

Best Practices for Targeted Marketing for Small Business Fashion Entrepreneurs

¹Kelcie Slaton, M.S., ²Tammy Kinley, Ph.D., ³Lynn Brandon, Ph.D., ⁴ Priscilla Connors, Ph.D.

Abstract

The purpose of this research was to determine the most effective promotion appeals for reaching target markets that a small business fashion entrepreneur might employ. Eight popular pieces of targeted advertising advice (social media, websites, retailer blogs, email, bloggers/influencers, videos, mobile apps, and TV ads) based on the Theory of Reasoned Action framework were tested via an online survey. When participants were asked to recall advisements that they had seen on the eight channels, the most frequently recalled were on social media (75%), email ads (70%), and ads on product websites (68%). The Theory of Reasoned Action is considered to be a good framework in this context of targeted advertising of small fashion-related businesses. Seeking prevailing wisdom on marketing strategies is very valuable, but only one side of the marketing equation. Other authors sought to determine the most popular promotional strategy advice noted by academia, the popular press, and the internet. How do potential targeted customers respond to these marketing strategies? Do the strategies effectively reach the consumer decision set? There is no knowledge of another study determining the effective promotion appeals for reaching target markets.

Keywords: advertising channel, fashion entrepreneur, fashion retailers, targeted advertising, theory of reasoned action

Introduction

There are over 27 million small businesses in the United States and these businesses account for 39 percent of the United States gross nation product (Headd, 2010). Further, small businesses create two out of three all new jobs or 99.7 percent (SBA, 2009). These small

businesses are created and owned by entrepreneurs who, according to Carland, Hoy, Boulton, and Carland (1984), are individuals that establish and manage a business with the goal of profit and growth. For the purpose of this study, the researchers looked specifically at fashion entrepreneurs who are, aligned with Lang and Liu's (2019) definition, individuals who have the capacity and will to start a small business providing fashion-related products and services for a profit. Fashion, in particular, is one of the world's most important industries as it accounts for nearly \$370 billion in revenue each year (Joint Economic Committee, 2015). According to Shi, Chen, Gifford, and Jin (2012), the fashion industry has the highest number of students who want to start a business after graduation and this number is increasing. However, it is not easy to enter this market as 50 percent of small businesses are not able to survive after four years (Nwazor, 2016) as the fashion industry is highly innovative and competitive (Pasuinelli, 2012). One reason for lack of success could be lack of attaining the target market and creating appeal. According to Robinson (2007) a key to a business's success is reaching the target market, which ensures that consumers are exposed to the retailer's offerings and by turn, inspired to purchase. The competition continues to grow as e-commerce enables companies to enter the market relatively easily thereby likely affecting the product life cycle (Moore & Fairhurst, 2003). As fashion entrepreneurs enter this competitive market and are seeking best practices to reach their specific customers, which strategies are needed for success?

1. 410 Avenue C, Denton, TX 76201 University of North Texas (940) 389-0866 kelcie.slaton@unt.edu

2. 410 Avenue C, Denton, TX 76201 University of North Texas (940) 565-4842 tammy.kinley@unt.edu

3. 410 Avenue C, Denton, TX 76201 University of North Texas (940) 565-2130 lyn.brandon@unt.edu

4. 410 Avenue C, Denton, TX 76201 University of North Texas (940) 565-4493 priscilla.connors@unt.edu

Popular strategies include the promotion and expansion of the business and its brand (McColl & Moore, 2011). This includes advertising strategies to reach the customers through specific advertising channels to communicate the products the retailer has to offer. The goal of advertising is to go beyond the colors, logos, and jingles, although important elements, and provide depictions of experiences and feelings target consumers are seeking. According to Abimbola (2001), branding is a marketing practice that is highly relevant to small businesses and stated that “branding as a marketing principle relevant to the entrepreneurial quest for stimulating demand and creating competitive advantage,” (pg. 97). Further, branding could follow in building a successful small business as creating a well-integrated set of brand elements, particular through targeted marketing, this can enhance both awareness and image.

Fashion entrepreneurs look at market segmentations and other elements to define their target market. Market segments are portions of a larger market determined by similarities in psychographics, product preferences, and purchase intention (Babin & Harris, 2016; Mothersbaugh & Hawkins, 2016). The entrepreneur must examine their brands, products, prices, services, and communications in order to define their segmentation strategies and define a target market (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013; Soloman & Rabolt, 2004) and then to target product communication to those specific groups of people (Soloman & Rabolt, 2004). After identifying a target market, a retailer can determine how to gain trust from the consumer and how to turn trusted consumers into loyal customers (Garrett, 2014). The strategy ensures the small business can withstand competitors and communicate its value, quality and image (McColl & Moore, 2011).

A small business needs to have an identity that can reach

and be relatable to the target market. However, with the growing competitive landscape enabled by relatively inexpensive targeted social marketing, there is a greater need for effective brand promotion strategies to create differentiation and positioning (McGee, 2014). The key for any fashion retailer is to choose a mix of promotional channels that will provide the best performance (Marketing Mix, 2014). According to Moore and Fairhurst (2003), there has been much work devoted to creating promotion strategies for fashion retailers to utilize, but the question is raised, do these strategies work?

Seeking prevailing wisdom on marketing strategies is very valuable, but only one side of the marketing equation. Slaton, Kinley, Brandon, and Connors (2020) sought to determine the most popular promotional strategy advice noted by academia, the popular press, and the internet. How do potential targeted customers respond to these marketing strategies? Do they find targeted marketing useful or annoying? Do the strategies effectively reach the consumer decision set (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013)? Therefore, the purpose of this research was to determine the most effective promotion appeals for reaching target markets that a small business fashion entrepreneur might employ. Also, will the promotion strategy generate an adequate return on investment by inspiring a purchase? Six research questions were used to guide the study:

RQ1: Is the promotion advice effective in reaching the desired target market?

RQ2: Is the promotion advice effective in building brand awareness?

RQ3: What are consumer attitudes toward targeted promotion?

RQ4: Do people feel compelled to follow the trends in targeted fashion promotions?

Rq5: Does targeted fashion promotion lead to a positive purchase intention?

Rq6: Is the prevailing advice effective in reaching the target market via positive purchase behavior?

