

# Consumer Mindsets and In-Store Engagement Behaviors across Purchase Journeys

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**Abstract** Shoppers move through different combinations of online and offline channels in their path-to-purchase journey. This study aims to investigate whether shopper segments by journey type exhibit distinguishable patterns of in-store behaviors due to the different mindsets they deploy during store visits. Study 1 investigates path-to-purchase journeys and identifies three segments of store visitors: offline store-only consumers, webroomers, and showroomers by sequencing all activities involved in sunglasses purchase journeys. Study 2 shows that different mindsets are present depending on the purchase journey. Study 3 demonstrates different patterns of in-store engagement behaviors among the three shopper segments in a shopping task that simulates different sequences of channel usage. The findings in studies 2 and 3 highlight the associations between mindsets and engagement behaviors among the three shopper segments. Our finding on the novel relationship between shopper segments and mindsets suggests that mindset can be a robust segmentation basis that explains both information processing and behavioral patterns in omnichannel environments.

**Keywords** Deliberative mindset, Implemental mindset, Purchase journey, In-store engagement behaviors, Omnichannel retail

**Citation** Oh, H., & Youn, C. (2024). Consumer mindsets and in-store engagement behaviors across purchase journeys. *International Journal of Costume and Fashion*, 24(1), 66-75.

## Introduction

In the purchase journey, consumers interact with brand marketers and retailers using various combinations of online and physical channels (Elzinga et al., 2009; Harris et al., 2021; Voorveld et al., 2016). Recognizing the importance of cross-channel shopping behaviors, retailers have integrated online and offline channels to create a seamless shopping experience (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). In such an omnichannel retail environment, consumers seek tactile experiences with products and brands in physical stores while being attracted to the various benefits offered by online channels, such as a wide selection of products, lower prices, convenience, and rich information like product reviews and ratings. As e-commerce surges, physical stores are transitioning from transactional spaces to experiential spaces

(Kumar et al., 2017; Stratten, 2020).

Traditionally, key consumer behaviors in physical stores were indicators of purchase. However, in the omnichannel retail environment, retailers must develop insights into consumer behaviors within the context of the purchase journey to manage store operations cost-effectively (Kannan et al., 2016; Kumar et al., 2017; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). In-store behaviors are shaped by consumer needs and expectations, which in turn alter their mindsets (Ofir & Simonson, 2007). Given that consumers have diverse needs and expectations at different stages of the purchase journey, it is anticipated that different mindsets will be activated at each stage, leading to varied behaviors.

This study aims to: 1) identify key consumer segments

Received May 20, 2024; Revised June 11, 2024; Accepted June 18, 2024

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related to channel usage during the purchase journey; 2) characterize the mindsets activated during store visits for each segment; 3) examine in-store behavioral patterns associated with each segment. The research was conducted over six months, with each study phase building upon the findings of the previous one to enhance the systematic nature of the research. Sunglasses were selected as the focal product due to their high product involvement and experiential nature, making them suitable for investigating cross-channel shopping paths and specific in-store engagement behaviors (Hilken et al., 2017). Through three studies, this research aims to derive consumer segments reflective of the purchase journey and examine their mindsets and behaviors, providing insights for optimized omnichannel strategies.

## Literature Reviews

### Consumer Purchase Journey

Given that consumers interact with brand marketers and retailers both online and offline, the consumer purchase process can be seen as a series of channels used and interacted with throughout the entire purchase journey (Elzinga et al., 2009; Srinivasan et al., 2016; Voorveld et al., 2016). This journey is becoming increasingly complex in an omni-channel environment (Herhausen et al., 2019; Kannan et al., 2016), as consumers choose channels based on various benefits and costs, resulting in highly diverse purchase journeys for different consumers (Herhausen et al., 2019). Considering consumers visiting offline stores, some still prefer offline browsing and purchasing, making them offline store-centric consumers. However, some consumers start with online search before purchasing in-store, known as webroomers, while others visit stores to try products before purchasing online, known as showroomers. Webroomers and showroomers are shoppers who utilize search channels separately to gain complementary benefits of the purchase channel (Flavián et al., 2020; Gensler et al., 2017; Verhoef et al., 2007).

Webroomers use online channels for convenient and effective product information searches (Flavián et al., 2020). In contrast, showroomers diagnose and evaluate products by

physically interacting with them in actual stores (Gensler et al., 2017). The scale of these cross-channel search types has grown significantly (Herhausen et al., 2019), and their continued growth in an omni-channel environment indicates that understanding consumer behavior in stores requires a different perspective from the traditional offline store-centric consumer.

### Consumer Mindset and In-Store Engagement Behaviors

All three consumer types (offline store-only consumers, webroomers, showroomers) include store visits in their purchase paths, but each store visit occurs at different decision-action stages. This study hypothesizes that store visits are associated with the unique mindset and in-store behavior of each type. Mindset refers to the cognitive processes and judgment criteria activated at a given moment of decision-making or task completion, divided into deliberative mindset and implemental mindset (Freitas et al., 2004). Deliberative mindset influences until specific purchase decisions are made, while implemental mindset influences from the decision to the purchase. Mindsets not only affect information processing differently but also shape different behaviors (Armor & Taylor, 2003; Murphy & Dweck, 2016). Previous studies have shown that people with a deliberative mindset use a much wider range of information for comparison and analysis, sometimes considering even irrelevant factors, resulting in lower task performance than those with an implemental mindset (Armor & Taylor, 2003; Büttner et al., 2013).

