



Consumers' Online Shopping Motivation

Consumers in the Tampere Area Shopping for Apparel
Online

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ABSTRACT

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Marketing in the digital world and being recognizable in the eyes of the consumers is important. By making sure the company's website is up to date and all the functionalities are easy for the consumers to use, assures better customer satisfaction. There are numerous ways which the companies could improve their website design and therefore gain more interest from the consumers. An easy to use and navigate website is proven to be one of the most motivating aspects for consumers when online shopping for items.

This thesis functions as a general guide to companies willing to improve their online presence and gain more loyal customers by offering a well-balanced online shopping experience. The objective of this thesis was to find and name aspects which the consumers find the most important for their online shopping experience. This was done by conducting interviews with a group of interviewees collected from the University of Tampere and Tampere University of Applied Sciences. The background data for the thesis was collected from scientific literature on motivation, digital marketing and website design and functionalities.

Based on the conducted research, the research data was then used to create recommendations for companies in the apparel sector willing to improve their website design and customer satisfaction. These recommendations function as improvement ideas to focus on to gain more loyal customers and better customer satisfaction. This can be done by creating a more user-friendly website and increasing the number of options for the consumer to choose from while placing an order online based on their preferences.

Key words: marketing, digital marketing, motivation, online shopping, online shopping motivation, website design, decision making process

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1 INTRODUCTION

In the modern times, having a strong online presence and customer satisfaction are important. These can be affected greatly by the experience the consumers have with a specific company. Conducting constant research on the area of customer experience is important. This includes ways to motivate the consumer into making a purchase or to recommend the brand forwards. This thesis will introduce the reader to the phenomena called online shopping motivation. Among this the thesis will explain the various concepts which affect a person's motivation to purchase apparel online. The thesis will also shed a light on which aspects the consumers of the research have deemed the most important aspects for them to purchase items online. The study conducted for the thesis will narrow the online shopping experience to apparel and their key features for the consumers taking part to the research.

Various organizations have turned their eyes on the online presence and e-commerce sector in their business strategies. Online shopping has increased over the current years and has especially grown during the global Covid-19 pandemic. Consumers are driven more towards the online setting due its convenience and vast selection of items. The will to shop online is also due to overall lower prices than in the physical stores. This thesis will discuss their importance and relativity to the topic.

This thesis focuses on conducting research on the shopping motivation of a specific group of consumers. In this case students in the University level of studies in the Tampere area. Based on the research data collected through interviewing the students, the thesis will then offer suggestions and recommendations on how the companies operating in the fashion and apparel industry can improve their means to motivate the consumers to favour their websites or business more.

1.1 Thesis topic

The topic of this thesis is “Consumers’ online shopping motivation”. The research is focused on why consumers choose to purchase items online, and what are the key aspects which make the consumer decide to purchase from a specific website or brand. The focus of the thesis is the motivation and interest in online shopping and the most important aspects in making the purchasing decision. The thesis will also discuss the design of websites, their functionality, and their importance to the consumers in terms of their source for online shopping motivation.

The topic was chosen due to its importance to the modern era since marketing and especially digital marketing is one of the quickest ways to increase sales for various sectors in business. According to Celik Hakan (Influence of social norms, perceived playfulness and online shopping anxiety on customers' adoption of online retail shopping., 2011) Electronic retailing has experienced a large growth during the recent years, due to its distinct advantages for both consumers and retailers. These advantages include for example, shopping at round-the-clock convenience, decreasing dependence of brick-and-mortar stores, travel cost savings, wider market area, lowering overhead expenses, supporting customer relations, and offering a wide range of items and services. (Celik, 2011) In addition to this, motivation is an important aspect to take into consideration when marketing to the consumers, no matter if the marketing is happening in the digital world or outside of it.

Motivation to make a purchase is one of the most important aspect when planning a marketing strategy for a certain item of service. It must be taken into careful consideration, since if the consumers are not motivated to by the items, there is no purpose in marketing them altogether. Therein lies the challenge of creating a need for the consumer to buy. This can be aided by offering various incentives to the consumers. Therefore, motivating the consumer to make a purchase or compare the brand as an option to buy from.

Having a good digital marketing plan and execution is important, especially in the field that is rapidly growing more internet and distance based due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Maintaining the position in the minds of the consumers and never

been more important and attracting new customers can be difficult. Keeping customers motivated and offering new products and services to grab the attention of the consumer is the key. (Kananen, 2018) However, because motivation is highly subjective to each individual, the research will focus on each individual's motivation and motives to shop online. As stated, motivation is highly subjective to each individual and therefore it is important to study. This also expands itself to which areas for example in marketing or website design motivate the consumers to make the purchase decision in general, and which areas should be paid more attention to by the marketers.

1.2 Thesis objective, purpose and research questions

The objective of the thesis is to research the motivation for online shopping for consumers who are making an impact in the e-commerce sector in the Tampere area, especially with shopping for apparel. The research will be conducted through various semi-structured interviews, both individual face-to-face interviews and e-mail interviews.

The objective of the research is to reveal the importance of online shopping as an alternative method for consumers and most importantly what are the motivators or the motivation to purchase online. In addition to these the research is meant to enlighten the most important aspects of the purchase making decision process, which could then be used to improve the online strategies for companies to make the online setting even more inviting and motivating for the consumers to shop in.

The main objective of the research can also be formulated in the form of a research question, which also functions as the base of the research:

“What motivates University students in the Tampere area to shop for apparel online?”.

The sub-questions of the thesis which help to frame the research more are:

“What are the most important motivational aspects in shopping for apparel online for the university students?”

“What are the most important features on websites to aid the shopping motivation for the university students?”

This thesis focuses on the motivational factors of the consumers when online shopping. Therefore, the research question and sub-questions will be used to determine what are the main aspects which motivate the consumers to buy online, and which are the most important factors for companies or brands to pay more attention to in order to attract more customers. The purpose is to determine which are key aspects in an online environment needed to motivate the consumer to buy from a specific company or brand either directly from the company’s website or from a website having various products in one place. In addition to this, the purpose is to offer research on the motivation of the consumers to be used by companies or brands to develop their digital marketing plan and offerings online to be more inviting and interesting for the consumers.

1.3 Working methods and data

The main working method for this thesis will be conducting semi-structured interviews with consumers and analysing the data collected from these interviews. The main focus point is to identify the similarities in the interviewees’ replies and ensuring they support the research questions. The author will also utilize other existing data from studies made on the topic to support cause. The interviews are to determine which factors the consumers find the most important when shopping online, what motivates the consumers to make the purchase decision and what the consumers think is the best way to approach them as individual consumers.

The qualitative interview method for this thesis is extremely suitable since it is used in for example, the fields of business and communications. This thesis topic is under the umbrella term business and digital marketing to be exact. Interviewing is also the most used qualitative method. (Saldana, 2011) Also, by using interviewing as a research method is allows the researcher to gather information

which is more emotional, opinionated and value based. (Saldana, 2011) The benefit of using interview as a research method is that it is more personal to the consumer and therefore more the responses are more open to interpretations. The consumer can also express more of their personal experience on the topic such as their experiences on a specific brand, through interviews. Also, the interview can provide more content, if for example the interviewee has strong experience on a related topic, therefore providing more content for the response. (Saldana, 2011)

1.4 Thesis process

The first chapter of the thesis will be an introductory chapter to the thesis. It will introduce the thesis topic to the reader as well as offer a brief overview on the thesis and its process. This part will also include the research methods used in the research. In this part the reader will also be introduced to the research questions as well as the purpose and objective of the research.

The second chapter of the thesis will introduce the theoretical framework of the thesis and the most crucial research points. These include online shopping motivators and websites as motivators for shopping online, among others. The second chapter functions as the background information for the research.

In the third chapter of the thesis the qualitative method for conducting the research will be introduced and the specifics of the research will be discussed. Among this chapter the timetable, advantages and limitations will be discussed. After this the fourth chapter will discuss the research data and its analysis in depth. Here the questions used in the interviews will be analysed and showcased.

The last, fifth chapter of the thesis will include the recommendations to the companies operating in the apparel field gathered and created from the data collected in the research. The final part of this thesis will be the discussion, which will summarize the thesis and explain how the research succeeded and its details.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter the key concepts relating to the thesis topic, and what it is based on are explained. The topic of the thesis is related to the field of marketing but mainly to motivation. However, it is important to explain what these terms the topic is based on mean for the reader to gain better understanding of what the thesis is discussing.

2.1 Marketing

The topic of this thesis is focused on the field of marketing, more closely one of its sub-branches. However, in order to understand the topic of the thesis, one must know the basis by which the topic is supported by first. According to Blythe (Essentials of marketing, 2008) marketing is essentially a term where activities occur in an interface between the organization or brand and its customers. The purpose of this concept is to assure mutual benefit for both the buyer and the seller in a transaction or exchange. In its core marketing uses the customers and their needs as a focus point for all decisions. (Blythe, Essentials of marketing, 2008)

Marketing is one of the most unpredictable areas to operate in since it forces one to think like someone else. In terms of companies for example selling apparel, like their customers and what their needs might be. In this thesis this is aimed to be found out via the use of semi-structured interviews of six consumers on their experiences of purchasing apparel online via various websites. Also, this could be linked to motivation of the consumers to shop online, more specifically on how to motivate someone enough to make them buy something specific from the specific brand. Furthermore, acknowledging that motivation is specific and unique to each individual, how to find the perfect balance between motivating the consumer enough to buy something and gain more loyal customers is the question brands find themselves asking. This thesis touches upon how advertising and marketing in their many ways can affect the consumer and their buying motivation.

Marketing can affect the consumer subconsciously by for example, bus stop advertising. This can occur when the consumer is not paying attention when looking out the window of a bus. More noticeable marketing means can also be used, for example mail or other brochures or radio advertisements, where the sound or catchy commercial tunes can be remembered by consumer. This all affects the consumer and causes them to collect more information on the advertised items after hearing or seeing the advertisements or commercials. This can also function as the source of the want or need of the consumer, which they can then fill in by making a purchase online.

Marketing is also important since it develops fast and changes its focus depending on the consumers' needs. "Selling and telling" has been the focus point of marketing for some time, however it has shifted more towards being more about the deep understanding of the needs of the customer. Also, as Kotler, Armstrong and Parment quote the management guru Peter Drucker "The aim of marketing is to make selling unnecessary". This also implies that the better the marketing strategy the better the results will be, since great advertising and marketing creates an automatic demand for the products on offer. (Kotler, Armstrong, & Parment, Principles of marketing, 2016) This also links itself to motivating the consumer to make a purchase, to want something specific, for example seasonal apparel. Advertising is one of the best ways to spread information on the products and gain interest of the consumers. The rest is up to the consumer and whether they are motivated enough to find more information on the items on sale or otherwise on the company or brand in general. This can also lead to word-to-mouth conversations with other consumers about the items and the brand in question. This also leads the consumer to compare the various options they might have in mind with each other to find the suitable item for them specifically.

It could also be said that marketing is a social and managerial process where individuals and organizations obtain what they need and want through creating and exchanging value with each other. (Kotler, Armstrong, & Parment, Principles of marketing, 2016) This also means that marketing is a process of creating and building strong relationships with the customers in order to provide and exchange value. (Kotler, Armstrong, & Parment, Principles of marketing, 2016) Building

strong relationships is also one of the ways to make selling unnecessary since if the trust of the customer is achieved, selling happens almost automatically based on the desire of the consumer, not necessarily an actual need. Consumers can buy items without an actual need, motivating and making someone believe they need something is also a term which often used in marketing. Marketing might not necessarily be about what one says, but about how one says it, which makes the difference and functions as the main source of motivation. This can for example be seen in the advertisements consumer may encounter while watching television and being influenced by it.