To address these issues, we tested eight popular pieces of targeted advertising advice (social media, websites, retailer blogs, email, bloggers / influencers, videos, mobile apps, and TV ads) via the Theory of Reasoned Action framework.

Review of Literature

Theoretical Framework

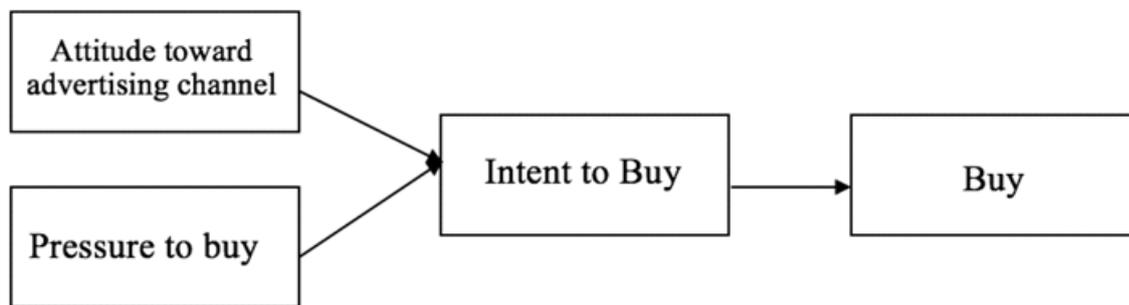


Figure 1. Employment of the TRA to Determine the Effectiveness of Prevailing Fashion Promotion Advice for Entrepreneurs.

The assumption of the theory is that humans are rational and use known information before performing an act or making a decision (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). In a fashion goods context, research has employed this framework to predicting interactions with Facebook page like ads (Kim, Lee, & Yoon, 2015), purchase of fashion counterfeit goods (Kim & Karpova, 2009), purchase intention of young consumers (Belleau, Summers, Xu, & Pinel, 2007), and students' adherence to dress code (Kaveh, Moradi, Hesampour, & Zadeh, 2015). In each study, both attitudes of the individuals and influence of peers influence their intention and ultimate behaviors. Specifically, product- or category-pertinent buyer decision making process where the TRA can be applied to understand individual attitudes toward product purchase intention as affected by their attitude towards the advertisement. For example, do they feel pressure to buy the product advertised, do they intend to buy the

Fishbein and Ajzen's Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) provides a framework for researchers to predict behavior based on precedent attitudes and intention. Individuals consider certain factors before choosing to partake in a behavior. The model shows that attitudes and subjective norms are a direct influence on behavioral intent, which is a prediction of performing the actual behavior (Al-Suqri & Al-Kharusi, 2015; Ranjbarian, Fathi, & Kamali, 2010). The research model for the present study is presented in Figure 1.

product, and do they actually purchase the product? The TRA can examine the attitudinal element of promotion strategies and the other variables that may entice a consumer to purchase a fashion product (Isaid & Nishat Faisal, 2015). However, there are a lack of studies that focus on this; specifically using TRA.

Strategy for Small Fashion-Related Businesses

Paid advertising has proven to provide success to new fashion-related businesses (Kotler, 2000). It has also been noted to positively influence the retailers' existing products since new product advertisements bring customer traffic (Supphellen, Eismann, & Hem, 2004). An essential element of promotion is to understand the consumer's behavior (Giele, 2009).

In addition to controlled paid advertising campaigns, there has been an increase of promotional channels

available for fashion entrepreneurs to utilize in the past decade (Watson, Worm, Palmatier, & Ganesan, 2015). Of particular note is the growing number of creative opportunities on the internet fueled by big data mining and digital technologies (Taiminen & Karjaluoto, 2015). Although the task of choosing and making sure the selected promotion channels are interacting efficiently is a challenging task, success occurs when the customer acquisition via product purchase results (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2016).

Choosing the best promotion channel is dependent on the target market. Fashion entrepreneurs need to take into account demographics, such as age, gender, location, and economic status, as well as psychographic variables that address the social psychology of shopping behavior to ensure they are using the right channels to reach the target market (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2016). Unfortunately, this science is not perfect; there is not a formula that will ensure that members of a consumer segment will respond to the same approach. Another consideration is the promotion budget needed to ensure effective reach. If there are several promotional channels an entrepreneur wants to exploit, proper budget planning is needed (Miller, 2016). To that end, Stolyarova and Rialp (2014), tested the efficiency of promotion media communication channels. The researchers noted there was little research in the efficiency of communication channels such as television, press, radio, online, and outdoor. Using Data Envelopment Analysis, or DEA, the researchers found that television promotions were the most efficient promotion channel and print was the least efficient. Efficiency was measured by how the consumer perceived the retailer value in the advertisement from the tested channels.

Brand Awareness

Brand awareness is the extent in which the name or qualities are familiar to the consumer and is present in

their minds (Aaker, 1991), or in other words, being able to remember or recall a brand (Pappu & Quester, 2006). Awareness may incorporate perceived quality and other recognized elements such as logos and promotion images (Pappu & Quester, 2006), and has been found to be directly related to the decisions made by consumers when they are considering a purchase (Arnett, Laverie, & Meiers, 2003; Hartman & Spiro, 2015). According to Grewal, Krishnan, and Baker (1998), a consumer has a positive association with a brand when the brand has a positive reputation or image.

Brand awareness is frequently overlooked in promotion strategies and is noted to be a crucial consideration toward building brand equity, which is defined as the value beyond the physical assets of the brand. The more consumers are aware of the brand, the stronger the reputation, the greater the overall brand value. Word of mouth, particularly driven by social media, plays a big part in creating brand awareness, brand equity, and potential loyalty (Kokemuller, n.d). Shabbir, Khan, and Khan, (2017) advocate examination of brand image, brand loyalty, and brand equity and how they relate to brand awareness. Their study suggests brand loyalty and brand image are key determinants of the end goal of brand equity. Shabbir et al. (2017) also found that brand awareness fully mediates the effects that brand loyalty and brand image have on brand equity.

Brand awareness is more than brand recall and is considered a communication objective (Percy & Rossiter, 1992). Therefore, creating brand awareness should be the first step in building promotion objectives. When entrepreneurs work to develop brand awareness, the result should be increased traffic and buzz in the market. When customers think of a certain brand first due to strategy has achieved top of mind brand awareness, creating market advantage (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2016; Kokemuller, n.d).

