. For example in a rural area, where the distances are larger to the closest store. A study made by Kreditor (2011) stresses that the growth of e-commerce is most apparent in the northern parts of Sweden. For further studies we suggest that investigating and describing apparel consumption online in rural areas would be very intriguing.

Previous research and statistical reports have had a focus on what is purchased on the Internet rather than how. That is why we believe that our study is a contribution to current research in the subject of e-shopping. To widen the research in this area we suggest further researching about how young males in the ages between 20–30 years shop clothes on the Internet and conduct the research according to the Value-Attitude-Behaviour model in order to make a comparison between young males and young females.

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List over respondents

- Anna Däldborg, 24, Dentist student. *2011-03-07.*
- Christine Holm, 24, Marketing and Purchasing student. *2011-03-14.*
- Charlotta Isacsson, 24, Psychology student. *2011-03-18.*
- Charlotte Lundell, 23, Sports Management student. *2011-03-15.*
- Daniella Frischer, 24, Textile-economy student. *2011-03-21.*
- Hanna Nordell, 25, International Business student. *2011-03-24.*
- Lisa Andersson, 23, Management student. *2011-03-25.*
- Madelene Björck, 24, Marketing student. *2011-03-23.*
- Nina Sellman, 23, Dietian student. *2011-03-11.*
- Pernilla Karlsson, 23, Finance student. *2011-03-22.*
- Philippa Katzoreck, 21, Public Relations student. *2011-03-16.*
- Jessica Gullme, 27, Fashion Management student. *2011-03-24.*

Appendix

1. Interview questions

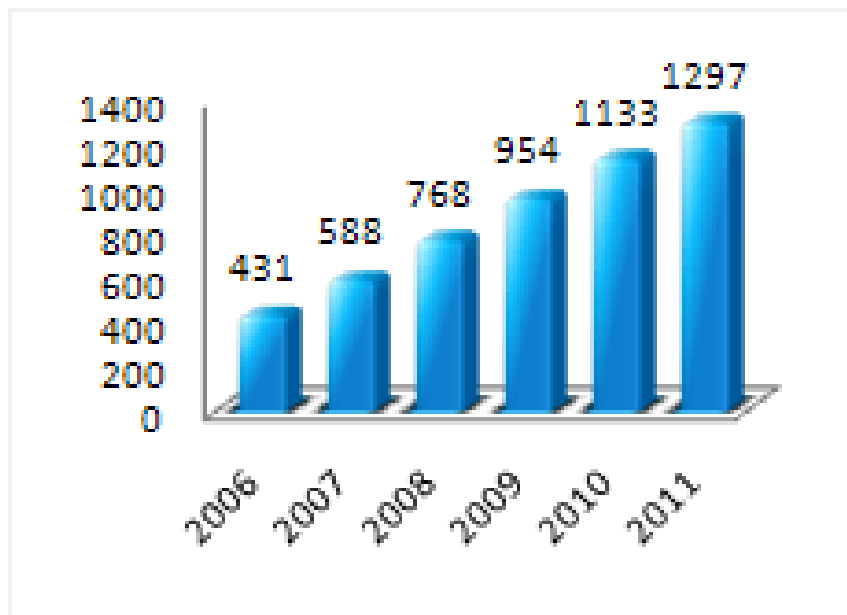
1. What do clothes mean to you? / What relationship do you have with clothes?
2. What makes you buy clothes? Do you believe that you are affected by today's consumer society?
3. Are you aware of why you buy clothes?
4. Do you associate shopping with a specific feeling?
5. What affects you to shop?
6. Do you create your identity through clothes-consumption? If yes, how?
7. Where do you prefer to buy your clothes; online or in a physical store?
8. What makes you choose this specific channel and not the other one?
9. What advantages and disadvantages do you find with shopping online?
10. Do you believe that knowledge and experience of Internet usage is important when shopping online?
11. Do you believe that any of the following factors has affected you in your preferred channel choice; how you have been raised/upbringing, your background, your education, your circle of friends?
12. Is the layout and formation of a certain e-shop of any importance?
13. What determines your buying decision; a need, a feeling, a creation of identity or another factor?
14. What characterizes the majority of your purchases?
15. When you have an option to choose from both channels (online and physical store) from a certain retailer, what determines that choice? (Examples such as Gina Tricot, H&M, Lindex)
16. Are you more inclined towards purchasing online from an e-tailer if you receive promotions or discounts?
17. How often do you shop online?
18. Do you have a favourite retailer that you always shop from or do you choose from many different retailers and compare them? What criteria do you choose from? Does your shopping behaviour differ when purchasing online or offline?
19. Please exemplify how you perform a purchase online.