2.2 Digital marketing

Digital marketing has many various branches of directions where it could be taken to, however this thesis focuses on the online shopping aspect, which is the product of successful digital marketing through various means and possibilities, such as email marketing, social media platforms and website marketing. Therefore, it is important to understand the basis of this concept. As of modern times, many companies and consumers have made the use of the internet a part of their daily operations, therefore being influenced by digital marketing every day. (Kananen, 2018) This will ultimately tie into motivating the consumers to purchase products online using the means available.

Digital marketing holds many aspects within, for example the Internet and its usage, mobile devices, social media, search engines and other possible channels to reach the targeted consumers (Barone, 2021). It can also be said that digital marketing is targeting a specific segment of consumers by utilizing search result ads, email ads, twitter, customer feedback or anything relating to a two-way interaction between the consumers and the companies. (Barone, 2021) Any of these means can create an interest or a need for the consumers to know more about the brand or company and their products.

In the modern era it is important to be able to compete with other brands or organizations, therefore having a strong digital marketing execution plan is im-

portant. By using digital marketing, companies can for example measure the success of their marketing campaigns even better and adapt them to be better suited for different group of consumers. (Hubspot: The Who, What, Why, & How of Digital Marketing) This ultimately aids the company to make their content more relative to the consumers and their needs. Where there is a need, there is a want. Companies can utilize the data collected from the consumers to better offer a motive to make a purchase, for example by advertising the sustainable standpoint of the company and their sustainable offerings. As stated by Posti (Suuri Verkkokauppatutkimus, 2021) the number of consumers preferring companies that are more sustainable with their offerings, packaging or shipping is increasing rapidly. Sustainability is a good route to take, since it is better for the environment, but also “trendy”.

Digital marketing ties into the topic of the research when assessing where the consumers find their information on the products and which platforms the products are successfully featured in. An example of a digital marketing strategy is to incorporate various advertisements and pop-ups to social media platforms for the consumers to see. Email marketing is also tied into digital marketing which can be successful in luring the consumers onto the company’s or retailer’s website.

2.3 Online shopping

Online shopping is the product of a successful marketing, especially digital marketing. The term online shopping means the activity where a consumer is buying an item or service via the Internet. Online shopping can also be used to find information on products online without paying for or buying anything. This can also be called “window shopping.” By the times online shopping has grown so much, that in the modern time, almost everything can be purchased online without the need or help from a professional or a salesperson. It is by far the most convenient way of gaining information on products and buying the wanted items without having to leave the comfort of one’s own home. This way of shopping can be utilized in for example, apparel, food, cosmetics or even electronics. In fact, the clothing industry has gained large growth with the use of digital channels. Companies such as Zalando have gained a large growth in their revenue with the addition of

loyal customer due to the easy nature of online shopping. In fact, motivating consumers to shop online is not difficult, due to the fact, one can shop from the comfort of their own home without ever having to enter a brick-and-mortar store.

Also, according to a study conducted by Posti in 2021, over 60% of Finns purchase items online each month. (Posti, 2021) Posti also implies that the popularity of domestic websites and products is in the rise, especially due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the uncertainty of how long it will still last. Also, increased number of online orders ensures the use of various delivery methods, including the increasingly popular home delivery, which only helps online shopping to make its case of being the most useful tool to order products without leaving one's home. (Posti, 2021)

2.4 Motivation

Motivation is the corner stone of everything one does, it is the force that maintains the passion for performing various tasks in the day-to-day basis. It is the process which initiates, guides, and also maintains consumers' goal-oriented behaviour. (Cherry, 2022) It can affect humans in everything one does, ranging from average everyday tasks such as drinking water to gaining knowledge through studying something or working. Motivation can also be defined as being the term for individuals or groups to choosing a particular behavioural pattern and persisting with it until the goal set in their minds is accomplished. (McInerney, 2019)

As stated by (Cherry, 2022) motivation includes biological, emotional, social and also cognitive factors, which can maintain and control one's behaviour. Motivation is used to answer the question "why" a person does what they do. However, motivation can be divided into two areas which oneself can affect, making the motivation to doing something sometimes extremely subjective. These divisions are Extrinsic, or outer motivation and intrinsic, or inner motivation. Extrinsic or outer motivation sources can include for example, trophies, praise, money or other possible prizes. Whereas intrinsic or inner motivation sources can include for example personal gratification of solving a problem or achieving the target goal. (Cherry, 2022)

2.5 Online shopping motivation

As motivation can be determined to be depended on a specific person and their specific wants and needs, this research aims to research the various motivators for online shopping. This section is to explain the chosen common motivators and why they are important for the overall online shopping motivation.

2.5.1 Price

When browsing the internet, the consumer comes across various alternatives for their specific apparel needs, for example shirts, jeans and other apparel. These can be taken to be evaluated and compared with one another to find the most suitable option for the consumer. The quality and the sense of value to the consumers can also be transmitted through the price of the item. This is where the price is important. The price should match the key competitors of the brand but also be competitive in terms of other factors, such as the choice of vendor and delivery method the consumer prefers to use. However often the consumer chooses the more affordable offerings to compare and to find more information about. (Crooijmans, 2021) This has to do with the motivation of the consumer, the want to pay as less as possible.

Saving money can be one of the most important principles of the consumer and therefore the motive behind the purchase decision-making process. This is also affected by the possible budget of the consumer. The internet has many popular websites to shop for apparel in, such as the Europe's leading online fashion platform for women, men and children. (Zalando, 2017) Zalando offers its customers a one-stop convenient shopping experience with having an extensive selection of items. (Zalando, 2017) Among being the leading online platform for fashion, it is also affordable and accessible to various groups of consumers making it one of the most popular platforms to online shop on.

As discussed, price of the item is important to the consumers since most consumers have a certain budget for online shopping and do not wish to exceed it. Also, according to Mayuri K. (Importance of pricing) the price is very flexible and

can be changed according to the needs of the situation. The wrong price decision could possibly mean the downfall of the company. (Mayuri) The internet is filled with websites which offer various brands of apparel on a lower price than many brick-and-mortar stores. This most often is achieved by not having to pay for many physical stores to store the goods in and having them shipped around to other locations. Instead of having physical stores to pay rent for, the brands can have a warehouse to store the items in, saving space and money.

The motivation for making a purchase online can also be due to incentives placed by the company or brand to attract new customers. These incentives can for example include sales or other discounts on the items such as referral or regular customer discounts or the “buy 3 pay for 2” method, where the consumer is lured into purchasing more products to obtain one for free. Various incentive offers can also be emailed to the consumers if they have allowed email marketing, but they can also be given as a store opening offer. Incentives will encourage the customers to adopt the same values that are integral to the brand. Incentives promote customer retention as more customers will eventually make purchases again. (Huhn, 2022)

2.5.2 Availability

When a consumer is looking for more information on the products online, they might come across products which are only available in the online store. This also could make the product more desirable. Product availability motivates consumers to make regular purchases, when the store has a correct amount of stock and range of items available. (Mulder, 2021) Having items which are exclusive to either online or stores, can be used by companies as a part of their strategy to attracting customers. Making something limited edition creates the illusion of the product being rarer, adding to the desirability of the item.

Availability is important for the consumers, furthermore it is expected from any product, how could one purchase something that is not available anywhere. When a potential customer enters a store, they most often expect full shelves with a good variety of items for purchase. By assuring the shelves are full of items

consistently, not only does it make the customer happier, but it can also help create a long-term customer loyalty as well. (Mulder, 2021)

Having a limited stock of products available in the brick-and-mortar stores is normal, but sometimes the correct size or colour is not available at the specific location the consumer would have wished to purchase the product from. This is where the online store comes in useful. Most of the time online stores have a larger stock of products in more variety or sizes, shapes and colours making it a better alternative for the consumer to find exactly what they are looking for, without the need to visit a store. The consumer could order the product anywhere at any given time, since the online stores are open around the clock. The deliveries might not be available at all times, however the order is still taken in and processed and handed to the delivery company as soon as possible.

Having the access to an online store, where the selection of products and their sizes and colours is much larger than in an average brick-and-mortar store also offers the consumer a better way of shopping anywhere at a given time. For example, certain products might only be available in the online store. This applies itself to the sizes and colours too. "Online exclusive" slogans are used often, to lure the consumers into the online store. This is especially useful to the consumer, if they are not able to leave their home or they are unable to travel to physical store, for example, if the store locates in another city. However, the online stores have also been useful in the current time of Covid-19 pandemic, where the restrictions have made keeping a physical store open difficult. Many consumers have also moved away from shopping in brick-and-mortar stores purely because the online stores have more to offer, without the fear of the certain products not having enough stock. In an online store this is easy to find out and also seeing where the product is still in stock has been made easy.

2.5.3 Convenience

For the consumers, convenience is often one of the corner stones of using a certain item or service in order to accomplish a certain goal. It can be applied to daily tasks such as cleaning or shopping. Online stores are often available 24

hours a day making online shopping truly convenient for the consumers. (Sunitha & Gnanadhas, 2014) Ordering items online is also convenient for the consumers, since it does not require the consumer to leave their home and the products often have good delivery and return policies, the parcels can even be delivered straight to the front door, making the use of deliveries even more useful.

Online shopping offers great value to the consumer, for example various delivery and return options. If the consumer is not satisfied with the items they have ordered, returning them is made easy and simple. However as many as there are options, there are opinions as well. Not consumers agree on which is the best delivery option, however the good thing is that there is an option to suit everyone. Parcel locker, customer service stand, home delivery and even faster delivery if needed. Various websites can also add in the incentive of ordering more products and offering the shipping or delivery for free. This functions as one of the motivating aspects as well, since the consumer can be persuaded to purchase more items, they want when the shipping or delivery is taken care of.

Other convenient aspects of ordering products online, is the tracking system companies use to track the location of the products. This can be used by the consumer as well. Companies such as Posti or Matkahuolto use this feature, which offers the consumer more insight on how the items will be delivered and where they are located, if for example an error occurs. (Posti) In addition to the various delivery and tracking options, the consumer has access to various payment methods when shopping online as well. The consumers can for example, pay immediately using their credit card or mobile bank, use a second party payment system, such as Klarna or can even pay using an application such as MobilePay. All this makes the checkout process more convenient and enjoyable in general. Also, if needed, the customer service is also available for the consumer if they have any inquiries or are in need of assistance at any point during the purchase process.

2.5.4 Security

In terms of online shopping, one of the most important aspects of it is the payment process at the end. While it is important to feel and prove that the website one is on is legitimate, the payment part can be the most dangerous one. Knowing the basic information of the company or brand gives a piece of mind to the consumers. Basic information can include the headquarters' location by country and address and the contact information of the company or an allocated representative of the company or brand. Without these the website can seem unsafe to shop in, which will not affect the consumer well and most likely makes the consumer leave said website and turn to other alternatives which offer the similar products.

Also as mentioned the payment method is important to keep in mind, since it can affect the consumer's willingness in shopping in the specific website. If the basic information is not offered, the chances are that the payment methods can seem a bit untrustworthy as well. Most websites use either credit card payment or vendors such as PayPal. However, the more options there are, the more secure the consumer feels about making the payment. This guarantees the ease of mind for the consumer and lessens the fear of being a target for a cash grab or other criminal activity involving stealing one's credit information. The more the consumer is sure about the website being safe to shop in, the more they let themselves explore the selection of the website.

People are more open to explore and more curious about new things if they are made feel safe. This also applies itself to online shopping and feeling safe and secure about the websites one visits. Payment methods and information offered are good clues to finding out whether the website is trustworthy or not. One aspect often referred to by the websites one uses is the privacy aspect. Websites can use various tracking cookies, to see where the traffic to their website is coming from, which features they and ultimately if these consumers make a purchase. The various cookies have more uses as well, but these most often are not mentioned to the consumers directly. The consumer can see which tracking cookies the website is using most, most often directly after entering the website. If the consumer does not wish to accept being tracked in a certain way, the cookies

can be denied. This, however, is not always possible, there are some cookies which are mandatory for using the website.