Customer Attitudes

An attitude is a learned element that allows a customer to like or dislike a particular product. In promotions, it is the favorable or unfavorable response to the advertisement (MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989). Customers' attitudes towards advertising and promotion have been studied and offered as a theoretical construct since 1981. For example, Christian, Zdenek, and Lucie (2014) found that customer attitudes towards advertisements differed based on the type of advertisement they observed and the advertised brand.

When it comes to promoting a brand on a social media channel, the customer's attitude can be the key success determinant of effectiveness (Mehta, 2000). Several studies have shown that customer attitudes towards promotion in general are dependent on several variables including credibility, perceptions, attitude towards brand, and observer mood. These findings relate to promotions in general and could vary depending on the channel, content, and ultimately, brand (Christian, Zdenek, & Lucie, 2014). Indeed, advancements in technology provide increasingly detailed market information and help identify ways to create a more positive attitude towards the brand and advertisement (Eze & Lee, 2012).

Purchase Intention

As a fashion entrepreneur, it is important to research consumer intentions (Blackwell, Miniard, & Engel, 2006; Ghalandari & Norouzi, 2012). According to Hawkins and Mothersbaugh (2010), intention is the action that stimulates a particular purchase. The connection between wants, needs, and intention is the center of measuring consumers' purchase behavior and TRA (Kim & Pysarchik, 2000). The consumers' behavior will be informed by the strength of the consumer's intention. If there is a strong intention, there is a high likelihood a behavior will be performed, and conversely,

if the intention is weak there is a small likelihood the behavior will be performed (Ajzen, 1991). The intention for a customer to purchase a product depends on the perceived value of the product and perhaps, on recommendations from other customers who have bought and used the product (Zeithaml, 1988). Promotions and user-generated word of mouth that are positive have been found to lead to positive purchase intention (Hoy & Milne, 2010).

Purchase Behavior

Retailers research consumer purchase behavior in order to understand why consumers make purchases and what factors influence that purchase. Once the retailer's research leads to a prediction of consumer repeated exposure and constant delivery, the market purchase behavior, a marketing strategy can be established appeal to the target consumer (Bhasin, 2016). The classic consumer decision making model (Bhasin, 2016; Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2016) describes a six-step process when purchasing a product. First, the consumer recognizes a need for a product and then begins to research information about the product, whether it be internally, that is based on memories, or externally, which can include internet search, word of mouth, and comparative shopping. Next the consumer will consider alternatives to the product and compare choices. The fourth step is the decision to purchase or not purchase and the next step will be the purchase. The last step involves the consumer evaluating their purchase by using it and making conclusions from their experience with the product.

Advice for Entrepreneurs

There are many ways to reach a consumer in a saturated market. Advice for entrepreneurs can be sought in many different areas. Slaton, Kinley, Brandon, and Connors (2019) studied advice found from academia, the popular press, and the internet. They found in total 194 different

advice points from the three different sources. The top ten advice points includes social media, websites, blogs, email promotions, influencers, videos, mobile applications, TV ads, search engine optimization, and Facebook page. While this provides great insight to how fashion entrepreneurs should promote their offerings, Slaton et al. (2019) did not test the effectiveness of these promotion channels. Therefore, a study like this is needed to determine what promotion channel is the most effective.

Methods

This study tested the eight most popular pieces of targeted promotional advice found in Slaton et al. (2019): social media, websites, retailer blogs, email, bloggers/influencers, videos, mobile apps, and TV ads. The researchers composed a consumer survey to test the effectiveness of each of the types of promotion advice. The survey was posted on the researchers' Facebook accounts for friends to participate and share, utilizing a snowball technique. This methodology for data collection has been determined valid (Stanley, 2011), and an effective way to reach a variety of participants in different demographic groups. Additionally, the researchers also asked fellow graduate students and faculty of a southwestern U.S. university to post the survey on their social media sites and offer the survey to their students in order to reach as wide an audience as possible, covering a broad range of individuals with different backgrounds, age, education level, and consumer behaviors. A drawing for five gift certificates (maximum \$50 value) was offered as an incentive. This methodology was reviewed and approved by the authors' Institutional Review Board.

In addition to sample demographics, instruments used to measure the variables were adapted from other studies. To measure targeted promotion effectiveness, the researchers asked the participants to recall any three

fashion brand advertisements they had seen in each of the eight channels tested. If they could recall three advertisements, defined broadly as product promotions, the marketing strategy was deemed effective. Brand awareness was measured with a survey from Pappu and Quester (2006), consisting of four items, measured with a 7-point (Strongly Disagree/ Strongly Agree) Likert scale. Consumer attitudes was measured with the Public Opinion Towards Advertising scale developed by Pollay and Mittal (1993). This scale consisted of 30 statements that were measured using a 5-point (Disagree/Agree) Likert scale.

To gain information about *consumers' encouragement to follow trends*, the researchers asked the participants the following Yes/No question: "Have you regarded images in targeted ads as features of the latest trends?" Additionally, participants were asked the following questions for each of the eight advice sources, "Do you feel encouraged to follow the trends you see in targeted fashion ads? Do you feel obligated to follow the trends you see in targeted fashion ads? Do you shy away from the trends you see in targeted fashion ads?" Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert (Never/Always) scale. *Purchase intention* was similarly measured with a Yes/No question, "Have you given thought to purchasing items you have seen in targeted ads?" *Purchase behavior* was measured by the following question, "Have you purchased items you seen in targeted ads? That is, have you clicked on the link and actually made a purchase?" Again, the participant answered with a simple Yes/No option.

In addition to the questions provided to address the research questions, the participants were asked several open-ended questions: "What kinds of merchandise have you purchased specifically from targeted ads?" "What Kinds of targeted advertisements do you like?" "What kinds of targeted advertisements do you dislike?" "Do

you consider targeted ads to be intrusive or do you appreciate the targeted aspect of the ads? Why?” “Do you think people see targeted ads as intrusive or welcomed? Why?” The eight targeted promotion advice points from Slaton et al. (2019) that were used as the context for this study were: social media, product websites, retailer blogs, email, bloggers/influencers, product videos, mobile apps, and tv ads.