20. If you shop online, is there a specific time or situation that you use the online channel for purchasing apparel?
21. What payment options do you feel most comfortable with?
22. Have you ever bought from foreign e-shops?
23. Does a company's ethical standpoint or any scandals affect you when purchasing from that e-tailer?



Statistics

2. Statistics source: E-mind.com



3. Statistic source: Statistiska Centralbyrån

Tabell 4
Andel personer i åldern 16–74 år som under första kvartalet 2010 använt Internet efter sysselsättning och hur ofta man använt Internet, procent

Frekvens	Kön	Studerande	Anställda	Egen företagare	Arbetslösa	Pensionärer och andra ¹
Män	Regelbundet	96	94	90	92	67
	Sällan	1	3	6	8	11
	Aldrig	3	3	4	0	22
Kvinnor	Regelbundet	99	95	98	91	57
	Sällan	1	3	1	8	12
	Aldrig	0	1	1	1	30
Totalt	Regelbundet	98	95	92	92	62
	Sällan	1	3	5	8	12
	Aldrig	1	2	4	1	26

* En regelbunden användare är här en sammanslagning av två kategorier av svarande: de som använt Internet "i stort sett varje dag de senaste 3 månaderna" och "minst en gång per vecka (men inte varje dag) de senaste 3 månaderna".

Sällan-användarna utgör en sammanslagning av tre kategorier av svarande: de som använt Internet "minst en gång per månad (men inte varje vecka) de senaste 3 månaderna", "mindre än en gång per månad de senaste 3 månaderna" samt "inte de senaste 3 månaderna men tidigare"

1) I gruppen pensionärer och andra ingår förutom pensionärer även hemarbetande, värnpliktiga, lediga och sjuka mindre än ett år framåt.

Diagram 9
Andel personer i åldern 16–74 år som under första kvartalet 2010 köpt/beställt varor/tjänster under perioden april 2009-mars 2010 efter ålder och kön, procent