2.5.5 Experience

The overall online shopping experience of the consumer is affected by everything happening during the process of online shopping. For example, comparing the various options, how easy that is and how the website works to how the consumer is satisfied with the goods after the purchase. Most often the reviews of other consumers are taken into consideration when choosing which goods to purchase or compare to find out which one is better for the specific consumer. This experience mostly is heavily affected by the previous experience the consumer has had with the company. (Fernie, 2005)

The online shopping experience is a way to pinpoint where improvement needs to take place. Leaving feedback as a consumer is one way of making a change and affecting the company or brand's operations online. For example, how the marketing campaigns are presented and in which platform they appear on. This also affects the consumer's willingness to learn more about the product advertised. Being exposed to constant marketing can be overwhelming and can lead to not having a negative experience on the specific brand or company. This applies itself to the goods of the company too. If the goods are not as good as promised, that can lead into negative feedback or reviews. That is where quality control should be precise. Also, the pictures taken of the goods should be accurate and the information available on the goods should be up to date and as helpful as possible. If necessary, the consumer should have the option of talking to customer service via a chat server or email.

The goods sold online are most often described in a way, which awakes the interest of the consumer. However, as mentioned the information and pictures or videos need to be accurate and up to date. There can be discrepancies with these however, in those cases the review section can be the best source of up to date information.

2.6 Websites as source of motivation

Websites are one of the most important tools for a company or a brand to have. The purpose of social media and various advertisements for companies, is to guide and attract the consumer from those platforms to the company's website. (Kananen, 2018) Building a website is challenging for most companies since it cannot be designed by an outside company or more comprehensively, the base can be designed; however, the true meaning of the website and the content of the website should be determined by the company based on the needs and desires of their customers. (Kananen, 2018) Therefore, only the company can have access to the data needed to make the website the best representations it can be for the company and what they have to offer. This step is done by the company itself by analysing the consumers' behaviour online and the platforms they engage with the company in. (Kananen, 2018) Also the way the website is presented can be a determining factor in the purchase making decision of the consumer. The more the consumer can utilize the website and its tools to find more information on the items, the more likely the consumer is to be ultimately motivated in making the purchase decision.

The websites should include the basic information of the products and services on offer as well as include pictures or videos, in order for the consumer to understand better what they are being sold. (Kananen, 2018) The aesthetic side of the website is the most important aspect, since if the website is more aesthetic for the consumer, they will most likely spend more time there as well. Also, the functions should be easy to use, and the overall layout of the page should be logical. (Kananen, 2018) The better the website is to use and look at, the more likely the consumer is to recommend it to others who might be interested in what the company has to offer. The website is not only to market the products and services on offer but also to function as the main aspect of marketing what the company is and what their values are. Therefore, it should be used to its fullest potential. (Kananen, 2018) The website can reach its fullest potential by asking for feedback from the consumers as well. This can lead to important improvements and more inviting pages, motivating more consumers to it.

2.7 Characteristics of user-friendly websites

For the consumer to gain interest in an item online, the website environment must be user-friendly. Online shoppers come across many kinds of websites and user interfaces when searching for more information on various items and order those items. This section is to explain the most important characteristics regarding this research.

2.7.1 Usability

When using a website, one of the most important aspects for the consumer is the usability of the website. The website should not only appear attractive, but also deliver a seamless user experience for visitors in order to be successful. (Shahbaz, 2021) Every function the page offers needs to work as intended. For example, if the website offers a searching feature, it needs to be easy to use and accurate with the results of the search. Otherwise, it might be deemed redundant, which ultimately might lead to the consumer to leave the said website. The consumer needs to have the ability to search for products from the website if they do not know where else to find them and also to make the process easier and convenient.

Higher quality and the attention to details is important on websites. Not only does it affect the usability but also the experience of the consumer after using the said website. For example, the navigation on the website needs to function well and the consumer needs to be able to navigate their way on the website without hardships. If the navigation functions as intended, the user experience is mostly likely better as well. Most consumers aspire for fast and responsive websites and well as simple navigation and functionalities, such as search bars or sections and sub-sections for various items.

2.7.2 Mobile compatibility

Most consumers do not necessarily use computers in their daily lives when for example, online shopping or looking for information on something. Many consumers use their mobile devices, phones or tablets instead of their computers. This is where having the website being designed to be used with any device comes in important. If the website is not compatible to be used with a phone it can turn the consumers away. Some companies have gotten around having to make the website compatible with all devices by creating their own application to do the same thing. Though this is not always the solution, the website still needs to be rendered for all platforms in order to be accessible to everyone.

Using various applications has increased drastically over the years, some might even think applications are replacing traditional web usage in total. This is also important why the websites of various brands and companies should be tailored to suit all possible devices, phones, tablets, and other devices. Consumers in general are more gravitated towards the use of applications for several reasons. Firstly, tablets and smartphones enable the use of applications anywhere. (Laudon & Guercio Traver, 2019) Another reason to why consumers prefer the use of applications is due to their convenience and portability.

2.7.3 Scannability and design

For the consumer's experience of the website to be pleasant, the website needs to be easily browsable and scannable. Many consumers do not spend much time in reading every word on the website, but more likely skim through the text of the website. Many users prefer to quickly scan essential sections of a website to see if it is relevant to their needs. (Shahbaz, 2021) For websites to be designed this way, it creates a better and more convenient environment for the consumer to search for information and discover new items. In fact, looking for example for apparel, design wise the websites should include large pictures of the items, in order for the consumer to gain a better understanding on the aesthetic of the items and therefore can determine if the item is suitable for them or not.

According to Talha Shahbaz (11 Characteristics of a User Friendly Website, 2021) The goal of a good web design is to make it simple for the users to locate the information they require quickly and simply. This also applies to the items and their descriptions on the websites. In fact, the websites' sections and categories should be designed carefully and present their content in a way the users of the website can easily discover it. Focus being on the point of view of the user. (Shahbaz, 2021)

In order for the website to be easily scannable for consumers, it needs to have properly placed headings, subheadings, paragraphs, bullet points and lists to break up the content and make it easier for the consumers to scan through and find what they are looking for. (Shahbaz, 2021) The company's website is most often the only visual presentation of the company the consumer has access to; therefore, the website needs to make a good first impression. The first impression can only be given once. Therefore, it is vital that the consumer gains as positive and informative impression of the brand or company as possible. (Lahtinen, Pulkka, Karjaluoto, & Mero, 2022) This way the consumer might also be persuaded to make a purchase from the said website. This example works not only with larger online stores such as Zalando which sell a large variety of items, but also with the smaller and more specific ones for example Voglia which only sells their own items.

2.7.4 Responsiveness and speed

For consumers to use a website and be satisfied with its performance, it should be fast loading. In fact, delayed loading times are one of the most common reasons for consumers to abandon a website. (Shahbaz, 2021) The loading speed of the website can be affected by the number of pictures the website has as well as their size and other alternating factors, such as the internet connection of the consumer. The coding of the website and its functionalities should be designed and tailored to suit all sorts of conditions, for example, a slower internet connection. Some of the factors making websites slower is the use of various plugins and widgets on the website. Assuring the reasonable usage of these fidgets and plugins assures a better loading speed. The speed of the website might also be

affected by the browser used by the consumer. Not all browsers measure at the same speed, therefore it is important to make sure all the possible browsers have similar performances when using a specific website.

2.8 Consumer decision making process

When a consumer recognizes a need for an item and starts looking for a specific item or service they wish to obtain, the consumer decision making process is at hand. This can be described as a pattern, which repeats itself when a consumer searches for an item to purchase. As seen below.



FIGURE 1. Consumer decision making process (Professional Adacademy)

The consumer decision making process begins with interest towards an item or service, which arises from a need or desire of the consumer. From this point on the consumer moves on to collecting for more information of that item or service in question. While in the process of the information search, comparing other similar items or services takes place simultaneously. (Blythe, 2013) This process also takes other consumers' opinions and reviews or word to mouth on the items or service into account and can influence the decision making. Also, advertisements

and other ways of marketing of the items and products, for example influencer marketing, stays in the minds of the consumers which can influence the decision making of the consumer. However, the final and actual purchase decision is for the individual consumer to make based on their specific need. (Blythe, 2013)

Once the purchase decision has been made after careful contemplation, the next phase takes place, which is the post-purchase evaluation. In this phase the consumer contemplates the purchase decision based on the experience they have with the purchased item or items. While the consumer is contemplating their purchase decision, the consumer also makes their evaluation of the fulfilment of their needs and whether the items purchased matched the set criteria, for example, the quality or the price of the goods. (Blythe, 2013)

In this thesis the consumer decision making process is focused on the motivation of the consumer to purchase apparel online and which factors in particular aid the purchase making decision process, which aspects function as the criteria to purchase something and why, given that the consumers have criteria for making purchases and compare various alternatives. The thesis draws its data from interviewing consumers to find out their criteria for making a purchase online and what are the factors influencing their purchase making decision.

The data collected will be analysed in the end of the thesis, found in the analysis chapter of the thesis. In this analysis the author will also link the data to the purchase making decision process of the consumers. The author draws connections to the purchase making decision process in the data-analysis chapter of the thesis. However, the process will be on the background of the research constantly. It will function as the backbone to the research.

3 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

3.1 Research background

The goal of this research was to gather data on the motivation for shopping apparel online as general research which can then be utilized by others based on their needs. The research and its findings function as base data for brands to improve their marketing and online presence as well as finding the suitable way to motivate the targeted consumers to buy more online. The research was conducted through semi-structured interviews consisted of both face-to-face and email interviews due to the pandemic situation and scheduling issues with two of the interviewees. The chosen interview method showcases the vastness and honesty of the participants of the research as well as offered more specific insight to the tactics which brands could use to appear more attractive for consumers.

3.1.1 Advantages of the research

The use of a qualitative research method had several advantages for the research. Interviewing the participants of the research, allowed the said participants to be more open with their replies and be as thorough as they wanted. This also gave the author more data to analyse and work with as the interview included very specific questions and sub-questions accordingly. The chance to participate anonymously to the research also aided the process, since the participants felt more at ease to be honest with their replies and opinions.

Using the interview as the research method, the participants could also take their time replying to the questions and think about their answers. There were no time restrictions with the amount of time the participants needed to reply to the question and if needed they were guided with an alternative perspective on the matter at hand. This included examples and the question being formulated in a simpler way. This allowed the participants to really think about their replies and assured the replies to be as thorough as they could be. Not restricting the response time

caused some of the interviews to take close to an hour, while some were closer to a half of an hour.

3.2 Research specifics

3.2.1 Interviews

The research was conducted through both interviewing the participants face-to-face but also through email interviews due to scheduling issues with two of the participants. This though did not affect the responses of the interviewees, since the participants taking part to the research via email were carefully instructed while sending out the interview questions as attachments in the emails. Therefore, the information given to the participants was identical. The email interviews included the same 31 questions which were asked from the face-to-face interviewees with the addition of sub-questions to clarify the answers if needed. All the four face-to-face interviews were recorded to ensure everything said was saved for the analysis phase of the research. All of the interviews were planned as semi-structured interviews to allow the interviewees to express themselves as much as they liked. All of the interviews were also recorded for future use.

3.2.2 Schedule of the research

The original schedule for the thesis process was meant for the previous year's autumn of 2021. However, this did not happen due to difficulties with the original topic and finding the information needed for the research. Therefore, the actual and final thesis process began the spring of 2022 with a new point of view for the topic and some background information already collected.

