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Buying Clothes Online Traditionally, consumers have preferred to shop for clothes in brick-and-mortar stores. However, a change is being witnessed. The United States, in the last few years, has seen a spike in online clothes shopping.

The findings of a survey conducted by the Consumer Reports National Research Center are pretty heartening for the online retailers. A whopping 85 percent of the 25, 000 respondents interviewed in this survey, which rated 39 online clothiers, expressed their satisfaction with their online shopping experience for clothes.

L. L. Bean, Zappos, and Lands' End were rated the best by the respondents primarily because these online retailers provided precise descriptions of the apparel and correct sizing information. Equally important in the superior ranking of these clothiers was the fact that they had an easy to browse, informative website. Majority of the respondents also felt that they got true value for money spent on online clothes-shopping.

The survey also revealed the flip side of online clothes-shopping. There were major issues with size accuracy of the clothes, which impeded customers intending to buy clothes online. Returning clothes and costs associated thereon was considered a huge disadvantage by many respondents. 72 percent of the respondents complained about the lack of transparency in divulging shipping costs by online retailers. There were certain instances of billing mistakes and wrongly filled orders.

In addition to these problems, consumers refrain from online shopping because of privacy concerns and issues regarding security of financial

transactions. Some customers find online shopping very confusing (Colberg 2002).

The analysis of the survey reveals that customers are not satisfied, among other things, with the process of exchange of goods purchased online. The online clothing retailers should make the process of returns trouble-free for the consumers. A straightforward and transparent policy regarding this aspect will provide a huge boost to their sales (Rosencrance 2000). Many consumers would be tempted by a generous returns policy that promises to exchange the item or simply return the item and take the refund of its purchase price.

The retailers can provide the consumers prepaid U. S. Postal Service labels which are valid for a certain period of time. The customers can use these labels for returning the apparel with which they are not satisfied. This will make the process of returns simple and inexpensive for the unsatisfied customer. With an easy returns policy in place, customers are likely to develop positive emotions towards the online retailers (Kim 2007).

Customers should be allowed to return the apparel even at the brick-and-mortar stores of the clothier. Furthermore, the customers should be given an option to call a particular toll free customer service number dedicated to exchanges and returns of merchandise to expedite the whole process of returns (Torjack 2002).

The customers should be able to exchange the apparel within a month from the date of delivery if the product has been delivered in the home country.

For international clients, this time frame can be two months. The apparel has

to be in unused condition and must be supported by the original bill for a full refund of the merchandise value. The online retailers must categorically mention the time it will take for the customers to get refund of money or the exchanged apparel as the case may be. The refund of money should be in the same mode as the method in which payment was initially received from the customer. Finally, the online retailers should look at returns as a mechanism that can provide useful information in terms of product development and other process improvements.

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