



## COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION BY SMALL APPAREL RETAILERS

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This study investigated present and planned future use of computers and the Internet by small-sized apparel retailers who are members of a market network. Networking is the formation of business alliances as one way small independent retailers can achieve market buying power. Network organizations can also aid in the communication of technology information.

Members of two apparel network organizations operating in 16 midwestern U.S. states participated; one network consisted of menswear retailers, the other women's wear. In total 233 retailers participated by responding to a pretested mailed questionnaire.

Retailer respondents are summarized as male, 48 years of age, married, Caucasian, post high school educated, and living in a community with a population of < 10,000. In terms of computers, 68% were users with an average of 2 terminals per store. Spreadsheet programs were reported as the most frequent in current and anticipated use among 16 different software applications.

As network members, these retailers were minimally involved; however, menswear versus women's wear members were more involved, and retailers in smaller versus larger communities were more involved. Retailers reported they asked computer consultants for information before asking network members. Reasons for not computerizing were lack of computer experience, too small a business, and lacking time commitment necessary for learning the technology. Internet usage was not favored for current nor future business potential.