

# Chapter 11

## How to Use Sizing Technology and Fashion Metadata to Improve the User Experience for Online Fashion Retail

**Fanke Peng**

*University of Canberra, Australia*

**Mouhannad Al-Sayegh**

*University of the Arts London, UK*

**Alessandra Vecchi**

*University of the Arts London, UK*

**Susan Hamilton**

*University of the Arts London, UK*

### ABSTRACT

*This chapter aims to open a dialogue on the importance and influence of sizing technology and fashion metadata on fashion e-commerce, especially the use of body metadata and garment metadata. It describes the e-Size project, its objectives, its contribution to specific innovation areas, the methodological approach adopted, as well as presenting the results of an exploratory survey administered to a convenience sample of customers in the attempt to assess the potential validity of the use of sizing software applications amongst fashion retailers. The chapter consists of six sections. The first section outlines the opportunities and challenges for online fashion retailers, the second and third sections analyze fashion metadata (What & How) and Size Technologies for Online Fashion Retail, the fourth section describes the methodology adopted. While the fifth section highlights the preliminary findings of the research, the final section illustrates the conclusion, their limitations and directions for further research.*

### INTRODUCTION

Drawing on our existing research, the e-Size project assessed the implementation and the deployment of novel, yet existing, software applications aimed at capturing accurate body measurements, and providing garment size recommendations in order to increase fashion garments' online sales. The key objectives of the research being: to further develop existing software applications aimed at producing accurate body measurements in close collaboration with a fashion retail partner; to enhance the retailers customers'

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satisfaction by improving the quality of their online shopping experience; to focus on user experience testing to contribute to the development of the user experience; to critically evaluate the opportunities and the challenges that are associated with the deployment and implementation of such novel software application for the retailer and for the broader fashion industry; to contribute to the reduction of the economic and environmental impact associated with garments' returns due to their poor fit.

By virtue of these novel software applications, customers are more likely to better match their shape and body measurements to garments that fit correctly, therefore increasing their satisfaction with the online shopping experience and by thus reducing returns. More specifically, this project focuses on user experience testing, specifically by integrating feedback from customers into garment sizing information and guidance on improving their online shopping experience. The keys to this are the quality and accuracy of the measurements, overall user satisfaction with the online experience and effectively matching body and garment measurements so the consumer can find the best fitting clothing size.

## **OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR ONLINE FASHION RETAILERS**

Online retail is the fastest growing retail market worldwide. The top 10 countries, ranked by online retail sales (in billions of US dollars) worldwide 2015, are China (\$562.66), US (\$349.06), UK (\$93.89), Japan (\$79.33), Germany (\$73.46), France (\$42.62), South Korea (\$36.76), Canada (\$28.77), Russia (\$20.30) and Brazil (\$18.80) (eMarketer 2015). Furthermore, recent statistics by Forrester Research Inc, eMaeketer, and The Centre for Retail Research predict that online retail revenue accounted for 5.9% of the total retail market worldwide in 2014, or \$1.316 trillion. By 2018, that share will increase significantly to 8.8%.

As the online shopping market continues to expand, due to its convenience for shoppers, numerous retailers are entering the online market in order to stay competitive (Kau, Tang & Ghose, 2003) and thus have spent a considerable amount of resources in a quest to retain and expand their customer base by improving customers' online shopping experience and building a seamless multichannel customer experience (Kaptein & Parvinen, 2014).

China and the US are by far the world's leading ecommerce markets, together worth more than 55% of global online retail sales in 2014. China's predicted growth over the next five years will widen the gap between the two countries, and China is expected to exceed \$1 trillion in retail ecommerce sales by 2018, accounting for more than 40% of the worldwide total. The US is expected to maintain its position as the second-largest retail ecommerce market in 2018, totaling nearly \$500 billion in sales, while it is predicted that the UK will account for about one-quarter of that figure, landing in a distant third place (eMarketer, 2015).

According to Retail Week Reports, the UK Fashion Retail Sector was valued at over £46 billion in 2014. The direct value of the UK fashion industry to the UK economy was £26 billion in 2014; up from £21 billion in 2009, showing an increase of 22% in nominal terms (British Fashion Council, 2014; Oxford Economics, 2014). UK online fashion sales in 2014 were estimated over £7.5 billion (Retail Week Report, 2015). The market for online fashion continues to see robust growth for the following reasons: consumers becoming more accustomed to shopping online; increased participation in shopping via smartphones and tablets, which has helped to bolster sales for apparel shopping anytime and anywhere; and a combination of different channels available to consumers to shop for clothes. Retailers have to ensure that shopping is truly seamless and that they give customers a consistent shopping experience whatever channel they choose to use. (Intel, 2015; CIO, 2015)

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