



RESEARCH PAPER

Webrooming in Clothing Retail: A Systematic Review with Evidence from Pakistan

¹Saima, ²Dr. Shad Ahmad Khan and ³Dr. Tahira Nazir

1. Research Scholar, Management Sciences Department, COMSATS University Islamabad, Pakistan
2. Assistant Professor, Department of Business Administration, University of Buraimi, Oman
3. Assistant Professor, Management Sciences Department, COMSATS University Islamabad, Pakistan

Corresponding Author

Saima@babariqbal.com

ABSTRACT

The research examines webrooming in the Pakistani textile and apparel industry focusing on consumer attitudes, behavior, demographics and how the online search can be transformed into an in-store purchase within an omnichannel context. Despite the fast pace of the sector development, lack of knowledge about the smartphone- and tablet-based webrooming practices in the emerging markets, such as Pakistan, A comprehensive literature review of more than 50 peer-reviewed empirical and theoretical articles was performed through the use of the snowballing technique to pinpoint the major drivers of webrooming behavior and customer behavior, and the features of the omnichannel. Results show that the perceived product involvement, primary shopping goals, and perceived omnichannel risk are the key predictors of webrooming behavior. Retailers need to improve mobile-friendly platforms, increase the level of information transparency, combine online and offline tools, decrease the perceived risk, and educate consumers to build effective omnichannel approaches in new markets.

Keywords: Webrooming, Clothing Retail, Emerging markets, Pakistan, Consumer Behavior, Omnichannel Retailing

Introduction

Webrooming is a phenomenon that has emerged as a result of the rapid expansion of digital technologies and mobile connections and has completely changed consumer shopping behavior, especially in developing countries. Webrooming is the process of consumers browsing online but completing their purchases in physical stores. (Kleinlercher et al., 2020; Rese et al., 2017). Webrooming is the opposite of showrooming, where consumers browse offline and shop online. It is a conscious decision to combine digital convenience with the real benefits of in-store experiences. Omnichannel management is reflected in the trend that marketing plans are key components of inventory management and customer relationships, especially for high-involvement products such as clothing brands. The blend of offline and online channels is a key aspect of retailing. (Aw, 2019; Zafar et al., 2023).

potential customers are increasingly turning to the Internet to compare prices, research features, and search for promotions then mostly visit physical stores to evaluate size, quality, and personal preferences, The complex relationship between sensory experience and cognitive evaluation has been highlighted by this movement, and as the light shines, multi-faceted strategies must move away from identifying preferences. Since clothing shopping involves fundamental and sensory elements such as touch, fit, and style

ratings that cannot be fully captured online, clothing shopping is particularly susceptible to webrooming behavior (Flavián et al., 2020; Herhausen et al., 2015).

The market is a case in particular for webrooming, as it connects traditional brick-and-mortar establishments with tech-savvy consumers. Most studies focus on developed markets in Europe and North America. The increasing internet penetration and adoption of smartphones, influenced by fashion trends, have contributed to the explosive expansion of the apparel industry in an emerging market like Pakistan. (Zafar et al., 2023). Despite the growing importance of behavioral marketing, research on this topic is still lacking in Pakistan. Therefore, academic understanding and real marketing applications are essential to understanding the webrooming behavior in Pakistan. This systematic review fills this knowledge gap by combining theoretical and empirical research on webrooming, omnichannel retailing, and showrooming.

This study advances theory and practice by presenting a comprehensive analysis that will help companies gain a better understanding of consumer behavior in enhancing omnichannel strategies in the hybrid digital-physical environment, which is a significant advancement in the highly competitive digital environment.

Literature Review

Conceptualizing Webrooming

It was widely recognized as an advertising medium for the company's efforts in the field of multi-channel retailing. Gensler et al. (2017) is widely recognized as a form of retailing, usually to get a better deal or for ease of access. In the broader context of omnichannel retailing, showrooming, on the one hand, involves customers inspecting products offered in physical stores before making a true purchase online. On the other side, webrooming is the deliberate practice of researching products online before making an offline purchase, usually to reduce potential risk or improve shopping satisfaction (Verhoef et al., 2015). Although the order of digital and physical interactions is different, both behaviors feature multi-channel integration from a consumer perspective.

It involves social cognitive considerations and emotional elements. This narrative emphasizes how decision-making is complicated and Consumers use webrooming with rational imagination to balance basic desires in order to balance the emotional fulfillment of in-store experiences against the effectiveness of online shopping. webrooming a helpful lens through which to view as mentioned, it offers although behavioral reasoning theory highlights the motivations, writing, and cognitive processes that better justify purchases (Zafar et al., 2023).