Findings

With these methods of dissemination, 490 surveys were returned, of which 312 were usable (63.7% return rate). Surveys were eliminated from the study because a substantial number of questions (90% or more) were left blank. One survey was completed by a minor subject (indicated by a reported age of 16). Since the use of minor subjects was not approved by the researcher's Institutional Review Board, this survey, though complete, was removed from analysis.

Sample Description

Survey participants ranged in age from 18 to 85, with a mean age of 41.29. Of the 261 (83.7%) participants who answered the question, 27 (10.3%) were male and 234 (89.7%) were female. The lack of gender diversity is acknowledged as a limitation of the study. Of the 261 (83.7%) participants who provided their ethnicity, white participants comprised the majority of the sample (70.8%), followed by Hispanics (5.4%), African American (3.5%), Asian-Pacific Islander (1.3%), and the remaining 2.6% identified as “other”. Those who selected “other” indicated they were mostly of multiple ethnic backgrounds. The overrepresentation of White, non-Hispanic subjects in the sample, as compared to the U.S. population statistics, is acknowledged as a limitation of the study. A total of 259 (83.01%) of the participants provided their annual household income. Almost 39% indicated an income of \$60,000 or above. The detail of the sample demographics with a U.S. Census comparison is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Sample Demographics.

| | | Frequency | Percent | U.S. Census Comparison % (Where Available) |
|-----------|---------------------|---------------|---------|---|
| Gender | Female | 234 | 89.70% | 50.80% |
| | Male | 27 | 10.30% | 49.20% |
| Age | | Mean = 41 | | U.S. Mean = 37 |
| | | Range = 18-85 | | |
| Ethnicity | White | 221 | 70.80% | 77.10% |
| | Hispanic | 17 | 5.40% | 17.60% |
| | African American | 11 | 3.50% | 13.30% |
| | Asian-Pacific | 4 | 1.30% | 5.60% |
| | Two or More Races | 8 | 2.60% | 2.60% |
| Income | Less than \$20,000 | 39 | 12.50% | |
| | \$20,001-\$40,000 | 45 | 14.40% | |
| | \$40,001-\$60,000 | 48 | 15.40% | |
| | \$60,001-\$80,000 | 25 | 8.00% | |
| | \$80,001-\$100,000 | 29 | 8.30% | |
| | More than \$100,001 | 73 | 23.40% | |

Note. Census income data is not provided for comparison because the U.S. Census provides this data in a multitude of categories which make comparison to the present data difficult.

Instrument Validation

In order to ascertain the reliability of the instruments used to measure targeted promotion effectiveness, brand awareness, customer attitudes, encouragement to follow trends, purchase intention, purchase behavior, shopping behavior, and effectiveness of promotion, principal components factor analyses with varimax rotation was computed on each of the scales to examine underlying dimensions of the constructs. All variables loaded on single factors with computed alphas of .07 or above (Kline, 1998). This reliability measure is deemed acceptable (Nunnally, 1978).

Results

To address research question one, "Is the promotion advice effective in reaching the desired target market?" the researcher asked the participants to recall three advertisements that were placed in each of the eight promotion channels. The researcher determined that if they could recall three advertisements, the brand had reached them, if not, the brand strategy was ineffective. Of the 312 participants,

- 234 (75.00%) recalled three ads from social media,

- 215 (68.91%) recalled as from email ads,
- 211 (68.00%) recalled from product websites,
- 164 (52.56%) recalled ads from TV ads
- 89 (28.53%) recalled ads from products videos,
- 84 (27.88%) recalled ads from mobile apps,
- 50 (16.03%) recalled ads from bloggers/influencers, and
- 38 (12.18%) recalled ads from retailer's blogs.

Thus, the most effective targeted promotion strategies were social media, email ads, and ads on websites (defined for the participants as "paid advertisements place on webpages").

Addressing research questions two, "Is the promotion advice effective in building brand awareness?" Since the responses to the four questions used to measure brand awareness loaded on a single variable, they were averaged to create a single value for analysis. Descriptive analysis, comparing the mean of brand awareness for each of the eight targeted marketing channels, indicated targeted advertising placed on websites (M=3.65) was the most effective. Email (M=3.33) was the next most effective targeted advertising channel, followed by TV ads (M=2.80), as indicate in Table 2.

Table 2. Brand Awareness by Advertising Channel.

| Advice for Targeted Advertising | Mean |
|----------------------------------|------|
| Websites | 3.65 |
| Email Advertising | 3.33 |
| Social Media | 3.09 |
| TV Advertising | 2.8 |
| General Blog Promotion | 2.67 |
| Retailer Blogs | 2.64 |
| Video Demonstrations/Information | 2.34 |
| Smartphone Apps | 2.01 |

Addressing research question three, “What are consumer attitudes toward targeted advertising?” attitudes toward advertising was measured with 30 questions from (Pollay and Mittal, 1993). To make the data more manageable, principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation was computed. Criteria used to determine factor composition included an Eigen value of one and items loading above .50 on a single factor. With this methodology, the 30 advertising attitude questions were reduced to six factors with Cronbach's alpha reliabilities ranging from .87 to .38. When the question, “Overall, I consider advertising a good thing” was removed from the factor labeled, “Misleading,” the Cronbach's alpha increased from .381 to .768. Therefore, the question was eliminated from further analysis so that the “Misleading” factor could be retained. A sixth factor computed a reliability coefficient of only .632, lower than the minimum of .70 (Nunnally, 1978), and thus was eliminated from further analysis. The five factors retained for analysis were named Undesirable, Desirable, Informative, Entertaining, Misleading, and Economical. Mean values were computed for each variable. The strongest attitudes were Informative (M=4.23), Entertaining (M=3.37), and

Undesirable (M=3.25). This concludes that participants had strong attitudes towards advertisement that seemed to convey information, be considered entertainment, and those advertisements that engendered a negative attitude.

Addressing research question four, “Do people feel compelled to follow the trends in targeted fashion ads?” survey participants were asked a general yes/no response question, “Have you regarded images in targeted ads as features of the latest trends?” The majority of participants (55.8%) answered “Yes” and 27.6% answered “No.” The disparate sizes of the group is acknowledged as a limitation of the study. ANOVA indicated that participants who considered ads as a source of trend information felt encouraged to follow those trends (M=2.96, F=49.626, $p<.0001$) and felt obligated to follow those trends (M=2.26, F=19.278, $p<.001$) more so than participants who did not feel obligated to use ads as a trend resource (M=1.95 and M=1.62, respectively). There was not a significant difference between the groups when asked if they tend to shy away from the trends seen in targeted fashion ads (Table 3).