Regarding the schedule for the interviews, they were meant to take two weeks. However, due to scheduling issues with two of the participants this was not the case. The scheduling issue was solved by conducting email interviews with two

of the participants. This also meant that the timespan of the interviews was shortened to one week giving more time for the data analysis. Conducting two of the interviews by email also allowed better time management with the face-to-face interviews and allowed the author to start analysing the existing data while still waiting for the other respondents' answers via email.

3.2.3 Interview participants

The participating student interviewees were all voluntarily taking part to the research, therefore there was no specific demographic to the research. All the participants were from the target area of Tampere though and studied in the TUNI - community, either in the University or the University of Applied Sciences side.

Due to the research not having any demographic requirements, no background information was needed from the respondents. This also helped to find the voluntary participants, since no one was counted out due to any restrictions and only the people who wanted to take part did, making the responses more honest and open. This was also helped by the fact that the interviews were conducted completely anonymously. This was important to the interviewees as well, since being totally anonymous helped to gather more honest and straight forward responses without the fear of anyone finding out what they had said.

3.3 Limitations of the research

The research was conducted through interviews with six participants. Therefore, the overall sample size is not overly large. The research was also conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic, causing some issues with setting up the interviews as well. Also, during the interviews, the author and the interviewees noticed that a couple of the interview questions were very similar if not the same. Due to the similarity of the questions, the responses seemed similar with each other and occasionally the interviewee would answer the next question in the previous question without realizing it. This created some repetition in the responses.

It was also to be noted that to some of the questions the interviewees did not have a strong opinion on. Therefore, some of the questions did not have all six responses to them. This was due to the overall predictability of for example, websites and their designs. They are very similar and therefore if the interviewee has used similar websites, the experience has been the same. This leads to assuming that all the websites are similar and made with the same tools causing the interviewee to not expect anything different from other websites any longer.

The features, aspects and design are all well blended with one another in the modern websites, causing the interviewee to not know what they might want more from the websites or to pinpoint the aspects they specifically want to see. This is due to expectancy of all the websites having the same functionalities without many differences and therefore causing the interviewee to not be able to name any features they think are the best ones. Although some ideas which could be implemented still or that are missing in total, were found after careful pondering.

4 RESEARCH DATA AND ANALYSIS

The research for this thesis was conducted through semi-structured interviews, where all the interview questions were open fielded and included sub-questions based on the answers of the interviewees. This was done in order to gather as thorough and precise responses as possible from the volunteer interviewees. Two of the interviews were conducted through e-mail interviews, due to scheduling issues with the interviewees. However, face-to-face interviews were utilized in four of the interviews. The interviews were all recorded to ensure everything said during the discussions was saved and therefore could be used in some way if needed. This recorded data also functions as the source for the recommendations later on in the thesis after the analysis.

The interviews had six themes within to ensure the interviewee was aware which area the interview question was regarding. These themes in the order of appearance in the interviews, are as follows, convenience and availability, consumer experience, price and incentives, advertising and marketing, websites and design and safety and security. The interview altogether included 31 main questions and sub questions if needed based on the interviewees' answers to the main questions. The questions of the interview are analysed in the order of appearance in the interview and can also be found in the appendix of the thesis.

The research began with creating the base for it in the form of a question, "What motivates consumers to shop apparel online?". After the question had been created, the author began investigating concepts relating to it and collecting data from various sources. The analysis of the thesis utilized the means of a thematic analysis, where the author of the thesis first interviewed the respondents and recorded the interviews. After all the interviews had been conducted, the author then continued to listen to the recordings and write down all what was said during the interviews. This written down data was then transferred onto an excel sheet and analysed more closely. The author looked for similar responses and similar opinions by comparing the answers collected from the interviewees against another to create a red string in the responses, what was the main result and the

most agreed factor and what could have been the other factors arising from the interviews.

4.1 Convenience and availability

For this research section the questions are relating to both topics, convenience, and availability since they are similar in theme. The goal for this section was to find out the basic information regarding online shopping habits of the consumers, how often and why do they shop online, are the items online exclusive and find out what their opinions are on delivery options. Convenience and availability are discussed in the thesis in the theoretical framework more.

Why do you shop apparel online?

Four of the interviewees can agree that the reasoning to choosing to shop online is because it is convenient to them since it is not tied to time or place, it can be done anywhere and at the most opportune time for the respondents. Other reasonings included the shopping experience being fast and effortless. Five of the interviewees also agreed that the selection is much larger than elsewhere, and it becomes easier to find a suitable item or brand they have not heard about yet. To three this also functioned as the aspect which would make them shop for longer, since there are constantly new items, brands and stores to look into depending on the need at the time.

How often do you shop apparel online?

The participants of the research are not carelessly spending money on clothing, four participants state that they shop approximately three or four times a year for clothing. However, seasonal shopping was mentioned by five of the participants making it the most popular type of shopping. This however ties with “window shopping” where the consumers attempt to find items on sale or for rewarding themselves on achieving something. Mainly online shopping for clothing takes

place when there is a distinctive need for it, not necessarily purely wanting for something new.

Do you shop exclusively online or in a store, or both?

The question is to determine whether the consumers prefer online shopping entirely or do they use both routes when shopping for apparel. In addition to these, the question aims to measure if the items the consumer is interested in are only available in one specific platform or store, which could also function as a motivator to shop online or use both routes accordingly. In terms of the replies received from the interviewees, both methods are being used in all but one of the cases. One interviewee shops exclusively online, due to it being more efficient for time management and more convenient in general. All six respondents however mentioned the need for the item being the most important aspect in this area. Exclusivity of the item has an effect on the consumer journey's part when consumers compare options to see which one of them appeals them the most. This can also mean that the item only available in a store, wins or vice versa, depending on the consumer in question and their preferences.

The way to shop the item depends on the specific need at the time. If there is a need to receive the item sooner, online stores function as an opportunity to see the selection better, but the physical store is a faster way of receiving the item. If there is not a rush to receive the item, the item is ordered online if possible. In addition to this, if the item is only available in one or the other online or physical store, the decision to buy the item is depended on price of the item. The lower price point functions as the determining factor in this case.

How important are the delivery options to you?... (Sections a-c)

Delivery options can function as an incentive for the consumer to be interested in ordering online, due to its convenience and the general experience other consumers have had with the website in question as well as the delivery of the items.

This also functions as the base for this question, to find out just how important the delivery options are, and which ones have the interviewees used in the past.

The most used delivery options were Posti and Matkahuolto's smartlockers, due to their contactless use and overall positive experience and availability in general. However, in most cases the actual delivery method, being either smartlockers, homedelivery or post office collection point, were not the most important aspect considering the motivation to purchase the items. The most important aspect is the speed of the delivery, does it take for example take 1-3 days or over a week, not the way the items are delivered. However, the more there are options to order the delivery, the better the experience is overall.

Options are important and sometimes, the method of the delivery depends on the trust between the consumer and the delivery company. Examples for this are, two of the interviewees mentioned that they do not use a specific delivery company for example Schenker or DHL, because of their previous experience with that company. Therefore, if there is only one available delivery company, the decision of making a purchase might be taken back. The interviewees see that as much as there are ways of having the parcel delivered, there should be some choices of the company making the delivery as well. However, sometimes the websites only offer one delivery company and only one method of delivering the parcel, most often being smartlocker, which incidentally is the most popular one amongst all six of the interviewees.

Are the items you require often online exclusive or are they also available in stores?... (Sections a and b)

Availability is one of the selling points for the consumers and marketing a piece of clothing to only be "online exclusive" functions as a way for the brand to drive the consumers on to their websites, creating traffic and making it the item more desirable as well as creating a facade that the website is busier than it most likely is in reality.

All six of the interviewees shop for items which are available in both, online and in brick-and-mortar stores. None of the interviewees have paid as much attention to the exclusivity of the items as much as it has been important to have the item available to them when required. However, since online shopping is more convenient and effortless, the interviewees state that they are willing to purchase clothing without having the chance to try them on first. This though is dependent on the price point of the item.

The more expensive the item, the less the interviewee is willing to buy it before making sure the fit is right in a regular store. For example, dresses and other fitted outfits almost always require the trying on stage before making a purchase. The more affordable the items are, the less the aspect of having to try on the clothing matters. In fact, four of the interviewees stated that they most often order a couple sizes of the items just to have options to choose from and to try on. After trying the clothing on, the interviewees return the unrequired items. This is also where a good return policy is important, especially free returns.

4.2 Consumer experience

This part of the interview was to determine the overall experience the consumers have had with online shopping in general and to find out which aspects they find important for their shopping motivation. In addition, this section aimed to find out the various aspects that affect the consumers decision making process.

How do you find shopping apparel online? What is your experience like?

In this question the aim was to find out the overall experience of the interviewees for shopping for apparel online and what affects it. In general, it could be said that the overall experience is good and all the parts of the process from thinking of the possibilities and the need for a specific item, to comparing various items from various websites to finally choosing which item to purchase and the additional parts of that decision making. For example, delivery options and their importance,

payment options, previous experience, other consumers' reviews on the items and more.

All six of the interviewees have been satisfied with their experiences with online shopping for apparel. However, there were a few examples which the interviewees spoke about in a negative way. These unpleasant experiences were heavily due to the lack free returns for the items and the overall lack of customer service or the quality of that said service. Other examples of the unpleasant experiences were when the consumer has ordered apparel online, they have not been informed of all the required steps of that process. For example, when ordering outside the EU zone, the consumer must pay taxes and most of the time take care of the customs fees as well. If the company fails to inform the consumer of all the required steps they need to take, the experience will automatically lead to a negative review for that specific time.

Though there were examples of negative aspects affecting the online shopping experiences, most of the occasions were pleasant. The interviewees spoke of the items arriving fast and the information being more than plentiful, including the use of an application to track the parcel as well as the items being as they appeared online. Though this also had its opposite reactions as well. The overall quality of the products had been good though and this most often had led to more times buying from that specific brand or website. This also leads to the trust getting stronger between the consumer and the brand or website creating a stronger bond between the two.

The experiences of other consumers were also an aspect the interviewees had paid attention to when looking for new items or brands online. Leaving reviews on the items ordered has an impact on the consumers and can be a one of the factors which the consumer bases their purchasing decision on.

Are you satisfied with the experience you have had with shopping online? (Sections a-c)

As depicted in the previous question, the overall experience has been pleasant and the various aspects affecting the decision making and experience have been brought out. This question focuses on the individual experiences of the interviewees and whether they have been satisfied with the options and if there were anything they would want the brands or websites to change in their actions to make the experience of the consumers better.

Two of the interviewees mentioned the parcels never arriving, which is concerning. The customer service was also useless with the order and correcting it. This is an example of a website not gaining their customers' trust. However, most of the online shopping experiences have been good and all of the steps have been cleared fast and with precision.

As to the aspects the consumers wish were done better, the interviewees had much to say. For example, in the occasion of the parcels getting lost, the company should have an insurance policy where the amount is returned to the consumer if the parcel is not found in time, if at all. This also applies itself to the overall customer service, it should be easily available to the consumer in case the consumer has any questions relating to the order. This most often though was achieved, but for the cases where it was not achieved, it should be fixed soon.

Due to the lack of space in the smartlockers, or the lack of the actual lockers themselves, sometimes the parcels are redirected to a different nearby delivery location. This was mentioned by many of the interviewees and is definitely one of the aspects which might affect the amount the consumer orders items from a specific store. The lack of room in the parcel lockers is not directly the fault of the brand or website the consumer ordered from, but it is a factor which could lead to not purchasing from the same place again. The delivery needs to be done according to the requests of the consumer to ensure a positive experience through and through. Not being able to do so is frustrating to the consumer.

