

We buy clothes because we need them

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GfK study on the reasoning and attitudes of Europeans and Americans when buying clothes and accessories Nuremberg/Frankfurt, July 7, 2006 - Four out of five Europeans and Americans buy clothes because they need them. Three out of four indulge if there are good deals around. Country of origin and fashion aspects, however, are less important according to a study of shopping habits carried out by GfK for The Wall Street Journal Europe in April of this year in 19 countries across Europe and the USA.

The most common reason by far for buying items of clothing is necessity. 82% of Europeans cite this reason, with a particularly loud echo from the Czechs, Germans and Swedes. Americans, on the other hand, oppose this trend.

The second most important reason for buying clothes, as given by three quarters of respondents, is the chance to bag a bargain. In Western Europe, cut-price clothes and accessories are particularly popular with Germans, while Bulgarians are less attracted by these.

It is also the pleasure derived from buying a new item of clothing or accessory that prompts over half of Europeans and Americans to purchase these. This is especially true of Czechs, Greeks and Finns, who simply enjoy buying clothes, and seldom applies to Germans and Swedes.

At number four in the reasons for purchasing comes the product's country of manufacture. 52% of consumers claim to buy clothes because they were made in their own country. This is particularly important to Turkish consumers and Bulgarians, while Dutch consumers are not very concerned about where the clothing they buy was made.

In fifth place is impulse buying. In particular the Austrians and the Germans like to seize the moment when shopping. This reason came in third place in these countries. The Bulgarians have quite a different attitude, with only 20% in agreement with spontaneity as a reason for buying clothes.

Following the latest trends falls quite far down the list of reasons for clothes purchasing decisions in most of the countries surveyed, as confirmed by 38% of all respondents. Only the Czech Republic and Denmark showed this to be a popular reason.

Similarly, looking at designer clothing, only around a third of consumers are interested in specific labels. Designer clothes were found to be particularly popular in Romania, Greece and Italy.

Online clothes shopping not so popular

Only 13% of consumers have purchased clothing or accessories over the Internet at least once in the last twelve months. The portion of Brits and Americans who have bought such items online, each 25%, is above average. By contrast, very few Central and Eastern Europeans report that they have ever purchased clothes from an online store. The Italians and the Spanish also showed little enthusiasm about the prospect of virtual shopping.

It is important to note with these figures that 36% of all respondents do not have access to the Internet. The most common reason given for not shopping online is that it is not possible to try on the clothes. Almost a quarter of those with access to the Internet therefore avoid virtual shopping, with Swedes and Danes being particularly wary.

For Greeks, Americans and Italians, the issue of Internet security is also an important factor. German online shoppers have a relatively care-free attitude, with only 5% giving security as their reason for not shopping on the web.

The Survey

For the "shopping habits" survey, citizens in 20 countries were asked about their attitudes to shopping for clothes and accessories, their reasons for purchasing, their thoughts on manufacturing locations, the prices of shoes and buying clothes/accessories over the Internet. The current survey was carried out by GfK Custom Research Worldwide on behalf of The Wall Street Journal Europe and with the financial support of GfK-Nürnberg e.V. from March to May 2006, and comprised a total of 20,654 people aged over 15 years in 20 countries.

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