Table 32. Targeted Ads as a Source of Trend Information.

| | See Ad as a Trend Inspiration Mean | Do Not See Ad as a Trend Inspiration Mean | F | p |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|--------|-------|
| | N= 174 (55.8%) | N= 86 (27.6%) | | |
| I feel encouraged to follow trends in the targeted fashion | 2.96 | 1.95 | 49.626 | 0.001 |
| I feel obligated to follow trends in the targeted fashion | 2.26 | 1.62 | 19.278 | 0.001 |
| I shy away from trends in targeted fashion advertisements. | 2.67 | 6.67 | 0.001 | 0.978 |

Addressing research question five, “Does targeted fashion advertising lead to a positive purchase intention?” participants were asked if they had given thought to purchasing items seen in targeted ads, 80.1% responded “yes” and 19.9% responded “no”. When participants were asked if they have actually made a purchase from the targeted advertisement channel, 44.6% responded “yes” and 55.4% responded “no”. Although participants had given thought to purchasing items from a targeted ad, it mostly did not result in a purchase of that item. Participants were then asked what kinds of merchandise they have purchased from targeted advertising in a free response question. The most frequent responses were clothing (26.87%), beauty products (16.53%), shoes (11.37%), food/drink (7.75%), jewelry (5.17%), and home products (4.13%).

To glean more specific information that would connect the marketing advice with targeted ad purchase behavior

and addressing research question six, “Is the advice effective in reaching the target market via positive purchase behavior?” the researcher further analyzed the data filtered for the participants who indicated they have previously purchased items they saw in targeted ads (Table 4). The most effective advertising channels seem to be from ads on websites (62.6% conversion) and through email (57.89% conversion). The website question was a general question framed as ads noticed on websites visited, as opposed to asking them about purchases made from a retailer's website. Also noteworthy is the low number of responses for the two blog questions.

TRA posits that attitude and pressure to purchase affects the intent to buy and ultimately purchase behavior (Figure 2). To this end, attitudes toward advertising and perceived obligation (pressure) to

Table 4. Indication that Survey Participants¹ Have Shopped for Brands Featured in the Advertising Channels.

| Advertising Channel | n | Frequency ² | % | Mean ² |
|----------------------|-----|------------------------|-------|-------------------|
| Social Media | 114 | 59 | 51.75 | 3.32 |
| Websites | 111 | 68 | 62.26 | 3.59 |
| Retail Blog | 27 | 9 | 33.33 | 3 |
| Email | 114 | 66 | 57.89 | 3.45 |
| Bloggers/Influencers | 49 | 19 | 38.78 | 3 |
| Videos | 110 | 37 | 33.64 | 2.65 |
| Mobile Apps | 109 | 20 | 18.35 | 2.13 |
| TV Ads | 111 | 38 | 34.23 | 2.94 |

Note. ¹Data are filtered for those participants who indicated they have purchased items they saw in targeted ads.

Note. ²Responses on a 5-point scale where 1=Never and 5=Frequently. For the purposes of this research question, responses with a value of 4 or 5 were summed.

follow trends were compared to purchase intention. When attitudes toward advertising were compared to purchase intention (“Have you given thought to purchasing items you have seen in targeted ads?”), ANOVA indicated a significant relationship between the attitudes, “desirable” ($F=9.589$, $p<.01$), “misleading” ($F=7.625$, $p<.01$), and “informative” ($F=13.913$, $p<.0001$) and purchase intention (see Table 5). When

participants had strong attitudes towards desirable advertising, and/or toward informative advertising, they thought more about purchasing the products in the ad. When participants had strong attitudes towards misleading advertisements, they felt less obligated to purchase the product from the advertisement.

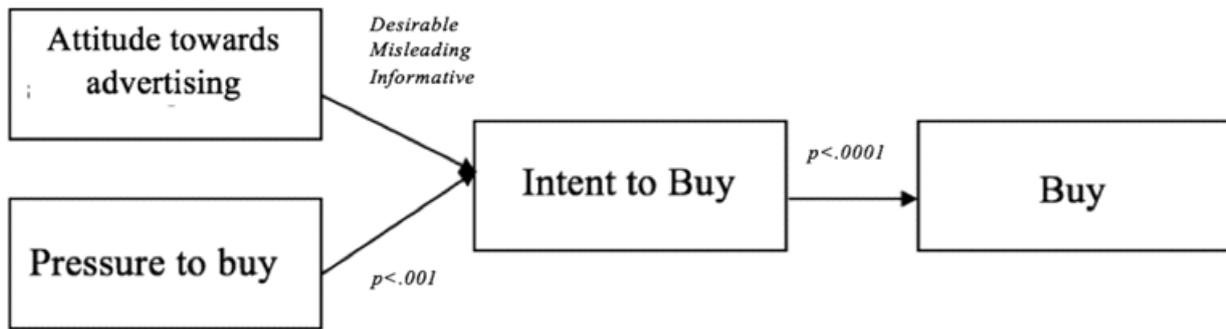


Figure 2. Concluded Model (Framework from TRA).

Table 5. Attitude Towards Advertising and Purchase Consideration.

| | Given Thought to Purchasing a Product via Advertisement Mean | Did Not Give Thought to Purchasing a Product via Advertisement Mean | F | p |
|--------------|--|---|--------|--------|
| Undesirable | 3.27 | 3.32 | 0.082 | 0.775 |
| Desirable | 2.87 | 2.42 | 9.89 | 0.002 |
| Misleading | 2.5 | 2.88 | 7.625 | 0.006 |
| Entertaining | 3.41 | 3.14 | 3.48 | 0.063 |
| Informative | 4.3 | 3.75 | 13.913 | 0.0001 |
| Economical | 2.43 | 2.2 | 1.408 | 0.237 |

When pressure to purchase was compared to intent to purchase, ANOVA computed a significant result. Participants who had given thought to purchasing items seen in targeted ads felt more obligated to follow the trends in targeted advertising (M=2.17) than participants who were less likely to consider purchase (M=1.60; F=10.790, p<.001). When intent to purchase was compared to reported purchase behavior, chi square analysis indicated a significant difference (X²=19.616, p<.0001). Just over half of the sample (51.4%) followed through on a purchase after indicating they considered purchase. Therefore, TRA is considered to be a good framework in this context of targeted advertising of fashion brands.