While the experience with the larger websites and brands, such as Zalando or Ellos is positive, the smaller less-known websites and brands have still room for improvement. Interviewees spoke of the delivery and return policies of the smaller less-known brands and websites to be nothing to praise. If the consumer needs to pay for the return of the items, it is automatically questionable. While some of the larger brands have this as well, most of them offer a free return of all products or have a specific sum of which needs to be achieved in order to gain access to a free return of the items. The return process should also be made easier for the consumers in general according to the interviewees. It should be as effortless as the example of Zalando's return process, as it was said to be the easiest return process the consumers have gone through.

Do you leave reviews on the apparel you purchase online? (Sections a and b)

Leaving reviews on the items one buys online can lead to others buying the items based on that review and the more there are reviews on an item, the more popular it is. This is the basis for this question as well. To find out if the reviews influence the interviewees' motivation to buy something based on the reviews they read and also if the interviewees leave reviews themselves on the items they purchase online. Leaving reviews on the items also functions as a part post-purchase evaluation in the consumer purchase making decision chart.

None of the interviewees in this research have left reviews on any of the clothing related items they have purchased online unless the experience has been terrible and if there has been something to criticize. According to three of the interviewees, leaving reviews on items can sometimes be harder than anticipated or at least it has been made harder than it needs to be. An example of this is that the review form sent via email to the consumer is filled with questions which mostly have little to nothing to do with the actual item purchased. The questions can have relevancy more towards the design of the website or where the consumer has found the website, for example they were told by a friend about it. One of the most important aspects which all of the interviewees mentioned was that they do not wish to leave reviews, since mostly it has to be done with ones' own name.

All six of the interviewees agreed that leaving reviews on anything, should be made completely voluntary and more importantly, anonymous.

Regarding the design of the review template, it should be made simple and fast fill in. For example, one of the interviewees suggested a “star form” for all the review templates as well as one optional open field, in which the consumer could leave voluntary words on the item in question for other consumers to see. Leaving and especially reading reviews can affect the purchase making decision of the consumer after all. Collectively for the interviewees the most useful reviews for them to see and read while searching for items they are interested in, could be about the size chart and its accuracy as well as the quality of the item and the materials used, how do they feel on the skin. More examples of the useful reviews for the interviewees included how fast the delivery is and how easy it is to return the items if necessary.

Have you returned apparel back to the seller?

This question was to determine if the consumers have been satisfied with the return processes they have had. As such, all of the interviewees had returned apparel back to the seller. The experience of that process has been relatively easy for most, with the exceptions of the few times explained in the previous questions as well, where the customer has had to pay for the return themselves and the process has been too complex to be comfortable for the customer to do by themselves.

The best kind of return process is easy, seamless, and simple, without forgetting the most important aspect, being free for the consumer. This is to ensure the consumer has an effortless experience with the website or brand, might recommend it to others and shop again. This can be aided with offering clear and simple instructions for making the return. Creating a relationship with the consumer is done in steps, and as such the steps should be easy to climb. The easier the return process is for the consumer; more likely they are to return to order items again. This also tied itself to the consumer decision making process in the theoretical framework chapter. If a consumer wishes to return an item, it is done post-

purchase and therefore can affect the overall experience of the purchasing process if made too difficult and costly.

When looking for information on new items, what are the most important aspects for you as a consumer?

When the consumers are looking for more information on new items, they might be interested in the most important aspects which arose were; the price of the item, is it higher or lower than desired and trustworthiness of the websites the items are displayed on and the previous experience with that website. In addition, the experience of other consumers with that specific website or item is important, mainly the reviews on the items and how the website had worked including the checkout and delivery of the items.

Other themes that were important to the interviewees were the sustainability of the items and how they are produced and the price to quality ratio, is one gaining what they pay for or not. The quality aspect also extended itself to whether the item is fashionable and trendy, this for example was the main reasoning to looking into apparel for two of the interviewees in the first place. As the interviewees thought the trendiness of the clothing was important to them, this tied in the price aspect once more. Four of the interviewees are willing to pay more for the product if it is trendy and of high-quality. This has its limits though, since if the website the item is found on seem untrustworthy, the consumer is not willing to take a risk with being a victim in a credit card information theft.

What are the advantages of online shopping compared to traditional brick and mortar store in your opinion?

The interviewees collectively thought that the most important advantages for online shopping were the larger selection of items and the overall availability of the items regardless of the time of the day. In addition to these the interviewees said that online shopping for them is easy and fast and it happens in their schedule and according to their needs. What makes online shopping pleasant for the

interviewees is also the fact it is contactless, and the amount of delivery and payment options is much better and larger than in regular stores. The importance of having the chance to pay with an invoice was empathised strongly here as well.

While shopping online makes it easier to discover new items and brands one has ever heard of or seen before, the addition of social media makes online shopping even more efficient due to the various algorithms recommending various brands and items based on the search history of the person in questions. The algorithms make it easier to find what one might be looking for without even having to look for it separately.

What are the disadvantages of online shopping compared to traditional brick and mortar store in your opinion?

While there are many advantages to online shopping, it is not the perfect way to purchase items, especially apparel. There is always the uncertainty of receiving what one orders. Sometimes there can be mix-ups and orders getting lost. This is where traditional stores service better and make sure those factors do not happen. Shopping in a regular store also allows the consumer to try on the clothing without having to purchase it. Having access to all the colours, sizes and customer service if needed are to the benefit of regular stores. Trying on clothing can be uncomfortable, but at least it assures the consumer to find the correct size of apparel with no delivery or return fees. This was also one of the main pros for regular stores according to the interviewees.

Regarding more the size of the apparel, online shopping is missing larger sizes of clothing in some cases. While the selection is larger online in general, purchasing for example pregnancy clothing online is harder than it needs to be. The pictures are not clear enough and the size charts are not accurate, in a regular store trying on the clothing fixes this issue and assures the perfect fit, this is also true if one is looking for purchase something as a present. It is easier to return the not suitable items and replace them with the correct size ones with no extra effort of sending the item back to the seller and reordering another size.

4.3 Price and buying incentives

This section aims to find answers to the price relating issues with online shopping and what are the most important incentives to help the interviewees make their purchase decisions. This section can be placed in the evaluation of alternatives phase in the consumer decision making process.

What are the key aspects which affect your purchase making decision?

For all six of the interviewees the price is very important when making the decision of what to buy and from where. In case of four of the interviewees if the price is too high, it makes it less likely for the interviewee to buy the item. All six of the interviewees had their limits with how much they are willing to pay for the quality of the item or a budget of kinds. Mostly the price depicts the quality of the product though, according to the interviewees, which makes the product more desirable in their eyes.

Other factors which have an impact on the purchase making decision of the interviewees are related to the size options, available colours, delivery and payment options and the desirability of the item. Social status seemed to be important to two of the interviewees and how other people view them. This aids the motivation to buy more high-quality items as well or shop for apparel in general. This can also be aided by social media promoters or influencers. Influencer marketing was mentioned in couple of cases to be the most effective way to motivate the interviewees to purchase an item or the least study the item better after seeing the influencer's post about it. The importance of others' reviews or recommendations seemed to be important no matter if the interviewees themselves leave reviews on items.

What part does the price of the item play in your decision making?

The interviewees were very convinced that the price of the item is the most important aspect when deciding to buy the item or not. Possible discounts or other incentives affecting the price are welcomed and most often the reason behind buying something. Paying for the delivery or shipping most often is not an issue, but the delivery costs should not be too high. Otherwise, this will lead to cancelling the order.

Two of the interviewees mentioned that they are willing to pay more for the item online if they are not able to shop in a regular store, but it was also said to be the opposite by the four remaining interviewees. Two of the interviewees thought that they are more willing to drive to a regular store to buy the item instead of ordering it online, especially if the item is more expensive. This is due to not having to pay for the delivery and also having the possibility to try on the clothing first.

Do you prefer quality over quantity when shopping for apparel?

Most often the financial situation of the consumer affects which kinds of items the consumer buys. This was the case with the interviewees of this research as well. Four of the interviewees stated that they mostly try to shop for more high-quality clothing, but that there is a budget to it with. Therefore, the quality might sometimes be sacrificed to due to the financial situation or the overall need and importance to having clothing in general. A specific need such as a wedding affects the situation, some of interviewees stated that if there is a dire need for a new outfit, the cost will be the most important factor in the decision making regardless of the quality. This also applies to the specific item in question. For example, socks or average t-shirts are bought in bulk, since there always is a need for them. However, a skirt or a pair of jeans might be more high-quality, therefore costing more as well. Three of the interviewees also stated that the importance of sustainability is a key factor in the more expensive items, also the longevity of most of the items is important.

What sort of incentives motivate you to buy more items in a single order?

The interviewees named the most important incentives to aid them to shop more in a single order to be the discounts mainly. For example, the classic “buy 3 pay for 2” marketing works as a motivator. However more practical way to motivate the interviewees to buy more is by offering the ability to pay via invoice, pay later for the items one wishes to keep and return the items one does not wish to keep. Klarna was the number one way of paying for the items via invoice system. This way the consumer also has the chance to try on the clothing before paying.

Beyond the paying aspects and marketing the interviewees mentioned the importance of free delivery or shipping for the items. Also, regarding the use of social media and influencers was mentioned. The use of influencer marketing seemed to have a major effect on the motivation to purchase certain items, since it offers real feedback on the items and their quality as well as a point of view to the overall process, for example, how effortless the paying process was and was the delivery fast enough for the current standards of the consumers.

4.4 Advertising and marketing

This relatively short section in the interview was meant to gather data on how marketing, digital marketing, and the various uses of those can influence the consumers. Along with these the section also studied social media and its many uses, and the specific kind of marketing used to attract the consumers.

What sort of an impact does advertising have on you? What about shopping online? (Sections a-d)

According to the interviewees, great advertising creates a need for the item. The rest is in the hands of the consumer. This was also used to describe the use of television advertising and the strategic ways of gaining the interest of the consumers. The interviewees thought that the best way to sell an item to them is to make sure the information is given in a correct way and that there is enough of it,

including size options and colours as well as the material of the clothing in this case.

Social media marketing arose to be the most efficient channel of gaining visibility for the items. This included platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and TikTok because of their usability and simplicity. The use of videos of the items was highlighted to be extremely welcomed as well. YouTube marketing was deemed frustrating and inconvenient. Four of the interviewees stated that especially YouTube marketing should be made entirely voluntary, since it only affects the interviewees in a negative way. This can lead to not liking the brand in questions based on just one advertisement and the mental image the consumer might develop on the brand after being forced to watch the same advertisement more than once. This also ties in the fact that a good advertisement affects the feelings of the person seeing the advertisement by causing a reaction of kinds.

Along with social media marketing and the use of television, three of the interviewees stated that the importance of average mail advertising is still considered as an effective way of reaching the consumers. The mail can include discounts for various items and could also introduce the consumer to something entirely new to them, such as a brand or a new store. This also attracts consumers to shop in the said store if the selection of the products is plentiful.

In the interviews, all six of the interviewees also mentioned that the preferred time to shop online, is seasonally. Seasonal sales and discounts were the most popular shopping times in terms of online shopping. The interviewees stated that they are more likely to shop more in a single order or to shop for more items in general when there is an incentive to do so. In this case a seasonal sale, which allows the consumers to purchase necessary items in more suitable price range for them. For example, shorts during spring or summer sales and coats and warmer clothing during fall or winter sales.

4.5 Websites and design

This section in the interview was meant for gathering data on the preferred types of websites the interviewees tend to use and the motivation behind using a specific website to order items from. This also includes the importance of the design of the website as a source for motivation.

