

# Chapter 4

## Consumer Decision–Making Processes in Clothing, Textile, and Fashion

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The aim of this section is to reveal how social media shapes consumer decision-making processes when purchasing textile and ready-made clothing products and to what extent it affects these processes positively or negatively. Accordingly, in this chapter, first of all, information about the consumer purchasing process and how this process works in the clothing, fashion, and textile sectors will be given, and then what kind of reflections and contributions of social media to the consumer purchasing process in these sectors will be mentioned. Finally, in the conclusion and discussion section, suggestions will be made for future research and applications for the sector.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Since the 1970s, the textile and ready-made clothing industry has made great progress and has become one of the rapidly growing sectors today. So much so that the increase in the welfare levels of countries around the world has created an acceleration in many sectors and sub-sectors such as housing and tourism, and the need for the textile sector has increased and it has been instrumental in the growth of the sector (Sanayi ve Teknoloji Bakanlığı Kalkınma Ajansları Genel Müdürlüğü, 2021, p.1). However, the Covid-19 pandemic, which was experienced in 2020 and continued for a long time all over the world, has deeply affected the textile industry as it has affected all sectors. The main reasons for this are; supply chain disruption, cash flow problems, unemployment, changes in consumer behavior, closure of physical retail stores and disruption of fashion events (Annaldewar et al., 2021, pp.94-97). In this regard, the “The State of Fashion” report, which was prepared jointly by Business of Fashion (BOF) and McKinsey & Company in 2022, contains important data on the volume of the ready-made clothing industry. In this report, it has been stated that the ready-to-wear sector has contracted by 27-30% in 2020, in 2021 it has

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grown by 2-4% compared to 2019, in the luxury ready-made clothing sector, there is a 35-39% shrinkage in 2020, and in 2021 there is a 1-4% growth compared to 2019. . Similarly, in the 2023 report, it was stated that supply chains were disrupted due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and therefore the need to invest in systems that could provide closer and faster production in terms of geographical location increased.

If we evaluate it from the point of view of the consumer, especially during the pandemic process, the rate of consumers who make online shopping habits instead of shopping in physical stores is quite high. Because, both for daily grocery shopping and for purchasing textile products such as clothes, consumers have now had to prefer online channels (Keenan, 2022; McKinsey & Company, 2021, p.65). In the article written by Keenan (2022) on global trends in e-commerce, it is seen that brands create advertisements for their target audiences through social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok, Snapchat, various shopping applications, etc.), especially with the acceleration of shopping made with mobile phones. is expressed. In parallel, of course, social media is of great importance for the textile and apparel industry in terms of advertising, sales and marketing channels. In the “The State of Fashion” report of BOF and McKinsey & Company (2021), it was stated that 74% of consumers were more affected when shopping on social media compared to the pre-pandemic period, and 70% of them shopped mostly from the clothing category on social media. . For this reason, it has become a matter of curiosity how social media shapes consumer purchasing processes in the textile and apparel industry.

## **Consumer Purchasing Process in Apparel and Textile Industry**

In order for a consumer to have a purchase intention, he must first have something he needs. In the event that what is needed is available, every consumer who acts to meet this need exhibits a unique buying behavior (Firat and Azmak, 2007). If there is a difference between the current situation and the desired situation in what the consumer needs, a need arises here and the purchasing decision process begins at this stage (Erciş et al., 2007). Consumers can meet these needs in physical environments, online or virtual environments. Physical stores are examples of physical purchasing environments, and online shopping sites are examples of online (virtual) purchasing environments.

In order to understand the differences of the online purchasing process from the traditional purchasing process, the online purchasing process is expressed in five stages. These; awareness of the need, information seeking process, evaluation of alternatives, purchasing decision, post-purchase behavior (Odabaşı and Barış, 2013). First of all, the consumer realizes that he has a need, then he searches for information about the products that can meet this need, after this stage, by comparing the information he has obtained with the alternative products, he determines the most suitable product for himself and the purchase decision is made. Post-purchase behavior, on the other hand, is the stage of forming ideas about whether the product meets the needs of the individual after purchasing the product. At this stage, if a problem has arisen with the product, the consumer seeks support for the solution of the problem by contacting the seller company. If businesses cannot manage this process well, the consumer will not think of purchasing products from that company or brand in their next shopping. As a matter of fact, the common complaints of the customers who shop online are the problems such as the products coming different from the ones seen on the online shopping sites, wrong or missing products. The better the businesses can manage these post-purchase processes, the more consumers will be satisfied with that brand and business and will want to shop continuously (Akkaya, 2013, p.106; Aydın, 2019, pp.47-48). Also, according to (Papachristou et al, 2022), online shoppers can settle for longer delivery times and spend more money if the final product meets their requirements.

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