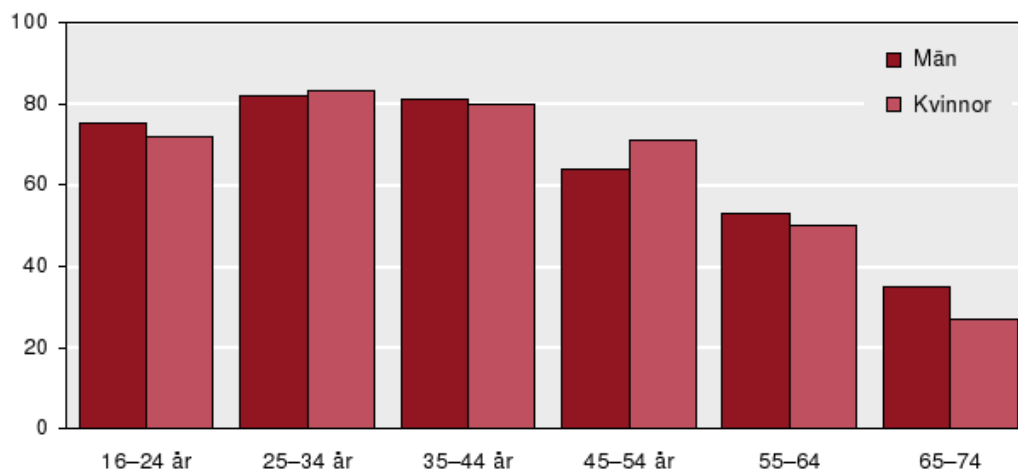
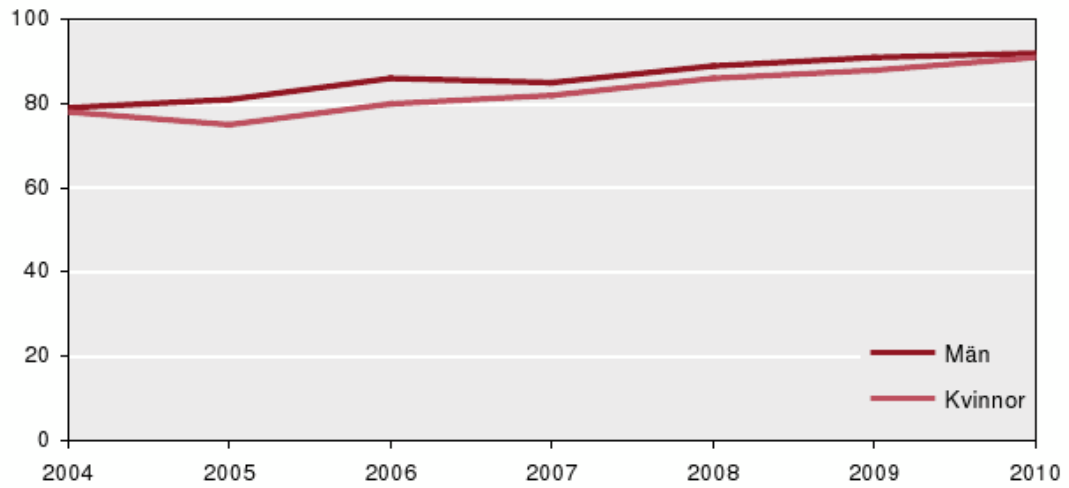
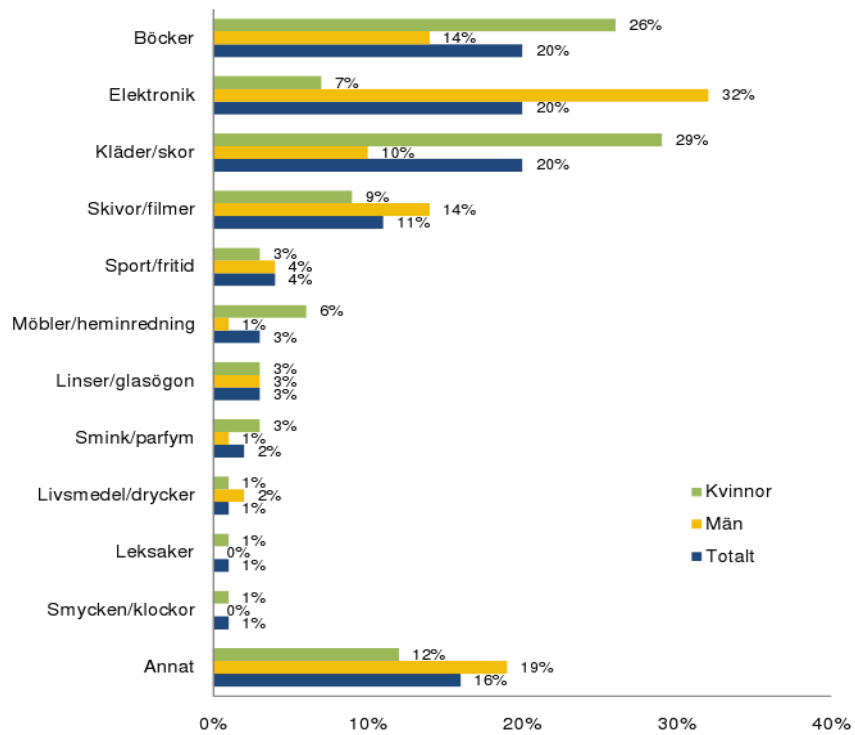


Diagram 1
Andel personer i åldern 16–74 år med tillgång till Internet i hemmet
2004–2010, efter kön, procent



4. Statistics source: Svensk Handel

Diagram 3.2.1 Vilken typ av vara handlade du senast på nätet?



Ser vi till skillnader mellan olika åldersgrupper framkommer det att äldre i större utsträckning än yngre handlar böcker och att de yngre grupperna istället konsumerar kläder och elektronik via nätet.