Which websites do you shop for apparel in? (Sections a-d)

The most popular websites to shop for apparel in by far were Zalando, Ellos, AboutYou and Nelly. These websites were said to be used every time the interviewees decide to shop for an item online due to their overall usability, easiness, and trustworthiness. In fact, the bigger the online store, the more often the interviewees said to trust them. It was also said that less-known websites are overshadowed by the more known ones.

When speaking of the availability of the items and how important it was to the interviewees, the most common response was that the interviewees would most often tend to shop the items they require, regardless of the availability in one specific store. If the item is not available on the website the consumer is in, they move on to the next one and so on, until the specific item or something similar is found. At this point the price does not matter as much, since the need is the main priority, finding the suitable item. Though the interviewees also stated that the need for the item can be persuaded by the price of the item if the price difference is too large. Most of the time though, the price points tend to be similar.

Most often during the seasonal shopping time, the items the interviewees were in the market for are out of stock due to their desirability. This can be avoided by being faster with the shopping process, but sometimes the items are very quickly out of stock on many occasions. This is often the case with the opposite sides of the size spectrum. Often the smallest or smaller items and the largest sizes available are out of stock, but the middle sizes are still plentiful. This seemed to frustrate the interviewees. This also means that the consumers were not willing to stay on the website longer than the time they had spent there at the

point where they had discovered their sizes have all been sold out already. The solution to this is often finding the similar item elsewhere. Other websites often have something similar which might suit the consumer better, the price range might also be better.

According to two of the interviewees, they might sometimes set the availability alerts on, if the item they require is restocked. This depends on the item though and the need for it. The item needs to be important and irreplaceable for the consumer if the alert is set. This was done by one of the interviewees in the example of a specific coloured and sized dress for a wedding. Though it can be applied to other apparel as well. Though as mentioned the item needs to be perfect. If the perfect item is not found; a similar kind of item will do. In this case the price of the item is not an issue.

When you load up the website what are the things you wish to see first?

This question was meant to find out which are the most important aspects the interviewees pay attention to, and which aspects could motivate them to order items from the said website or study the items more closely.

For four of the interviewees to stay on a specific website, they first need to make sure the website is safe to stay on. Mostly the language option, both Finnish and English are required or at least proper English, with correct spelling to make sure the website is deemed safe. Safety and security were also discussed later on in the interview.

Mainly the aspects the interviewees want to see first had to deal with the overall design of the website, its simplicity and the overall first impression. Too much information on the screen at a time, makes the interviewees leave a website. The information on the items should be clear and all the sections should be logically placed.

Other aspects the interviewees wish to see first on websites are the promises of a fast shipping or delivery, overall design of the website, if the website is too

cluttered it will result to not staying on the said website. Other listed aspects are, the size of the item pictures, they should not be disproportionate to the other sections on the website. The navigation on the website should be simple as well, if there are too many subcategories, it makes the process of finding items more difficult.

What makes you leave a website without making a purchase?

As mentioned in the previous question, the design of the website is extremely important for the consumers. Too much information at once is not a pleasant sight, or incorrect spelling. Too many pop-up windows are a sure way of having three of the interviewees leave the website quickly, since it creates an untrustworthy impression of the website. The importance of the search bar on the website was emphasised because it makes finding the required items faster. This however includes suggestions and recommendations based on the keywords the consumer uses to conduct the search with. The lack of suggestions or other recommendations is deemed frustrating by the interviewees.

Regarding the design of the website more, the navigation should be logical and well designed. If the website has too many categories and sub-categories, it makes finding the required items more difficult. This also includes the use of banners and other fidgets on the website. All the sections on the website should be cohesive with one another. The use of too many sales or discount banners on the website is also deemed unpleasant by three of the interviewees. The banners can also sometimes lead to a blank page, which does not exude quality about the website and its coding. Which can then lead the interviewee to leave the website. Incorrect coding in the design of the website and its functionalities can also lead the consumer to thinking that the payment process could be unsecure as well.

The website should also include reviews by the previous customers, including reviews on the items, the payment process, customer service and the overall experience with the website. If there are no reviews available, it can lead to the consumer to not enter the website or leave the website after discovering there are no review on any of the aspect relating to the website. Other consumer's

experience was deemed important for five of the interviewees. It functions as a source of security and guidance.

Do you prefer to use traditional websites or an application when shopping for apparel? Why?

The interviewees were torn between using applications offered by the various apparel brands and the use of traditional websites on a browser. However, most agreed that the applications are more useful when the specific brand is familiar to them and if it is used more often. In the example of using the websites as a source for online shopping, the consumers prefer to use them on a computer or on a tablet device to have more screen real estate at their use. This way the consumer can see more of the selection and functionalities, such as the navigation bar and the filtering system at once without having to scroll too much.

Using the websites on a browser has the advantage of having larger pictures as well, which also means the consumer does not have to zoom in to the picture as much as they would on a mobile phone. Though the benefit of the applications is their portability. One can use them anywhere at any time and they are custom made for the brands, making them more specific for certain items. However, applications can become obsolete quickly if they are not used frequently. Also, according to the interviewees, the applications can seem forced by the various brands, which can seem unpleasant at times.

Which do you prefer, online platforms which offer variety of brands and products or specific websites for specific stores? (Sections a-d)

All six of the interviewees all agreed that the larger platforms offer more variety in items and products which is beneficial, since it allows the consumer to find all they need in one place, at least in theory. Also, the benefit to the larger websites and platforms, such as Zalando, is that they most often offer more options for payment and delivery. This helps the consumer to be at ease with their orders since they have the power over which options they wish to use. Whereas this can

often be the downside of the smaller brand's websites and online stores. The lack of options can be seen as simply not good enough and deemed old fashioned, according to the interviewees.

Smaller brands do have the advantage on the very specific items, such as dresses, since the descriptions of the items might be more in-depth and include more useful information. They also have the advantage of customer service being more helpful regarding the items they offer. More knowledge on the maintenance of the items and material is always welcomed the more expensive the item is. Larger websites might only have a general description on the items and could even be lacking the descriptions altogether.

Regarding the design features and functionalities, the interviewees like on the websites altogether include the easy navigation and the filtering systems, to ensure one finds what they require. Descriptions on the items offer value to the experience and the pictures showcasing the items are mandatory. The pictures though could be larger and regarding what the interviewees would like to see more of is especially more pictures on all items, everywhere.

The pictures can seem too simple at times and therefore not offering any added value. If the pictures were larger and taken from various angles it could offer the consumer a better understanding on what the item will look like outside the website. This also includes the suggestion of including real life and size models wearing the items, this would bring added value to all the consumers since it would bring the aspect of realism to the pictures. Also, four of the interviewees thought that they would most likely be more interested in items, if they had videos on the items being used and worn by someone. This would also bring the aspect of personality to the website, which is welcomed, since according to the interviewees all the websites look alike these days.

What kind of an impact do you find website design to have on your shopping motivation and purchase decision?

According to the interviewees the design of the website is crucial in motivating the consumer to stay on the website and purchase something. The website should create an atmosphere where the consumer feels at home. The visuality of the websites should be simple and pleasing to the sight, this could for example be achieved by assuring all the sections fit together and create a complete experience instead of pieces detached and not fitting together. This can be done by matching the colour scheme and making sure the items are displayed in a tasteful manner. The overall experience is also affected by addressing the security of the website, including the various payment and delivery methods.

The websites should also be inclusive to the consumers, if one feels welcomed it can motivate them to purchase items more. This could be achieved by assuring the pictures being inclusive to all kinds of model pictures. Inclusivity is the key in the modern era, having different skin tones and body types visible in the pictures of the item is more than realistic and definite improvement to the overall bland design of most websites.

What does an aesthetically pleasing website look like to you?

The question was to determine which kind of elements websites should have design wise to spark the motivation to make a purchase. The more pleasing the website is, the more likely the consumer spends time on the website, and this could lead to making a purchase, if the required items are found and presented in complementing way.

According to three of the interviewees, websites should have large pictures on all the items, which include comprehensive descriptions of the items and a decent selection of colours and sizes to choose from. Other consumers' reviews on the items are also a feature which the interviewees mentioned should always be included. This ensures the consumer to be able to consider the purchase from various angles, their own and what others have had to say. Also, to make the items more interesting, the pictures should include the items being photographed on various real-life models. This could also include videos on the items, to ensure

the consumer gains a comprehensive image of the items and sees how the fabrics and materials look like against real skin and not only on a mannequin. Showcasing the item in a comprehensive way also communicates the quality of the item to the person viewing it. Since the quality aspect can be hard to prove, the items should be presented in a way where the consumer gains a proper understanding of what the item offers without researching it more.

The design of the website regarding the colours and themes was also said to be better if it is as simple as possible, since the focus should be on the items instead of the website design. The design should complement the items to make them more attractive. This also includes the various menus and search bars including the filtering system to narrow down the selection to find the suitable item. All these were said to be important in the design. Too cluttered and hard to use features make the experience worse for the consumer.

What is your ideal website user experience like?

This is the second question to finding out specifically what the interviewees consider to be the features and aspects on websites which could motivate them to make a purchase.

In the ideal experience of the interviewees, the experience is always fast and responsive. All the sections on the website and features such as search bar and the menus should work well and the way they are meant to. Also, all the necessary information such as descriptions of the items, pictures and reviews should be clearly visible and presented to the consumers in a way where the consumer gains the sensation of knowing everything there is to know about the product. This also extends to the delivery and payment methods being clearly explained.

Two of the interviewees mentioned the possible addition of recommended items which would fit together creating a complete outfit. For example, when looking for a top, the search result could include recommendations of suitable jeans or other bottoms as well as a jacket and maybe even a purse if everything is available from the website. All the recommended items should fit together, by doing this

the consumer might be tempted to purchase the entire look, especially if the outfit came with the incentive of buying more and gaining discount accordingly.

What are the most important features for you when comparing apparel from different websites?

This is the third addition to the group of questions aiming to discover which are the most important features on websites for the interviewees. In addition to how they could affect the motivation of making a purchase and which aspects affect the decision of doing so.

Some of the most important features already covered in the previous questions include the addition of larger pictures and videos, size charts and colours, navigation on the website, search bar functionalities and menu options. With these the interviewees named the reviews being important for making the decision and ultimately affecting the decision of staying on the website altogether. This also includes googling the website and user experiences, not necessarily only visiting the website. The decision of entering the website can be made before entering the website itself based on other consumers' experiences. In three cases the interviewees mentioned that they research the websites ahead of time, before entering to see if the websites are secure and trustworthy.

If the decision of entering the website is made, the interviewees pay attention to the aspects mentioned above but also add the importance of the overall price range of the items. Other websites might offer the same item in a different price range, making it more appealing if the quality remains the same. With the addition to these, the availability of the clothing is extremely important. It is important to have the item in stock, in all the options. Not doing so might lead to the consumer shopping elsewhere. Most often especially the size options are quite lacking in most websites, which affects the entire experience in a negative way. If there is nothing but too small clothing that is worth mentioning to other consumers, which leads to bad publicity already for the website or brand not being inclusive enough. This can be avoided by having all the showcased options in stock with all the

various options, sizes, and colours. Selling something the website does not have is deceiving the consumer.

4.6 Safety and security

This section was to find out the need for secure website browsing and ordering item online, including the payment process. In addition to this the interviewees were asked to describe which features to them create the sensation of safety on various websites.

What kind of an impact does having multiple payment options have on your purchase decision? (Sections a and b)

When asked the interviewees about the various payment methods and options, most were confused, since most often websites have only a couple of options to choose from if options at all. Most often the payment options are only credit card payment or online banking. This for two of the interviewees was enough, but for the rest they would require more. The amount of payment options is also tied with the number of consumers using the websites and ordering items. As for options, the most important aspect is that the payment method is secured somehow, and the consumer feels like the process is effortless.

