

How Women's and Men's Online Shopping Behaviors Differ

Chuanlan Liu, Auburn University¹
Sandra Forsythe, Auburn University²
Daniel M. Gropper, Auburn University³

Women are the world's most powerful consumers as they influence more than 83% of consumer purchasing decisions. However, women's shopping attitudes and behaviors have been shown to differ from men's in traditional retail channels. These differences may also apply to the Internet. This exploratory research to examine differences in men's and women's online shopping behaviors was based on empirical studies using two national samples. The research objectives were to examine: (1) gender differences in perceived benefits of shopping online, perceptions of the Internet as a shopping medium, and online shopping behaviors; and (2) the moderating effect of gender on the relationships between online shopping benefits, perceptions of the Internet as a shopping medium and shopping behaviors.

We first propose an integrated theoretical framework from innovation adoption and consumer decision-making to examine online shopping behaviors. Then empirical studies based on two national samples were conducted. In the first study, a questionnaire investigating consumers' perceptions of the benefits of online shopping was administered to a national sample of 2000 Internet shoppers. We received 960 responses for a response rate of 48%. The second study examined gender differences in online shopping perceptions and behaviors under the proposed theoretical framework. Data were collected by a commercial online survey service provider with a 2.5 million-member panel. An email invitation was sent to 1500 panel members. A total of 789 responses were received, representing a response rate of 52.6%. A total of 598 valid responses, qualified for inclusion in this study.

Results from the first study show that male and female online shoppers were motivated by both functional and hedonic benefits of shopping online, including *shopping convenience*, *product selection*, *ease/comfort of shopping*, and *hedonic shopping experience*. Overall, women perceived more benefits of shopping online than did men. In the second study, structural equation modeling was applied to empirically test the proposed theoretical framework, providing a base to test the moderating effect of gender on the relationships between online shopping benefits, perceptions of the Internet as a shopping medium, and shopping behaviors. Results showed that perceived relative advantage and enjoyment of online shopping has a positive impact on information search and online purchases. Perceived online shopping benefits have an indirect impact on online shopping behaviors, mediated by perceptions of the Internet as a shopping medium. A multi-group invariance comparison was then conducted to test the moderating effects of gender on the direct impact from perceptions of the Internet as a shopping medium and the indirect impact from perceived benefits of shopping online on consumers' online shopping behaviors. Results showed that the effect of relative advantage on purchase offline and the effect of enjoyment on information search and purchase online are significant only for female shopper groups, indicating a moderating effect of gender on the relationship between perceptions of the Internet as a shopping medium and online shopping behaviors.

Our research identified several differences between female and male in online shoppers shopping motivations and perceptions, providing direction for Internet retailers to better meet the needs of female consumers. For instance, our findings indicated that female online shoppers were motivated more by hedonic shopping motivations than did males do. Internet retailers may improve female shoppers' hedonic benefits through creating new shopping experience, providing customized products, and promoting more impulsive purchasing. In addition, we found that perceived enjoyment of online shopping had a positive impact on female shoppers' online information searching and purchasing, but not on male. Therefore, Internet retailers may adopt strategies to improve females' perceptions of enjoyment of shopping their web sites through facilitating more shopping convenience, providing better product selections and creating more new shopping experience.

¹ Research Associate, MBA Programs and Department of Finance, Auburn AL, 36849. Email: liuchu2@auburn.edu. Phone: 334-844-5342. Fax: 334-844-4960.

² Wrangler Professor, Department of Consumer Affairs. Auburn AL, 36849. Email: forsysa@auburn.edu. Phone: 334-844-6458. Fax: 334-844-1340.

³ Associate Professor and Director of MBA Programs, Auburn AL, 26849. Email: groppdm@auburn.edu. Phone: 334-844-4060. Fax: 334-844-2964.