Drivers of Webrooming Behavior

Product-Related Factors

Webrooming will be more promoted on products that are large in colour where pleasure and self-expression are paramount. It requires research and description. Awareness is also one of the processes through which quality material is obtained at the base, without their prestige and price. (Flavián et al., 2020). The examples of high-involvement products are fashion clothing and electronic products: a shopper is more likely to visit the Internet and watch detailed information on the web site and only after evaluation comes a real one. The involvement and complexity of the product is the key determinant of Webrooming behavior (Rese et al., 2017; Herhausen et al., 2015).

Consumer-Related Factors

Although there is still little research on emerging markets, demographics such as age, gender, and urban-rural residence also influence web browsing intentions. Consumer characteristics have a significant impact on webrooming behavior. Research data suggests that web browsing is more prevalent among consumers who are technologically literate, more risk-averse, and have hedonistic or experimental motives (Kleinlercher et al., 2020; Aw, 2019). Consumer-related factors Decision-making, online reviews, and word-of-mouth influence social factors, especially in culturally diverse settings such as Pakistan (Zafar et al., 2023).

Channel-Related Factors

Webrooming adherence is influenced by the features of both online and offline channels. The rich and interactive online product information, price comparison software, and custom recommendations enhance the customers with the belief about offline purchases (Gupta et al., 2024). In emerging markets, where the use of smartphones is often higher than the use of computers, mobile commerce is critical in facilitating convenient on-the-go product research. Click-and-collect, in-store trial, and flexible return policy are all inclusively implemented by omnichannel intensification of the connection between online research and offline purchase decisions (Herhausen et al., 2015; Rese et al., 2017).

Consumer Experience and Omnichannel Retailing

The integration of several touch - points, which enables the customer to switch between online and offline channels with ease, was the focus of omnichannel retailing. Assert that consumer satisfaction, loyalty, and purchasing confidence are all increased by seamless channel integration. Omnichannel approaches are not only practical choices for webroomers but also significant elements that impact perceived value since they enable concurrent information collection, experiential assessment, and purchasing effectiveness. (Verhoef et al. 2015) Effective omnichannel implementation raises the likelihood of webrooming, according to empirical studies done in North America, Europe, and Asia. For example, Flavián et al. (2019) found that consumers feel more in control of their purchasing process when they use many channels, which boosts webrooming activity. Similarly, it found that tactile evaluation and hedonic desires are improved when digital and physical channels are successfully connected (Kleinlercher et al. 2020).

Webrooming in Emerging Markets: Focus on Pakistan

Retailers may leverage upon the behavior by combining digital marketing strategies with in-store experience offers like individually tailored consultation processes, try-ons, and incidents that increase brand engagement. Mobile commerce is also quite significant. Since smartphones are the main way that Pakistani consumers access the internet, they are increasingly using apps, social media platforms, and mobile-optimized websites to research products before visiting physical businesses.

There is a significant gap in the literature, though, as there isn't much empirical research that there is little research on webrooming in emerging areas, despite its inherent benefit. Webrooming identification is particularly relevant in Pakistan, where fashion is determined by social media and the rate of internet penetration is increasing at a rapid pace with more than a hundred million users. According to Zafar et al. (2023), Pakistani customers employ webrooming and heavily rely on social influence and brand trust to minimize the perceived risks of online purchase. examines the relationship between webrooming, demography, and mobile engagement.

Material and Methods

Research on webrooming in clothing retail was found, evaluated, and synthesized using a systematic and rigorous approach, with an emphasis on developing countries like Pakistan. To assure that the scope is broad, the methodology combines the database searches with the snowballing approaches and follows the traditional standards of systematic reviews in the social sciences. (Tranfield et al., 2003).

Reporting Standard Through (PRISMA)

This systematic review was reported and written according to the Recommended Reporting Items to Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines. The use of the PRISMA framework improved the methodological rigor and the clarity of the review process. The review was undertaken in four stages: finding relevant research by database searches and snowballing techniques, screening titles and abstracts, reviewing full-text articles for eligibility, and integrating studies that met the stated criteria in the ultimate fabrication.