Discussion

The purpose of this research was to determine the effectiveness of targeted advertising advice fashion entrepreneurs can access and determine its effectiveness in terms of brand awareness, shopping involvement, customer attitudes, ability to communicate trends,

purchase intention, and purchase behavior. The Theory of Reasoned Action was used as a framework for this research. In the original model, attitudes and subjective norms positively relate to the intent to perform a behavior, which is positively related to performing that behavior. In the current study, the TRA model was utilized to predict that attitudes toward targeted advertising and pressure to follow fashion trends would positively relate to intent to purchase which would, in turn, positively relate to purchase behavior. After analysis, desirable and informative advertising attitudes provided a significant relationship to intent to purchase. Pressure to follow trends had a significant effect on purchase intention. Lastly, purchase intention had a significant effect on reported purchase behavior. In conclusion, the TRA model provided a proper framework to predict purchase behavior from targeted.

The most popular channels to purchase items was from ads on websites visited (as opposed to retailer's websites) and via email advertisements, and social media. Social

media, email, and websites are digital channels that are rising in popularity as revenue from these ads are increasing and outpacing traditional channels such as TV (IAB, 2010). These digital channels differ from traditional promotional channels as they are highly used by consumers, inexpensive, targetable, and measurable. In 2016, of the approximate population in the US of 323,996,000 people, 88.6% use the internet. Facebook, a popular social media site, had a 62.0% penetration rate (North America, 2016). Globally, there are 4.3 billion email users (Smith, 2017). Consumers can see the items they wish to purchase on the advertisement, and with a quick click of a link, they are brought to a page in which they can carry out that purchase. The convenience of the purchase process is a positive element that allows consumer to purchase online.

According to Hu (2004), targeted internet advertising costs less than most traditional promotion channels, sometimes virtually costless, and can rely on performance-based pricing instead of upfront pricing on many traditional channels. This is possible as it is easier to measure and track the performance of the targeted advertisement via digital channels such as social media, email, and websites. Thus, advertising agencies and platforms are held more accountable (Goldfarb & Tucker, 2011). Further, according to Goldfarb and Tucker (2011), digital channels allow for targetability as data can be automatically tracked at the individual consumer level and can easily show these consumers different types of ads using algorithms.

An interesting finding indicated that the majority of participants gave thought to purchasing items seen in targeted ads; however, less than half indicated they actually followed through on purchasing. In this case, there may have not been a strong enough intention to entice purchasing as if the intention is weak there is a small likelihood the behavior will be performed (Azjen,

1991). Further, the consumer may have not seen the perceived value of the product or did not received a positive recommendation from customers who have bought and used the product (Zeithaml, 1988). However, of those that did make a purchase from the ads, the most popular items purchased were clothing and beauty products.

Most participants' attitudes towards targeted advertising was that it is undesirable. Many consumers find that advertising is intrusive and can contribute to bad buying habits. Firms are continually working on ways to improve their ability to find out information about consumers and reach them via advertising based on their technology footprint (Johnson, 2013). Because of this, consumers are faced with many targeted advertisements on a daily basis. According to Story (2007), consumers can see up to 5,000 ad messages a day. Although these 5,000 ad messages are not all targeted, the number can be overwhelming for consumers, creating an undesirable amount of marketing noise (Babin and Harris, 2016). For a company to target a consumer, the company receives a signal that informs that company of a match between them and a consumer (Johnson, 2013). Technology then allows follow-up.

In terms of effectively reaching the desired market, participants were more aware of targeted advertisements on social media, as 75% were able to name three brands advertised from that channel. Email, websites, and TV advertisements proved to have high reach with 68.9%, 67.6%, and 52.6%, respectively. According to Asano (2017), people spend an average of 35 minutes on Facebook, 25 minutes on Snapchat, 15 minutes on Instagram, and one minute in Twitter (all social media channels) daily. Social media consumption adds up to a total of ten hours and 39 minutes the average person spends online each day (Howard, 2016). The average American watches five hours and four minutes of TV a

day (Koblin, 2016) and spends six hours and 20 minutes on email (note this includes work email) a day (Reaney, 2015). With the large amount of time spent on these media, the consumer is becoming more aware of brands as they advertise on those media. This finding reinforces that fashion entrepreneurs who want to reach their desired market can do so by advertising on social media. Low performers in reaching the desired market are bloggers/influencers (16.0%), mobile apps (26.9%), and product videos (28.5%). Participants were also not as aware of brands on retailers' blogs, with only 12.2% able to name three brands. A larger number of participants did not read retailers' blogger/influencers' content as they are not as familiar with them. This can be attributed to the fact that consumer must seek out blogs and read them (Navarra & Lopez-Rua, 2016).

In terms of building brand awareness on the advised channels, websites proved to be the most effective, along with email, social media, and TV. Mobile applications were found to be the weakest in building brand awareness. According to Abimbola (2001), innovative and imaginative ads are seen using digital channels and encourage brand awareness. Mobile application does fall into this category, but as they are developing and gaining in popularity, only early adopters (3% of the population) are using this channel (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013). Again, fashion entrepreneurs are challenged to utilize company websites, email, social media, and TV as advertising channels to build brand awareness within their target consumers. With consumption levels high in the most effective categories, consumers are more likely to be aware of brands that use them as a targeted advertising channel.

Limitations

The researcher used snowball sampling that requires networking among close friends and family. This method was used due to the convenience and cost-effective

measures. While a valid data collection methodology (Stanley, 2011), with this method, the sample can contain individuals in the same geographical area who have similar beliefs and habits skewing the results. Further, the survey was primarily distributed via Facebook, which may have influenced the social media findings. As a result of this sampling method, the results may not represent the view of the population as a whole.