Sometimes though the interviewees admitted that they only purchase items from the websites if the payment methods are familiar to them from previous experience. Also, the more expensive the item is the more important the security of the payment is. This is also where most of the interviewees stated they wished invoice payment method was available everywhere since it is the most convenient and makes the experience of online shopping even more effortless. In general, the more there are payment options the more the interviewees trust the website and feel motivated enough to continue the purchasing process.

*How important is having multiple/different payment methods/vendors for you?
(Sections a and b)*

This question was meant to deepen and add on to the previous questions with finding out which payment methods are the most used and important to the interviewees and why.

The importance of having more payment options was explained by most websites often only having a limited number of options, one or two. Four of the interviewees thought that the more there are options to pay with, the more likely they are interested in trying out new methods, and even buying more. This is the example of having invoice payment as an option. This way the consumer could try on the clothing first without having to purchase anything yet and only paying for the items the consumer wishes to keep and return the rest back to the seller.

The amount of payment options speaks for the trustworthiness of the website. Especially if the options are used in other larger websites as well. The most trusted and used payment vendor was Klarna and the other used methods were PayPal, MobilePay, credit card and mobile banking. Depending on which website was in questions and how much the interviewee had ordered. The more expensive the order was, the more likely the payment was done through Klarna due to not having to pay the sum immediately and having the chance to try on the clothing on first. By far the importance of having the invoice payment as an option in all websites was emphasized. Other methods are a good addition, but with being the most important, Klarna was also the most trusted option in most cases.

Do you check if the website you shop in is legitimate and safe before you make a purchase?

All six of the interviewees make sure the website they decide to shop in is safe and secure some way, at least before making a purchase. If a new website is in question, the interviewees make sure the website is safe by googling the name of the website and seeing if the company information and location of the headquarters is somewhere reasonable or if it exists in general. By googling the name

of the website and reading other consumers' experiences with the website also affects the decision of being willing to buy anything from the website in question. The delivery or shipping options, customer service information, the information found in the description of the items and the pictures of the items all create the image of security on the website. If everything seems good, the website is deemed safe. Most of the times seeing that the website is using Klarna as the payment vendor was enough to ensure that the website was safe.

The interviewees also continued to state that the importance of the fine print on the websites was important and the various links on the bottom of the site. Including the possible frequently asked questions, company information with the addition of when the website was last updated and the overall return policy of the website and the speed of the delivery.

What are the aspects which make you trust a website?

In addition to how the interviewees making sure the website they shop in is secure, the most important aspects to them were also discovered. Klarna as a payment option for some was the most important aspect, but it was mainly important for the payment process and its security. Other factors which aid the experience to be better were mentioned to be for example, the language the website uses and its spelling. The language must be correct to ensure the consumer trust is gained, no misspelling is tolerated, since it makes the website seem untrustworthy. Also, it was important to know the nationality of the website, if it is domestic, it most of the time was enough to ensure the interviewees of the security of the website.

The overall design of the website was deemed to be important, since it is most likely the largest factor in making sure the consumer feels at ease. Careful attention to details, such as the menus, fonts and colours used re important for the consumers. The return policy and the speed of the delivery were deemed to be important factors in making sure the website seems trustworthy too. This is due to the faster the delivery is, the more likely the website is legitimate, especially if

the delivery companies used by the website are mentioned. Posti and Matkahuolto were the most popular delivery companies for the interviewees and the most often used ones as well. DB Schenker and DHL were deemed the most untrustworthy ones, due to previous experience with them.

What is your experience with websites' tracking cookies?... (Sub-sections included)

As the last question the interviewees were asked about their experiences with tracking cookies which all websites often use in various ways. The overall experience can affect the website's functionality and the trustworthiness of the website, especially if the cookies cannot be turned off or avoided.

Websites can offer the ability to turn off all the cookies and sometimes there is the option of allowing only the mandatory ones, which most often are regarding marketing and website traffic tracking. All the cookies are often explained in the options section; however, the consumers mostly do not read through all of them. This was one of the aspects the interviewees wished would change somehow. Allowing the consumer to shop online in privacy without having to worry about being spied on.

This interview question had the most variety in the responses. Two of the interviewees refuse all cookies, while two allow them all without first finding out what the cookies are regarding. Then two leave the website if the cookies cannot be turned off or avoided. One main observation could still be made from what the interviewees stated, all the interviewees are frustrated with websites using cookies. While the use of cookies is understandable, forcing them on to consumers can make the consumer feel unsafe, especially if the list of cookies is long and if the cookies ask for permission for personal files on the computer. This was also said to be one of the reasons why the interviewee would leave a website, allowing the access to anything personal makes the interviewees feel uncomfortable.

Allowing cookies was also depended on the device the consumers are on. For example, when using a personal computer, the cookies might be accepted more often than when using a work-related device. This is due to wanting to keep work

related files and other information private just in case. Also, the mandatory nature of the cookies most often made the interviewees leave the website they were on regardless of the device they were on.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Recommendations based on the research

This chapter is to give recommendations based on the results of the research and what the interviewed consumers had to say about the various topics discussed in the interview. These recommendations support the consumer decision making process mentioned in the theoretical framework chapter, due to being important steps while comparing items online and being the source for future reference and reviews.

5.1.1 More selection of payment options

Including an invoice payment method as a standard paying option would appeal to more consumers, since it offers the chance to try on the clothing and assure access to more expensive items as well. Paying via invoice with for example *Klarna* in 30 days' time or in smaller pieces via payment plan, are good ways to attract more consumers to the website, especially if advertised more on social media or by using a social media influencer. This also makes the brand seem trendier, since the use of invoice payment has increased in the modern times making it one of the most used payment methods altogether. With the addition of Klarna as a payment option, online stores could include some other methods as well, such as PayPal and other traditional options such as online banking and credit card payment to ensure all the consumers have at least one previously used option which they might prefer and use most often while shopping online.

5.1.2 Focus on the customer experience

When researching the topic and interviewing the interviewees, the overall consumer experience seemed to be very positive. This implies that most of the websites do indeed take care of their offerings, including the items and how those are

presented on the websites, inclusion of pictures and delivery and payment options in general. However, there are some aspects which still need to be discussed. For example, the inclusion of other *consumers' experiences*, namely inclusion of review is missing from some websites. The inclusion of all the feedback on the items themselves, customer service, shipping or delivery and its speed, the website design and atmosphere and the overall experience should be included. This allows the consumer to gain a better understanding of what to expect from the website and also save time trying to research whether to trust the website or not.

The *customer feedback templates* could also use some work. The templates sent to the customers need to be precise and to the point, only asking the customer to evaluate their experience in for example giving out stars and then including only one optional open field, where the customer could talk more about their experiences with the website. If the brand or website wishes to gain more in-depth customer data, they could send out a survey to which the customer could answer to if they so wish. Also, all the data given, whether it is reviews or feedback should be totally *anonymous*. The consumers feel that giving feedback or reviews with their own name makes the process more than uncomfortable. Most of the consumers do not wish to be associated with the brands they purchase. Therefore, making all the customer related data anonymous is absolutely mandatory.

Regarding the content the websites provide to the consumers, the *information* on the items must be up to date. This includes the *size chart* and its correctness, colours available and the description of the items. Those are the most important aspects the interviewees stated should be correct. In addition, some sort of proof of the quality of the clothing is a good addition, since if the price of the item is higher, the assumption of the item being more high-quality is also amplified. In terms of the sizes available to the consumers, having more sizes, especially bigger and smaller sizes would benefit the brands since only having regular sizes can turn away customers. This was the case especially during the seasonal sales, not enough stock for variety of sizes of clothing. Though this can be implemented in the regular experience as well.

Having *more items in stock* could mean that the consumers order more items at once, if the item is suitable for them and at a suitable price range. Also, the addition of paying by invoice was almost demanded by the interviewees. This makes the shopping experience more enjoyable, since the consumer has the chance to try on the clothing first before paying and ordering a couple of size options in general and can return the clothing deemed unnecessary of the wrong size.

5.1.3 More options in delivery companies and methods

The inclusion of more delivery companies, instead of only a couple, and options of where the order is delivered to should be included on to all the websites, since the more there are options, the more the consumer are willing to purchase items since it is more convenient. Most often there is only one delivery company, by there should be at least *Posti and Matkahuolto* in terms of domestic deliveries. International shipping could be handled by for example, DB Schenker or DHL but this should also be influenced by the consumer and their preferences as with the domestic deliveries as well. Due to the consumer having previous experience with a specific delivery company, good or bad.

The delivery options should include more *smartlocker* options nearby the consumer as well as the option of a post office collection point, for example for more expensive items. Among these, the option of home delivery should also be offered as an option, while not often used due to the orders of the consumers not being overly expensive, but the delivery method being expensive most often, making it nonsensical. This could change though if the price of the home delivery option was decreased somewhat.

The interviewees emphasized the contactless methods more, therefore the availability of having more smartlockers makes sense. This most often is also the cheapest option, if not free when the total sum of the order is high enough. The *delivery costs* of the order should also be paid by the company if the total sum of the order reaches a given level, for example 25 euros. In addition to the delivery fees being free or free after a certain sum is reached, the *return policy* should be changed to be free as well. Consumers do not wish to pay when returning items,

they do not require or are not satisfied with. This also makes it harder for the consumer to change the items ordered to more suitable options in terms of for example size of the item. Having to only include a sticker on to the parcel and taking the parcel to the nearest return centre or store is the most convenient way of returning the clothing. This should be implemented to more websites to ensure even better customer experience.

5.1.4 More inclusivity on social media marketing

While most brands and websites already advertise their items broadly, the means to do so could still be improved. For example, social media marketing could be more focused on the *Instagram stories* and making it visible to everyone, instead of only posting on a specific brand's page on Instagram, which is not followed by nearly as many of their customers as there are consumers using Instagram. At least the chances of that are very slim. In addition to this the *advertising on TikTok* should be increased if not yet started, since it has become a very popular platform among all age groups, not just the youngest demographics. Videos on the items sold would be welcomed, especially if filmed on *real life and sized models*, showcasing the possibilities of the clothing, the materials used, available colours and sizes. This would also improve the brand's image in the eyes of the consumers since it would create a sense of unity among various groups of individuals.

While the advertising and marketing would be more beneficial to companies on Instagram and TikTok, the need for YouTube advertising on the other hand is decreasing. Interviewees all stated that none of them would be interested in seeing advertisements on YouTube and that there needs to be less of them in general. This is due to most of the time the advertisements getting in the way of the consumer on YouTube when the focus is on the content, not the advertisements. Instead, companies should take their marketing content more on TikTok, where the advertisement is the content and not the necessary evil in the way of the consumer.

The focus on advertising and marketing the apparel items, should also be on the traditional marketing means, brochures and newsletters delivered via mail. Television advertising is also still preferred, since it the most common and familiar method to the consumers. It also reaches a wider audience of consumers. The seasonal sales and various discounts could be advertised more of and in a more personal way, showcasing the real-life models wearing the apparel in question. Advertisements gain the interest of the consumers if they have their own flare to them, personality. This can be done through the models in the advertisements and the message the brand wishes to send. The more the advertisement is personalized to the company, the more likely the consumer will remember it too. The use of songs or musical pieces could also be more implemented to make the advertisement more memorable.

5.1.5 The importance of website design

The main aspects with websites which gain the interest of the consumers are the design and the *functions* provided on the website. The navigation on the website needs to be clear and simple, as well as the overall design of the website. Milder and more simplistic designs appeal to a broader audience of consumers. The simple and easy to use functions, such as the navigation, search bar and its search suggestions and recommendations and various menus make the user experience more convenient and enjoyable. The addition of larger pictures and videos of the items on offer are strongly recommended, as well as the inclusion of more size options on the apparel and the use of real-life models showcasing the items. This creates more inclusive image of the brand and assures that consumers of all body types can find a suitable option for them.