Literature Search Strategy

Boolean operators like "webrooming," "apparel," and "Pakistan" were used to refine search results. Search terms were restricted in order to assure peer-reviewed academic articles issued between 2010 and 2024. Three primary electronic databases—Google Scholar, Scopus, and Web of Science—were used to find pertinent studies. Webrooming was one of the keywords 2010 and 2024 in existing relevance.

- webrooming
- omnichannel retailing
- showrooming
- Pakistan
- clothing retail
- consumer behavior

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Studies were included if they

- provided theoretical frameworks, reviews of the literature, or factual information.
- Product lines related to clothing, apparel, or fashion were analyzed; electronics and multi-category research were taken into consideration if they offered significant webrooming insights.
- Reportedly issued in English around 2010 and 2024.
- Focused on webrooming, showrooming, omnichannel shopping, or related consumer behaviors

Studies were excluded if they

- focused solely on physical or online purchases, ignoring omnichannel behavior.

- presented not enough research methodology information to be included in the formation.
- if These were non-peer-reviewed articles, book chapters, or conference proceedings.

Snowballing Technique

A snowballing technique was used to gather further pertinent research when core studies (e.g., Kleinlercher et al., 2020; Aw, 2019; Zafar et al., 2023) were identified. This entailed assessing abstracts and titles for their relevance to webrooming in the retail clothing sector. Locating subsequent empirical studies through the citation by feature of Google Scholar. Snowballing to make sure that new, underrepresented research is inclusive, particularly in new market economies where researchers can be published in local journals that are not included in major databases.

Data Extraction and Coding

A standard data extraction form was used to record the following information from each trial

- Important findings about omnichannel or webrooming behavior
- Research design (experiment, survey, literature review, conceptual)
- Characteristics and sample size
- Year, country/context, and authors
- Product category and emphasis
- If applicable, the theoretical framework

The investigations were then subjected to the three primary categories of determinants: product-related, consumer-related, and channel-related factors. Comparing and synthesizing the elements influencing webrooming behavior across research is made simpler by this paradigm.

Assessment of Quality

The papers were assessed for methodological rigor, which included the consistency of the findings, the suitability of the research design, the representativeness of the sample, and clarity. The theoretical contribution, comprehensiveness, and relevancy to emerging markets of conceptual and literature research articles were assessed.

Results and Discussion

Overview of Included Studies

Over fifty peer-reviewed studies from Europe, North America, South Asia, and other emerging markets that were published between 2010 and 2024 were included in this systematic review. A smaller number of research concentrated on electronics and other product categories, whereas the majority concentrated on apparel and fashion purchases. The range of sample sizes was 250–700 to offer empirical and theoretical insights into webrooming behavior, the studies included a range of techniques, such as surveys, experiments, conceptual analysis, and literature reviews.

Global Patterns of Webrooming

Convenience, brand trust, and customized buying experiences are the top priorities for American consumers when it comes to webrooming. Customers are more likely to browse online for products that need more interaction when they feel more in control of the purchasing process and big ups to multi-channel engagement.(Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Piotrowicz & Cuthbertson, 2014).

omni-channel integration, including in-store trials and seamless online and offline interactions, significantly increases the adoption rate of webrooms in these locations.(Herhausen et al., 2015; Rese et al., 2017).For example, studies conducted in Germany and Spain show that although consumers often use the Internet to compare prices and information about products, they still prefer to buy items such as clothes and electronics in stores.(Aw, 2019; Flavián et al., 2019)

Based on studies conducted in the US and Europe, underlying motivations, risk reduction perceptions, and the need for tactile product evaluation drive webrooming.(Kleinlercher et al., 2020; Flavián et al., 2020)

Webrooming in Emerging Markets

Zafar et al. (2023) found that in Pakistan, the use of web searches by customers is aimed at minimizing confusion and stimulating purchases in stores, feedback recommendations, and brand trust have a supportive role. Emerging economies that exhibit specific trends include Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India. Customers in these areas majorly depend on mobile commerce, brand reputation, and social influence when making purchases. (Zafar et al., 2023; Gupta et al., 2024; Neha & Kumar, 2024)Similarly, the importance of customer satisfaction, social impact, and easy access to smartphones is emphasized in the studies carried out in Bangladesh and India as a factor in viewing webrooming intentions (Gupta et al., 2024; Consumer Intention Towards Webrooming, 2022).

