Mobile Apparel Shopping: Application to Innovation Theory

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Our mobile devices have changed the way we think about apparel shopping. Today you can flip on your phone and buy a pair of jeans in under a minute. Mobile technology is becoming increasingly attractive as it converts traditional electronic commerce (e-commerce) into mobile commerce (m-commerce) (Min, Dong, & Chin, 2012) allowing consumers to conduct online transactions via devices such as smart phones and tablets. Some feel that m-commerce has become superior to e-commerce, as it can provide location-, customer-, personalization-, and context-based services (Wang & Li, 2012). Nearly half of all American adults own smart phones and before they buy clothes in-store, most browse the Internet for styles, search for coupons, and read customer reviews (Salfino, 2012). There are even mobile applications whereby a shopper can snap a photo of an item and find where to get the best deal. This leads to the practice called "showrooming," as consumers visit in-store retailers and then buy online. An Australian retailer recently started charging customers to just look if they don't buy (Bhasin, 2013). Others are embracing m-commerce illustrated by Sephora, Nordstrom, Macy's, Net-a-porter and Bloomingdale's rankings as the top five for digital innovation of fashion and beauty prestige brands, due to innovating and creating mobile experiences for the consumer (Strugatz, 2012).

Framework and Method. Using Roger's (1983) attributes of successful innovations as a framework, questions were developed to measure the following: compatibility, trialability, complexity, relative advantage, and observability. Lennon, Jasper, Damhorst, and Lakner (2003) used this innovation framework to study use of the computer to purchase products making a strong argument for marketers to communicate these attributes to consumers. The purpose of this study was to investigate mobile shopping relative to innovation attributes and evaluate hypothesized relationships between this and consumer behaviors related to mobile shopping. A survey was developed with focus group input using 1-5 Likert-type items to measure innovation attributes and behaviors in addition to age, gender, and ethnicity. The survey was distributed to a convenience sample of 250 consumers mostly female (66%) and of Generation Y (70%). This age group is seen as the most active in apparel m-commerce (Salfino, 2012). The largest ethnic groups were Caucasian and Asian. SPSS was used for statistical analysis. Frequencies were calculated for all variables. An innovation score was calculated by summing scores on the five innovation attribute items using data from those owning a smart device. Each item significantly and positively correlated with the sum of the attributes indicating the validity of the scale. Pearson correlations were used to analyze the innovation score with behaviors. Chi-square and t-tests were used to explore relationships with mobile device behaviors and demographics.

Results and Implications. Ninety-two percent of the sample (n=231) indicated they owned a smart device (phone or tablet), higher than the 70% quoted by Salfino in 2012, with

(58%) owning an iphone, 24% an Android, 9% a tablet, and 9% other. Over a third indicated they purchase products on their mobile devices and 20% said they would rather shop with their mobile device than in a physical store, indicating that just because they have a device does not mean that all purchase with it. However, they are using the devices to browse and do research and a third are using coupons provided on the device. No differences were found with age or gender; however, Caucasian and Asian respondents indicated they purchased significantly more often using their mobile devices than other ethnicities. Innovation scores ranged from 5-25 (the possible range) with most scoring 18-20, or neutral to agree. This correlated positively with each behavior investigated indicating that as respondents' behavior increased, so did their agreement with the innovation characteristics. See Table 1. The hypothesized relationship between mobile shopping as an innovation and consumer behaviors related to mobile shopping was accepted.

Results indicate that an increasing number of young consumers are using mobile devices in their shopping experiences. Retailers need to accommodate and capitalize on this phenomenon. They should also reinforce the innovative attributes of compatibility with lifestyle, added benefits, using the device to try new things, and observability.

Table 1. Mobile Device Behaviors (those who agree) Related to Innovation (n=231)

Behaviors	f	%	correlation with innovation	p
I use my mobile device to do research on a product	160	64%	.41	.001
I "window shop"/browse with my mobile device	141	56%	.58	.001
I like being able to buy clothing on my mobile device	121	48%	.21	.001
I purchase products on my mobile device	90	36%	.48	.001
I use coupons provided on my mobile device	85	34%	.38	.001
I download/use apps from my favorite clothing stores	66	26%	.27	.001
I use my mobile device to help locate items	57	23%	.32	.001

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