The aspects which make the consumers leave the website more often are the plentiful pop-up windows, overly bright colours, lack of information on the company and items, slowness of the websites and the more than generous amount of various discount banners. Making sure the design of the *website is as mild and simple as possible*, the correctly functioning navigation, menus and categories, no pop-up windows and making changes to the website in order for it to be faster are recommended in order to attract more consumers. All the various sections

including, sales and discounts, company and brand information, shipping and delivery, and customer service should all have their own individual sections but easily accessible for the consumers.

One of the main improvements to the search bar function could be the results based on the search. For example, when searching for a blouse, the search functions could give the consumer *suggestions on the items* suited with that specific search result. In this case for example, jeans, blouse, purse and even underwear. The idea is to have a *complete outfit suggestion* which is pre-decided by the brand, which the consumer could then research more of. Also, the overall number of suggestions and recommendations based on the search should be amplified to ensure the consumer does not leave the website without making a purchase if not finding the originally required item or items.

5.1.6 Create a sense of safety for consumers

For the consumer to feel secure, the mandatory “*generalities*” information should be included on all websites. This information should include, the company information, nationality of the company, when was it founded, customer service and location, when the website was last updated, what the offered delivery and payment options are and how fast the delivery is in general. All the factors should be included either to their own sections on the website or on to the lower part of the website in one collective unit. There should also be a section for reviews and frequently asked questions section to ensure the consumer has access to all the possible information before deciding to make a purchase or not. The access to the information can be to the benefit of the company because, if the consumer is comparing various websites, the one with more background information can seem more legitimate and trustworthy.

As discussed in the payment options section, including more *payment options* could ensure the feeling of security for the consumer. Having access to for example Klarna and its invoice payment system, in most cases has been enough

for the interviewees of this research to feel more secure about the payment process. With the addition of Klarna, the websites ensure all the consumers have at least one previously used option which is deemed safe and trustworthy.

The use of *tracking cookies* should be more explained and justified to the consumer. The option of turning the cookies off entirely should be made more prominent and possible. In addition to this, the options of reading more about the cookies and only allowing the required cookies should be made more effortless as well. Tracking cookies should also have more in-depth explanations to as why they are asking for permissions for something specific. The specifics in general should be more explained.

5.2 Discussion

The objective of this research was to discover the aspects affecting the online shopping motivation of the consumers and what the specific features are that motivate the consumers to make a purchase online the most. The research was divided on to various themes during the research interviews mentioned more in depth in the data-analysis chapter, to make it easier for the interviewees to keep up with the discussion and have a better understanding to what the questions were related to topic wise. The purpose of the research and analysis was to find the said features or aspects which motivate the consumers to make a purchase online and how those aspects could be utilized more with companies wanting to improve their desirability in the eyes of the consumers. The research was aimed to aid companies improve, especially the features discussed in the recommendations chapter of this thesis. These include but are not limited to, more inclusive advertising, better pictures and inclusion of videos and more functional and simpler website. With these improvements, companies operating in the online world, could then gain more loyal customers when there are more options to choose from for the consumers. In example, payment method or delivery option wise. Based on the research and the analysis chapters, there were many recommendations made to companies to which they should pay closer attention to. This is

because, constant development and improving the customer experience is always mandatory in order to make profit and gain a better image for the company in the eyes of the consumers.

The analysis of the research showcased diversity in the responses collected from the interviewees. However, in most cases the interviewees' responses were similar, which made it easier to locate the specific aspects which need to be improved by the companies or change completely. These areas which need improvement from companies were specifically the advertising aspects, which social media platforms are being used and the kind of content is posted to create an image for the company, the need for more selection of delivery companies such as Posti, Matkahuolto and others and delivery methods such as the contactless smart-locker, adding more payment options specifically Klarna to ensure the sense of safety and finally the overall design, features and clarity of the websites need to be paid attention to. The design should be easy on the eyes, simple and logical, making sure all the functionalities of the website function as they should, and the additional information and selections are easy for the consumers to use and understand.

The research findings answer the original research question, "*What motivates University students in the Tampere area to shop for apparel online?*". The most important findings of the research were that the consumers find more selection online than in regular brick-and-mortar stores and for example more colours and sizes are available online and the consumer can directly see if the item is in stock or when it is available for purchase again. The prices online are most often lower than in regular stores and often have a discount code available to them or a sale. The shopping experience is more convenient and often more enjoyable than in a regular store as well, according to the consumers in this research.

The sub-questions of the thesis can be answered by the findings of the research as well. "*What are the most important motivational aspects in shopping for apparel online for the university students?*" The most motivational aspects found in the research are that the consumers all wish for more inclusive advertising and better use of pictures and videos to understand what the clothing item truly looks like and what it might look like on themselves by the help of videos. This can also

be aided by using more social media influencers. Along with this, the price of items and the possible discounts or sales influence the motivation to make a purchase. This though is depended on the quality of the clothing as well, which needs to be proved somehow to the consumer by for example showcasing the item's material more in the pictures. Also as discussed in the recommendations chapter, websites, their design, and their functionalities are proven to be important to the consumers in this the research. The various sections including the navigation and search bars should have predetermined recommendations to the items the consumer is searching for and other suggestions which might interest the consumer as well.

The second sub-question of the thesis "*What are the most important features on websites to aid the shopping motivation for the university students?*" was answered through the collected data as well by showcasing the selection of payment options, such as Klarna. More features which make the consumers more motivated were the selection of items on the website, their descriptions, pictures, and videos along with the reviews left by other consumers. The options available during the checkout process in terms of the delivery company and methods were also deemed important due to the possible preferences of the consumers. Overall, even before the consumer enters the website in question, the base information of the company needs to be available to the public, for example, where the company is based, when was it founded and other useful information provided such as a customer support or frequently asked questions bar and reviews left by the other consumers. Also, these features help to create the sense of trustworthiness and safety for the consumer. Creating the sense of safety assures that the consumer could make an order if they find what they are looking for.

The thesis functions as base research for the companies willing to research their customers' experiences further. The research was meant to be qualitative research instead of being quantitative. However, the total of six interviewees might not be enough to say that the research is the most scientific research. It did reach its goal though, but it could have been conducted with more interviewees to ensure there had been more data to compare and analyse to find for example a comparison against a certain age group of students against another age group. This was not the case in this research, but it can function as a source for future

studies done about online shopping motivation amongst university level students. The thesis has value as it is, due to its length and the amount of data collected in a qualitative method. Therefore, it can be used as a reference or a source in future attempts to study the phenomena of shopping motivation, especially when it comes to website and their key functionalities for consumers.

Furthermore, the process of the thesis did go according to the plan mostly. However due to some scheduling issues and not enough of interviewees the research ended up becoming rather narrow. Along with these factors, the research also lacks a specific age group to study. This came to be one of the down sides of the research. Had the author had a specific age group, it would have made more sense for the rest of the thesis and research itself due to its more scientific approach. The lack of an age group can be justified though as having completely anonymous interviews and therefore not needing any background information which was the case in this research. The interviewees volunteered for the research due to not having to give any excess information on themselves other than their responses to the interview questions themselves.

Considering the research and what new questions and aspects came up during the process, this research functioned as a steppingstone for the motivation research. The author realized the potential research idea of conducting further research on the actual shopping behaviour, patterns, and the reasoning for purchasing the specific items in questions which can be studied as its own topic.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Interview questions

In this section the questions used in this thesis research are placed in the order of their appearance in the interview. The questions used in the interview appeared under various research related themes which will also become apparent.

Convenience and availability

1. Why do you shop apparel online? Please specify.
2. How often do you shop apparel online?
3. Do you shop exclusively online or in a store, or both?
4. A) How important are the delivery options to you?
B) Are the delivery options a deal breaker/maker?
C) Which sort of delivery methods do you prefer to use? *For example, homedelivery, post office (collection point), smartpost locker*
5. A) Are the items you require often online exclusive or are they also available in stores?
B) Are you willing to purchase items online without having the chance to try them on first?

Consumer experience

6. How do you find shopping for apparel online? What is your experience like?
7. A) Are you satisfied with the experience you have had with shopping online?
B) What could have made your experience better?
C) Which features are you not satisfied with? For example, payment methods, customer service, usability of the website, return policy
8. A) Do you leave reviews on the apparel you purchase online?
-> if no, why not?
-> if yes, which aspects do you often write about? For example, size guide accuracy, deceiving pictures,
B) What kind of reviews do you find useful for your own shopping decision?
9. Have you returned apparel back to the seller?
-> If you have, what was the experience like for you? Describe.
-> If you have not returned anything, why is that?

10. When looking for information on new items, what are the most important aspects for you as a consumer? For example, price, availability, sustainability
11. What are the advantages of online shopping compared to traditional brick and mortar store in your opinion?
12. What are the disadvantages of online shopping compared to traditional brick and mortar store in your opinion?

Price and buying incentives

13. What are the key aspects which affect your purchase making decision? For example, price, delivery options, reviews
14. What part does the price of the items play in your decision making?
15. Do you prefer quality over quantity when shopping for apparel?
16. What sort of incentives motivate you to buy more items in a single order? For example, sales, discounts, free delivery/shipping

Advertising and marketing

17. A) What sort of an impact does advertising have on you? What about when shopping online?
 B) Which type of advertising appeals to you the most?
 C) Which platforms are the best ones to reach you specifically?
 D) What kind of advertising could get you to shop more apparel online?

Websites and design

18. A) Which websites do you shop for apparel in?
 B) Are the items you shop for often out of stock, or plentiful?
 C) How does the "not in stock" make you react? For example, shop elsewhere.
 D) If you decide to shop elsewhere what aspects are the most important to you when choosing the new online store? (possible higher price versus availability?)
19. When you load up the website what are the things you wish to see first? For example, pictures of the products, filters, search bar
20. What makes you leave a website without making a purchase? In key-points, for example multiple pop ups, scaling of the website, hard to navigate, first impression
21. Do you prefer to use traditional websites or an application when shopping for apparel? Why?
22. A) Which do you prefer, online platforms which offer variety of brands and products (for example Zalando) or specific websites for specific

stores? (for example, H&M, Voglia) Please describe.

B) What do you like about the design of the websites you mentioned in the previous question?

C) Which features do you especially like? (pictures, search bar etc)

D) Which types of features do you think the websites require more of? (pictures, videos, featured products, recommendations, reviews..)

23. What kind of an impact do you find website design to have on your shopping motivation and purchase decision?

24. What does an aesthetically pleasing website look like to you? Describe. For example: simple looking, color scheme, size of the pictures, navigation bar...

25. What is your ideal website user experience like? For example, Is it important that the website's loading speed is fast?

26. What are the most important features for you when comparing apparel from different websites? For example, price, size options, pictures

Safety and security

27. A) What kind of an impact does having multiple payment options have on your purchase decision?

B) Do you only buy the product if the payment method is familiar or you have used it before?

28. A) How important is having multiple/different payment options/vendors for you? For example, PayPal, MobilePay, credit card, online banking, Trustly, Klarna

B) Which of them have you used before?

29. Do you check if the website you shop in, is legitimate and safe before you make a purchase?

-> if yes, how do you check it?

-> if no, why?

30. What are the aspects which make you trust a website? For example, language options/typos, customer service availability, secure payment via vendor, previous experience, recommendations

31. What is your experience like with websites' tracking cookies?

-> do you accept the cookies? why and which ones? For example, marketing & advertising

-> if you do not accept the cookies, do you decline all, or only allow the mandatory ones?

-> do you leave the website if the cookies cannot be turned off?