Mobile devices are the primary platform for online product research in emerging markets.The rise of social media and influencer marketing are growing drivers of webrooming that contribute to brand awareness, shift the perception of the consumer regarding product quality, and give the community an assurance. Although this has been discovered, there is no empirical research conducted in Pakistan yet which underscores the need to conduct further studies on the demographics, regional differences, and impact of electronic marketing. (Halibas et al., 2023; Neha & Kumar, 2024). Irrespective of these findings, empirical research is missing in Pakistan and this indicates that more in-depth research should be conducted on demographics, regional differences, and electronic marketing impacts.

Drivers of Webrooming Behavior

Product-Related Factors

Many human associated products, such as clothing, footwear, and electronics, continue to use webrooming across global markets.(Rese et al., 2017; Herhausen et al., 2015).Products with hedonistic characteristics, such as clothing that reflects individual style, are more likely to lack online accessibility.Online platforms are unable to fully satisfy consumers' need for tactile assurance of fit, quality, and aesthetics. (Flavián et al., 2020).The decision to complete an offline purchase is also influenced by brand prestige and price sensitivity.

Consumer-Related Factors

Purchasing decisions are heavily influenced by social factors, such as peer recommendations and online reviews, especially in collectivistic countries like Pakistan. Internet roaming patterns depend on consumer preferences to a large extent as webrooming is mostly applicable to tech-savvy people, risk-averse users, and people driven by simple or experimental motivations. (Kleinlercher et al., 2020; Aw, 2019). Age, gender, and living in an urban or rural area are examples of demographic modifiers that have yet to be adequately studied in emerging markets.

Channel-Related Factors

Webrooming adoption is significantly influenced by the features of both online and offline venues. Consumer confidence is increased by interactive websites, comparing tools, and rich online product information. (Gupta et al., 2024). Omnichannel integration, consisting of click-and-collect services, in-store trials and easy returns connecting online research and offline purchases. (Herhausen et al., 2015; Rese et al., 2017). Because it allows customers to easily research products and access promotions while on the go, mobile commerce has taken the spotlight in the developing world.

The results of this systematic review highlight that web rooming is a growing consumer behavior in apparel retailing, especially in emerging markets like Pakistan. Following the synthesis of more than 50 empirical and conceptual sources, it is evident that webrooming depends on a set of intersecting product, consumer and channel-related variables with significant differences in the developed and emerging markets.

Conclusion

Identified as webrooming before purchasing a product, has become a widespread consumer behavior that is influenced by a combination of product, customer, and channel variables. Although the technological capability, the social influence, and availability of mobile devices are critical in the purchasing decision-making process, particularly in developing nations, the high degree of product involvement, primary objectives, perceived risk, and tactile consideration are often significant. This systematic review summarizes more than 50 studies on webrooming, showrooming, and omnichannel retailing, with a special focus on the textile sector and emerging markets such as Pakistan (Kleinlercher et al., 2020; Zafar et al., 2023; Gupta et al., 2024).

According to the findings, having various purchasing options is critical for consumers to use the webrooming strategy. Stores may boost customer satisfaction and confidence in purchasing by merging internet and in-person shopping with strategies such as click-and-collect choices, in-store trials, simple returns, and personalized consultations. Moreover, online technologies like mobile applications, online dressing rooms, and engaging product details allow the customers to shop online quickly and make decent buying choices in the physical stores. Brand awareness and trustworthiness are another aspect that is increased by social media and influencers and that influences webrooming behavior in the countries where community and social approval are the key factors (Halibas et al., 2023; Neha and Kumar, 2024).

Although it has been analysed extensively in the mature markets, the analysis shows that there are major gaps in the developing economies especially Pakistan. Not many empirical researches take into account such factors as demographic disparities, mobile shopping, the influence of social media, and the tendency of behavior in the long term. This highlights the significance of a study that should appreciate the cultural setting of how age, gender, level of income and urban/rural dwelling impact webrooming practices. Moreover, research on webrooming, when approached together with the ideas of showrooming, ROPO

behavior, and consumer experience, may give a more detailed picture of the omnichannel retail.

On the management side of the issue, this research paper also points to some real, doable actions that the retailers of the emerging markets can undertake. Clothing companies will be able to apply these insights to further their operations and online channels, develop customer-centered omnichannel experiences, and use social influence tactics in order to raise the level of engagement and conversion rates. The retailers can effectively seize the market share of the emerging fusion e-commerce by adjusting the merchandise, online platforms, and in-store experiences to the clients expectations.