When accessing the demographics of the survey participants, only 10.3% of the respondents were male. This is considered a limitation of the study, as it does not represent the population of men in the United States and may not accurately represent the population. Additionally, many of the participants of the study did not read or follow blogs, whether it be retailer blogs or blogs produced by individuals. This is a limitation as the researcher was not able to accurately calculate the effectiveness of retailer blogs and bloggers/influencers' blogs. Other studies need to survey individuals who are more aware of these advertising methods at a later date, as advertising in blogs is a new approach and gaining in popularity.

Suggestions

Further research is needed to determine attitudes by advertising channel in the Theory of Reason action model. In this study, attitudes towards advertising as a whole was utilized and proved to be parallel to the original framework as attitudes and pressure to follow trend had a significant effect on purchase intention and intention had a significant effect on purchase behavior. Research looking at attitudes by channel can further test the effectiveness of the targeted advertising advice. Additionally, as blogs are developing and gaining popularity, additional research should be conducted to determine whether using retailers' blogs or hiring bloggers/influencers to advertise products will be more effective. The same should be done with mobile apps and

products videos as these channels are a fairly new targeted advertising medium.

References

- Aaker, D. (1991). *Managing brand equity*. New York, NY: The Free Press.
- Abimbola, T. (2001). Branding as a competitive strategy for demand management in SMEs. *Journal of Research in Marketing and Entrepreneurship*, 3(2), 97-106.
- Ajzen I. (1991). *The theory of planned behavior*. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 50(2), 179–211.
- Al-Suqri, M.N. & Al-Kharusi, R.M. (2015). *Information seeking behavior and technology adoption: Theories and trends*. Hersey, PA: IGI Global.
- Arnett, D.B., Laverie, D.A., & Meiers, A. (2003). Developing parsimonious retailer equity indexes using partial least squares analysis: A method and applications. *Journal of Retail*, 79(3), 61–170.
- Asano, E. (2017). How much time do people spend on social media? *Social Media Today*. Received from <http://www.socialmediatoday.com/marketing/how-much-time-do-people-spend-social-media-infographic>
- Babin, B. & Harris, E. (2016). *CB (7th ed.)*. Boston, MA: South-Western College Pub.
- Belleau, B., Summers, T., Xu, Y., & Pinel, P. (2007). Theory of reasoned action: Purchase intention of young consumers. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 25(3), 244-257.
- Blackwell R.D., Miniard P.W., & Engel J.F. (2006). *Consumer behavior (10th ed)*. Mason, OH: Thomson.
- Carland, J.W., Hoy, F., Boulton, W.R., & Carlna, J.C. (1984). Differentiating small business entrepreneurs from small business owners: A conceptualization. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 9(10), 354-359.
- Christian, D., Zdenek, L., & Lucie, V. (2014). Attitude toward advertising in general and attitude towards a specific type of advertising: A first empirical approach. *Journal of Competitiveness*, 6(1), 87-103.
- Eze, U.C. & Lee C.H. (2012). Consumer's attitude towards advertising. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 7(13), 94-108.
- Fishbein M. & Ajzen I. (1975). *Belief, attitude, intention, and behavior: An introduction to theory and research*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co.
- Garrett, C. (2014). Branding vs. advertising: Know the difference to grow. *Brand Twist*. Received from <http://brandtwist.com/advertising/branding-vs-advertising-know-the-difference-to-grow/>
- Ghalandari K. & Norouzi A. (2012). The effect of country of origin on purchase intention: The role of product knowledge. *Research Journal of Applied Sciences, Engineering & Technology*, 4, 1166-1171.
- Giele, F. (2009). *Chinese consumer behavior: An introduction*. Fransgiele. Received from <http://fransgiele.be/freematerial/2009chineseconsumerbehaviour.pdf>
- Goldfarb, A. & Tucker, C. (2011). Online advertising. *Advances in Computers*, 81, 289-315.
- Grewal, R., Krishnan, J., & Baker, J. (1998). The effects of store name, brand name and price discounts on consumers' evaluations and purchase intentions. *Journal of Retail*, 74(3), 331–352.
- Hartman, K. & Spiro, R. (2005). Recapturing store image in customer-based store equity: A construct conceptualization. *Journal of Business Research*, 58(8), 1112–1120.
- Hawkins, D. & Mothersbaugh, D. (2013). *Consumer behavior: Building marketing strategy (12th ed)*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill/Irwin.
- Headd, B. (2010). *An analysis of small business and jobs*. Small Business Administration, Office of Advocacy, March 2010.
- Howard, J. (2016). Americans devote more than 10 hours a day to screen time and growing. *CNN*. Received from <http://www.cnn.com/2016/06/30/health/americans-screen-time-nielsen/index.html>
- Hoy, M.G., & Milne, G. (2010). Gender differences in privacy-related measures for young adult Facebook users. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 10(2), 28–45.
- Hu, Y.J. (2004). *Performance-based pricing models in online advertising*. Purdue University—Krannert School of Management.
- IAB. (2010). *IAB internet advertising revenue report: 2009 full-year results*. New York, NY: IAB.
- Isaid, E.N. & Nishat Faisal, M. (2015). Consumers' repurchase intention towards a mobile phone brand in Qatar: An exploratory study utilizing theory of reasoned action framework. *Global Business Review*, 16(4), 594–608.
- Johnson, J. (2013). Targeted advertising and advertising avoidance. *Journal of Economics*, 44(1), 128-144.
- Joint Economic Committee. (2015). *The economic impact of*

