

More Digital Buyers Purchase Clothing Online

But free shipping and easy returns are must-haves

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Consumers who have avoided buying clothes online usually cite an inability to determine product fit and fabric, as well as apprehension toward shipping fees or difficult return processes as reasons to not purchase. But improved product information and streamlined logistics are changing some consumers' minds.

Three in five US internet users said they've purchased clothes, shoes or accessories online in the past month, according to an April 2019 eMarketer survey conducted by [Bizrate Insights](#). That figure climbs to 68% for females as well as younger consumers (ages 18 to 34).

US Digital Buyers Who Have Purchased* Clothing, Shoes or Accessories Digitally, by Demographic, April 2019

% of respondents in each group



Note: among those who have made a digital purchase in the past month/30 days; *in the past month

Source: "The eMarketer Ecommerce Survey" conducted in April 2019 by Bizrate Insights, April 9, 2019

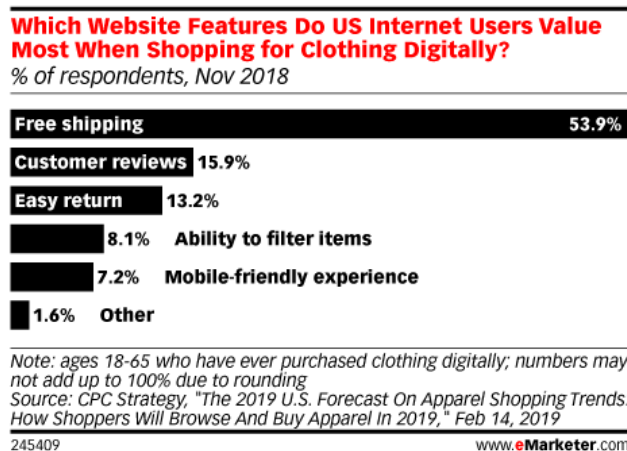
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But a November 2018 survey from [CPC Strategy](#) found that roughly one in five internet users shopped for clothes via digital channels frequently. In fact, the most popular response, cited by 39.9% of respondents, was only one to two times per year. A similar number (36.4%) reported buying clothes online three to five times a year.

While online apparel shopping is growing—we estimate US ecommerce sales of apparel and accessories will rise 14.2% in 2019—the category appeals more to consumers if they're offered solutions to historic pain points.

A majority of internet users who purchase clothing digitally say that free shipping is their most valued website feature when online clothes shopping, according to CPC Strategy. Following farther behind were customer reviews and easy returns.



Additionally, a November 2018 survey from omnichannel ecommerce company [Radial](#) found that 51% of US digital buyers avoid purchasing goods from online retailers that do not offer free returns. And digital consumers were most hesitant about the [return process](#) for clothing and accessories.

"For [apparel items](#), the desire to see, feel and try on merchandise is one reason why consumers have been apprehensive about clicking the buy button," eMarketer forecasting analyst Cindy Liu said. "But now, with more and more retailers offering easy return policies and free shipping, that's no longer the case."

Innovative online shopping solutions like "try before you buy" services and buy online, pick up in-store (BOPUS), as well as more detailed product information, have also transformed the digital apparel buying space.

"Try before you buy" incentivizes 35% of consumers to buy products online that they had not considered before, according to RetailMeNot's "2019 Retailer Playbook." Globally, more than two in five consumers consider BOPUS to be the most valuable aspect of the retail shopping experience, per a February 2019 report from iVend Retail. And according to a January 2019 survey from Salsify, consumers are calling for more detailed product information and will abandon product pages should they not deliver.

Marketers looking to capture a portion of the growing apparel and accessories market should focus their efforts on providing consumers with accurate, detailed information—as well as offering multiple buying and pickup/shipping methods.