Concisely, webrooming is an indication of change in consumer behaviour within a digitally connected retail space and is an important bridge between online information search and off-line operation. This conduct offers an opportunity and a challenge to retailers in emerging markets such as Pakistan who are seeking to improve customer experience, sales and build brand loyalty. To enhance theoretical knowledge and management practices in omnichannel retail, it is recommended that further research should be placed on empirical investigations in the developing context, study the experience of consumers mediated by technology usage, and take into consideration cultural and demographic elements.

Theoretical Implications

Mobile technology and social media play an important role as intermediaries in emerging economies, allowing these models to be applied in contexts with high mobile device penetration and adoption of digital technologies. Furthermore, the results extend the model's explanation in technology acceptance models (TAM and UTAUT2), in which social influence, perceived usefulness, and ease of use predict intentions to use webrooming. (Gupta et al., 2024).

Provide a rationale why online research justifies offline purchases and dwells on the motivational and cognitive factors that drive consumers to webrooming. Consumers strike a balance between risk-reduction and gratification like pleasure and self-expression especially when buying high-commitment products like clothes.. (Flavián et al., 2020; Kleinlercher et al., 2020). The current construct reinforces and extends a wide range of theoretical frameworks for consumer behavior and multichannel retailing. Behavioral Reasoning Theory (Zafar et al., 2023).

By explaining how the seamless integration of online and offline channels increases customer trust, satisfaction, and the likelihood of webrooming, this review also develops the idea of omnichannel retailing. (Herhausen et al., 2015; Rese et al., 2017) Finally, the results indicate a lack of research on demographic and cultural moderators, highlighting the importance of contextualizing behavioral patterns with regional market realities.

Managerial Implications

Omnichannel Integration retailers need to focus on integrating offline customer experiences with online research. Order online, try on products in store, flexible returns, and one-on-one consultations are just a few of the tactics that increase customer trust and reduce hesitation when making a purchase decision. (Rese et al., 2017; Herhausen et al., 2015).

Digital Tools and Mobile Commerce With the increasing penetration of smartphones in Pakistan, retailers should optimize their mobile apps and virtual experiences, comprehensive descriptions, websites for product search and customer

reviews, as well as providing real-time offers and expert recommendations. (Gupta et al., 2024; Halibas et al., 2023).

Marketing Strategies and Social Influence. In new markets, peer recommendations and reputation of the brand count. Customer behavior can be significantly affected by online reviews, influencer marketing, and social media campaigns because they can affect perceptions of social desirability, quality, and reliability. (Zafar et al., 2023; Neha & Kumar, 2024).

The results indicate for practitioners that webrooming consumers should be supported by omnichannel integration among emerging markets' apparel companies. The rich online information, mobile optimized sites, and social proof can enable effective online research; the experience in-store such as fitting rooms, personal assistance and the simple return policies can motivate outlets to complete purchases offline. High influence countries by peers, especially in Pakistan, retailers can apply social media and influencer marketing to build trust and reduce perceived risk.

Product Considerations Webrooming is more probable for apparel with strong involvement, hedonistic value, or quality uncertainty. Retailers should draw attention to important product attributes online and offer in-store tactile assessment, fit, and style try-ons. Price transparency, loyalty programs, and special in-store discounts can further encourage offline shopping following online investigation.

Differences Between Developed and Emerging Markets

Developed and emerging markets have different webrooming habits. In developed economies, omnichannel infrastructure and high levels of digital literacy support hedonic motivations, convenience, and risk reduction. (Kleinlercher et al., 2020; Flavián et al., 2019). Social influence, brand trust, and mobile accessibility are more powerful drivers in developing nations such as Pakistan. (Zafar et al., 2023; Gupta et al., 2024). Brands and retailers need to change their all-channel plans to fit the local technology, culture, and economic situations.

Recommendations

Consumer education programs should be one of the priorities of the retailers in the developing markets to create awareness of the multifactorial advantages particularly the combination of online search and in-store shopping. Perceived risks can be mitigated by creating mobile-enhanced platforms that have complete product details, updated inventory status, and stable prices.

Clothing stores are advised to embrace personalization approaches based on data to optimize the online content in accordance with the demographics, preferences, and shopping objectives of the consumers. The experience on the site can be further enhanced by reinforcing training of sales personnel in brick and mortar stores to assist online savvy customers. The policymakers and industry stakeholders ought to facilitate the growth of the digital infrastructure and promote the cooperation between the e-commerce and the brick-and-mortar retailers. The next study must apply these strategies in different regions and customers to determine their suitability and their adoption by various retailing operations in the new markets.

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