Amazon's Influence: The Online Apparel Purchase Intention of Amazon Prime
and Non-Prime Shoppers

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Introduction: Amazon, the world's largest e-commerce marketplace, represents a 50% share of the United States (U.S.) e-commerce market and inspires intense loyalty among shoppers with its Prime membership program (Chen et al., 2016). Both Amazon and Amazon Prime have grown in popularity and have completely transformed consumer expectations for online shopping (Wilson, 2018). As Amazon's dominance made it harder for retailers to meet consumers' expectations, many prominent retailers are closing stores or filing for bankruptcy in recent years (Barrabi, 2019). Thus, retailers must clearly understand the expectations and preferences of both Amazon Prime members and non-Prime shoppers (regular shoppers without Amazon Prime membership). Little research has been carried out to understand the online apparel purchasing behavior of Amazon Prime members and non-Prime shoppers. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to identify and explain the perceived benefits that Amazon Prime members and non-Prime shoppers in the U.S. engaged when developing an intention to purchase apparel online. A conceptual model was extended from the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991) by incorporating external variables such as convenience, time-savings, price, and product variety.

Literature Review: The spending of consumers quantifies consumer confidence, a major indicator of consumer behavior (Bennur et al., 2018). There are noticeable differences exist in the spending pattern and shopping preferences of Amazon Prime members and non-Prime shoppers. For instance, Amazon Prime members in the U.S. spend more than twice as much as compared to non-Prime shoppers (Wilson, 2018). Prime members' motivation for shopping on Amazon was mainly driven by conveniences. Akram (2018) reported that convenience had the strongest influence on consumers' intention to purchase apparel online. The convenience of shopping from anywhere and at any time, avoiding crowds, and elimination of cash payments enabled consumers to save both time and effort (Duarte et al., 2018). Since purchasing apparel online is flexible and efficient, consumers can achieve time-savings benefits (Wei et al., 2018). However, Ariffin et al. (2018) argued that buying products online could be a waste of time due to the complex process of placing an order and time spent searching for product information. Amazon Prime members and non-Prime shoppers also cited price as one of the major reasons for shopping on Amazon (Epsilon.com, 2018). A price benefit such as discounts, price promotions, or lower prices increased shopping satisfaction, and in turn escalated the intention to purchase apparel online (Khan et al., 2015). Moreover, online apparel shoppers were found to be variety seekers. Thus, Sethi et al. (2018) recommended that online retailers should offer a strong product line (i.e., depth and breadth) to increase consumers' number of choices and purchase intention. Since consumers' beliefs about perceived shopping benefits direct behavioral intention to purchase apparel online, TPB was adopted as the overarching theory in this research.

Methodology: Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) was used to recruit and collect data from a convenience sample for a total of 334 (Female: 56.6%) U.S. participants, aged between 21 and 69, via an online survey. A Likert-type, five-point scale (1 = strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree) was utilized for all survey items. Cronbach's alpha of 0.7 or higher and content validity were used as the determinant of the survey instrument's reliability and validity.

Results: The model predicted 72.5% of the variance for the intention to purchase apparel online ($F(4, 329) = 216.59$, $p<.05$). Convenience, price, and product variety had a significant positive influence on consumers' intention to purchase apparel online (H5, H7, H8, supported). However, time-savings was not found to be significant. The Mann-Whitney test results showed that Amazon Prime members perceived greater price comparison than non-Prime shoppers (H3, supported). However, there were no significant differences between Amazon Prime members and non-Prime shoppers in their perception toward convenience, time-savings, and product variety while buying apparel online. Therefore, hypotheses H1, H2, and H4 were not supported.

Figure 1.
Statistical Findings for Theoretical Model
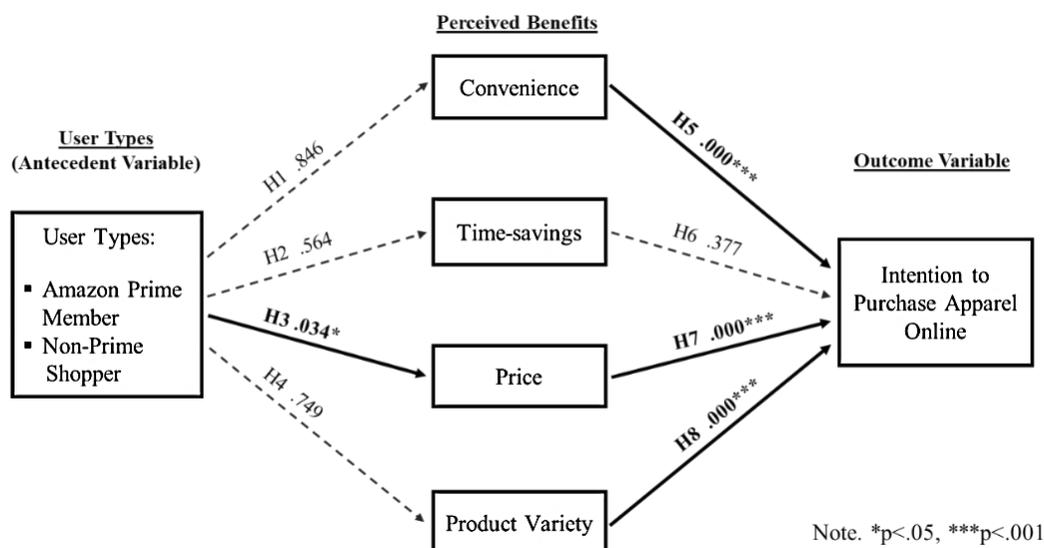
Discussion and Implications: This study provides empirical evidence regarding the influence of convenience, time-savings, price, and product variety on consumers' intention to purchase apparel online. In addition, the distinctive differences between Amazon Prime members and non-Prime shoppers' perceptions toward online shopping benefits were addressed. It is anticipated that the results of this study will help both online and physical store retailers, marketers, and Amazon sellers to develop compelling sales strategies. Researchers from across various fields will be able to use this study as a foundation to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the purchasing behavior of Amazon Prime members and non-Prime shoppers.

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