- the fashion industry. Retrieved from https://www.jec.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/2523ae10-9f05-4b8a-8954-631192dcd77f/jec-fashion-industry-report---sept-2015-update.pdf
- Kaveh, M., Moradi, L., Hesampour, M., & Zadeh, H. (2015). A survey of the effective factors in students' adherence to university dress code policy, using the theory of reasoned action. *Journal of Advances in Medical Education & Professionalism*, 3(3), 133–141.
- Kim, H. & Karpova, E. (2009). Consumer attitudes toward fashion counterfeits: Application of the theory of planned behavior. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 28(2), 79-94.
- Kim, S., Lee, J., & Yoon, D. (2015). Norms in social media: The application of theory of reasoned action and personal norms in predicting interactions with Facebook page like ads. *Communication Research Reports*, 32(4), 322-331.
- Kim S., & Pysarchik D.T. (2000). Predicting purchase intentions for uni-national and bi-national products. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 28, 280-291.
- Kline, R.B. (1998). *Principles and Practice of Structural Equation Modeling*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Koblin, J. (2016). How much do we love tv? Let us count the ways. *New York Times*. Received from <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/01/business/media/nielsen-survey-media-viewing.html>
- Kokmuller, N. (n.d.). The importance of brand awareness. *Chron*. Received from <http://smallbusiness.chron.com/importance-brand-awareness-45853.html>
- Kotler, P. (2000). *Marketing Management*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Lang, C. & Liu, C. (2019). The entrepreneurial motivations, cognitive factors, and barriers to become a fashion entrepreneur: A direction to curriculum development for fashion entrepreneurship education. *International Journal of Fashion Design, Technology and Education*, 12(2), 235-246.
- Marketing mix: Promotion in four p's. (2014). *Cleverism*. Received from <https://www.cleverism.com/promotion-four-ps-marketing-mix/>
- McCull, J. & Moore, C. (2011). An exploration of fashion retailer own brand strategies. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, 15(1), 91-107.
- MacKenzie, S.B. & Lutz, R.L. (1989). An empirical examination of the structural antecedents of attitude toward the ad in an advertising pretesting context. *Journal of Marketing*, 53(April), 48–65.
- McGee, T. (2014). *Marketing's biggest challenges: 1. cutting through the clutter*. Targeted Marketing. Received from <https://www.targetmarketingmag.com/article/marketing-biggest-challenges-1-cutting-through-clutter/all/>
- Mehta, A. (2000). Advertising attitudes and advertising effectiveness. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 40(3), 67–71.
- Miller, E. (2016). *Choosing the best advertising channels for your small business*. Business Woman Media. Received from <http://www.thebusinesswomanmedia.com/choosing-best-advertising-channels-small-business/>
- Mothersbaugh, D.L. & Hawkins, D.I. (2016). *Consumer behavior: Building marketing strategy (13th ed)*. New York, NY: McGraw Hill Education.
- Moore, M. & Fairhurst, A. (2003). Marketing capabilities and firm performance in fashion retailing. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, 7(4), 386-397.
- Navarro, G.M., López-Rúa, M., & de Garcill (2016). The influence of blogs in fashion in consumer behavior: an exploratory approach. *Vivat Academia*, 19(135), 85-109.
- North America. (2016). *Internet World Stats*, Received from <http://www.internetworldstats.com/america.htm>
- Nunnally, J. C. (1978). *Psychometric theory (2nd ed.)*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Nwazor, T. (2016). 7-steps-to-success for clothing industry start-ups. *Entrepreneur*. Retrieved from <https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/270271>
- Pappu, R. & Quester, P. (2006). A consumer-based method for retailer equity measurement: Results of an empirical study. *Journal of Retail and Consumer Service*, 13(4), 317–329.
- Pasquinelli, I. (2012). Could small be the new big for the fashion industry? *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/blog/fashion-industry-trends-innovation-small-business>
- Percy, L. & Rossiter, J.R. (1992). A model of brand awareness and brand attitude advertising strategies. *Psychology & Marketing (1986-1998)*, 9(4), 263.
- Pollay, R. & Mittal, B. (1993). Here's the beef: Factors, determinants, and segments in consumer criticism of advertising", *Journal of Marketing*, 57(3), 99-114.
- Ranjbarian B., Fathi S., & Kamali A. (2010). The factors affecting on consumers' repurchase intention toward an
-

- automobile brand: An application of reasoned action theory. *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 16(3), 361.
- Reaney, P. (2016). U.S. workers spend 6.3 hours a day checking email: Survey. *Huffington Post*. Received from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/check-work-email-hours-survey_us_55ddd168e4b0a40aa3ace672
- Robinson, T.M. (2007). *Survival of the fittest*. *Black Enterprise*, 384, pp. 96-98.
- Sealey, D. (2013). "The big list of today's marketing channels", *Smart Insights*, available at: <http://www.smartinsights.com/online-brand-strategy/multichannel-strategies/selectmarketing-channels/>
- Shabbir, M.Q., Khan, A.A., & Khan, S.R. (2017). Brand loyalty brand image and brand equity: The mediating role of brand awareness. *International Journal of Innovation and Applied Studies*, 19(2), 416-423.
- Shi, J.J., Chen, Y., Gifford, E.K., & Jin, H. (2012). Fashion entrepreneurship education in the UK and China. *Education + Training*, 54(4), 291-305.
- Slaton, K., Kinley, T, Brandon, L, & Connors, P. (2020). Popular advertising advice for small business fashion entrepreneurs: A summative content analysis. Manuscript submitted for publication.
- Small Business Administration, Office of Advocacy Group. (2003). *Dynamics of women-operated sole proprietorships, 1990-1998*. Washington, DC 2003.
- Smith, C. (2017). DMR email marketing report (February 2017). DMR. Received from <http://expandedramblings.com/index.php/downloads/dmr-email-marketing-statistic-report/>
- Soloman, M. & Rabolt, N. (2004), *Consumer behavior in fashion*. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Stanley, D. (2011). How to use Facebook for market research surveys. *Research Access*. Received from <http://researchaccess.com/2011/11/how-to-use-facebook-for-market-research-surveys/>
- Stolvarova, E. & Rialp, J. (2014). Synergies among advertising channels: An efficiency analysis. *Journal of Promotion Management*, 20(2), 200-218.
- Story, L. (2007). *Anywhere the eye can see, it's likely to see an ad*. *NY Times*. Received from http://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/15/business/media/15everywhere.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0
- Supphellen, M., Eismann, O., & Hem, L.E. (2004). Can advertisements for brand extensions revitalise flagship products? An experiment. *International Journal of Advertising*, 23(2), 173-196.
- Taiminen, H.M. & Karjaluoto, H. (2015). The usage of digital marketing channels in SMEs. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 22(4), 633-651.
- Watson, G.F., Worm, S., Palmatier, R.W., & Ganesan, S. (2015). The evolution of marketing channels: Trends and research directions. *Journal of Retailing*, 91(4), 546-568.
- Zeithaml, V. (1988). Consumer perceptions of price, quality, and value: A means-end model. *Journal of Marketing*, 52, 2-22.
-