



## The Role of Curiosity on Showrooming and Webrooming.

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Keywords: Curiosity, Omni-channel Retailing, Showrooming/Webrooming

**Introduction.** Two consumer trends, showrooming and webrooming, have evolved from the growing accessibility of mobile technology (Khan, 2018). In an apparel shopping context, showrooming occurs when a consumer visits a store to check out a clothing product but then purchases the product online. Webrooming is the opposite behavior of showrooming. Consumers research clothing products online before going into the store for a final evaluation and purchase. To date, little empirical research has explored what motivates consumers' exploratory behavior in an omni-channel context. With that in mind, this study attempts to assess whether curiosity, as a psychological construct, can predict apparel shoppers' showrooming and webrooming behaviors.

**Background and Hypotheses.** This study builds on a theory of epistemic curiosity (Berlyne, 1954). Epistemic curiosity (EC) is defined as one's drive to know that is aroused by conceptual puzzles and gaps in knowledge (Berlyne, 1954). Berlyne (1954) suggests that EC motivates one's specific exploration behavior triggering a detailed investigation of novel stimuli to acquire new information. Extending this EC theory, Litman and Jimerson (2004) distinguished between two types of curiosity: (a) 'interest curiosity' focused on acquiring knowledge simply for the intrinsic joy of it, and (b) 'deprivation curiosity' focused on the correctness, accuracy, and relevance of the desired information to a specific unknown situation (Litman, 2008).

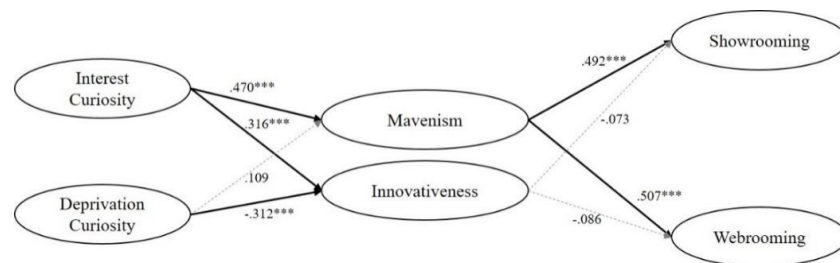
Research suggests that curiosity is a motivational state that leads individuals to seek methods to resolve the arousal it elicits (Loewenstein, 1994), thus revealing much about information seeking behavior (Litman, 2005) and purchase intention formation (Hill, Fombelle, & Sirianni, 2016) in consumption contexts. In line with this perspective, this study proposes and tests a conceptual model delineating how each dimension of curiosity (interest vs. deprivation) affects showrooming and webrooming through two mediating variables, market mavenism and consumer innovativeness. Mavenism is expected to play a mediating role as it is positively associated with consumer involvement with mobile phones and with clothing (Goldsmith, Flynn, & Clark, 2012). Prior research suggests that consumer innovativeness is one of the key variables explaining technology-mediated apparel shopping behavior (e.g., Kim, & Forsythe, 2008). Therefore, the following hypotheses were formulated:

- H1: A higher level of interest curiosity will lead to a higher level of: (a) market mavenism and (b) consumer innovativeness.

- H2: A higher level of deprivation curiosity will lead to a higher level of: (a) market mavenism and (b) consumer innovativeness.
- H3: A higher level of market mavenism will lead to a higher level of: (a) showrooming and (b) webrooming.
- H4: A higher level of consumer innovativeness will lead to a higher level of: (a) showrooming and (b) webrooming.

**Method and Results.** Data were collected from online apparel shoppers aged 18 or older in the United States. A total of 350 complete responses were collected through Amazon Mechanical Turk. The majority of the participants were female (58.3%), younger than 30 years old (43.1%), Caucasian (67.4%), with household income over \$60,000 (41.7%). Six multi-item scales were adopted based on literature review.

Cronbach's alpha values of the all constructs were greater than the generally accepted standard of 0.70. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted using Amos 25.0 to evaluate the quality of the measurement model. The fit indices indicated that the measurement model was a good fit to the data ( $\chi^2=394.91$ ,  $df=194$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\chi^2/df=2.04$ , CFI=.95, NNFI=.94, RMSEA=.05, SRMR=.05). Each construct had an average variance extracted greater than .50, providing evidence of convergent and discriminant validity. SEM analysis was conducted and the model fit was satisfactory ( $\chi^2=395.34$ ,  $df=195$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\chi^2/df=2.03$ , CFI=.95, NNFI=.94, RMSEA=.05, SRMR=.05).



After assessing the model fit, the relationships between constructs were analyzed. Interest curiosity had a positive influence on market mavenism ( $\beta = .47$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and consumer innovativeness ( $\beta = .32$ ,  $p < .001$ ) while deprivation curiosity had a negative influence only on consumer innovativeness ( $\beta = -.31$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Market mavenism had a positive effect on showrooming ( $\beta = .49$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and webrooming behavior ( $\beta = .51$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Consumer innovativeness did not have any effect on showrooming and webrooming behaviors. Lastly, there was a significant indirect effect of interest curiosity on showrooming ( $\beta = .21$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and webrooming ( $\beta = .21$ ,  $p < .01$ ) through market mavenism.

**Discussion and Implications:** Our findings suggest that market mavens motivated by interest curiosity tend to engage in both showrooming and webrooming. Many individual factors, both in-store and online, together may activate the interest curiosity of a consumer. In-store factors include exciting products, variety, excellent merchandising, appealing atmosphere, or new products. Online factors include website design, user-generated content (UGC), and social media. Also, our findings suggest that apparel retailers should attempt to facilitate market mavens' exploratory behavior through a seamless integration of online and offline channels. For example, Sephora's mobile app offers an "in-store" mode which consumers can use to scan a product in a store to read online ratings and reviews, access the loyalty program to check reward points, and receive personalized messages and alerts (Roman, 2017). This research is subject to certain limitations. Additional studies are needed to further enhance the generalizability of our findings. Future research should also explore differential antecedents and consequences based on retail formats (e.g., department stores vs. specialty stores).

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