In a shopping context, it is evident that consumers' mindsets shift from deliberative to implemental at the point of purchase (Dhar et al., 2007) as they move from the evaluation stage to the action stage. In other words, as consumers progress from the early to the later stages of the purchase journey, their mindset changes from deliberative to implemental. Therefore, even consumers visiting offline stores have different mindsets depending on their purchase journeys. Consequently, it is expected that the three types of consumers (offline store-only, webroomers, showroomers) visiting the store exhibit different mindsets and behaviors during their visits.

Showroomers visit stores for exploration (Gensler et al.,

2017). As store visits are part of the initial stages leading to purchase, their mindset remains in the pre-decision stage. They explore the available options in the store but delay purchase decisions to find better prices online (Verhoef et al., 2007). Showroomers interact with various products and brands in the store, but their exploratory behavior does not convert to purchase. Therefore, showroomers are expected to have a cautious mindset and exhibit exploratory behavior with low purchase likelihood.

Offline store-only consumers visit the store to evaluate available options and make immediate purchase decisions without intending to defer the purchase to another channel. Interacting with products in the store activates a concrete and implemental mindset (Liu et al., 2017). Consumers with high product touch motivation not only seek direct experiences with the product (Grohmann et al., 2007) but also exhibit impulsive purchasing behaviors (Peck & Childers, 2006). Thus, offline-only consumers can be seen as maintaining an implemental and action-oriented mindset. Additionally, consumers with high touch motivation tend to act confidently, making it more likely that their in-store engagement behaviors with the target brand and products will translate into purchases (Fazio & Zanna, 1981; Laroche et al., 1996). Therefore, it can be predicted that offline-only consumers will exhibit an implemental mindset and goal-oriented in-store engagement behaviors during their store visits.

Lastly, webroomers visit stores in the later stages of their purchase path after starting with online search. They visit offline stores to make a definitive judgment about the products they intend to purchase after obtaining in-depth information about product attributes online (Fernández, et al., 2018). Webroomers visit stores to physically experience limited options and reduce uncertainty (Flavián et al., 2020), making their in-store engagement behaviors goal-oriented. Therefore, it is predicted that webroomers' mindsets transition from deliberative to implemental during store visits. Their in-store engagement behaviors are also expected to be goal-oriented and likely to convert to purchase. To verify this, this study examines the following research questions through Studies 1, 2, and 3:

RQ1: Classify consumers using offline stores according

to their purchase journey.

RQ2: Investigate if there are differences in mindsets among offline store consumer types according to their purchase journey.

RQ3: Examine if there are differences in in-store engagement behaviors among offline store consumer types according to their purchase journey.

## Study 1: Consumer Typology Based on Purchase Journey

In Study 1, we identified key purchase journey types based on the sequence of shopping channel choices throughout the purchase journey.

### Research Method

Data was collected from 188 American college students using a Qualtrics survey. Participants were first asked to report when they last purchased sunglasses (4 response options: never purchased, more than a year ago, within the past year but more than 6 months ago, within the past 6 months). Only responses from those who had purchased within the past year were included, resulting in a final analysis sample of 185 participants. Participants were asked to select all the processes they experienced while purchasing sunglasses from a list created based on focus group interviews with 20 participants from the same demographic. The list included activities such as investigating brand websites/apps, checking fashion trends online and in-store, viewing social media promotions, online promotions, in-store promotions, comparing prices online and offline, reading online reviews, trying on sunglasses in-store, and making the purchase online or offline. Finally, participants arranged the selected activities in the order they experienced them, generating individual purchase journeys.

### Results

The collection of sunglasses purchase journeys resulted in 81 unique journeys from 188 participants. These journeys were

further categorized into higher-order groups based on shopping channel choices: offline store-only (39.0%), online-to-offline (29.8%), online-offline-online (11.4%), offline-to-online (7.1%), offline-online-offline (6.9%), and online-only (5.8%). Given the importance of trying on sunglasses before purchase, the offline store-only journey had the highest proportion, followed by the online-to-offline journey. In contrast, the online-only journey had the lowest proportion. Many cross-channel users reported starting their search online but visiting a store to try on sunglasses before completing the purchase online.

These journey types can be grouped into three main categories as shown in Figure 1: offline store-only consumers, webroomers, and showroomers. Offline store-only consumers accounted for 39.0% of the sample. Webroomers (a combination of online-to-offline journeys and offline-online-offline journeys, where consumers visit online at least once during the purchase process but complete the purchase offline) made up 36.9% of the sample. Showroomers (a combination of online-offline-online journeys and offline-to-online journeys, where consumers visit an offline store at least once before completing the purchase online) comprised 18.3% of the sample.

## Discussion

Total of 55% of sunglass consumers were identified as cross-channel consumers (webroomers and showroomers). Offline store-only consumers were found to have simple journeys, consisting of either 2 steps (e.g., attempt to purchase) or 3 steps (e.g., research style-attempt to purchase or price comparison-attempt to purchase-purchase) in 49.0% of cases. Interestingly, in contrast, showroomers had a very low percentage of simple journeys (2-step journey: 0.0%, 3-step journey: 8.3%), with 79.2% of them experiencing complex journeys consisting of 5 or more steps. For webroomers, completing the purchase directly in the store after trying on the product (66.0%) occurred nearly twice as often as continuing to search for additional information online after trying on the product in the store (34.0%). In summary, offline store-only consumers prefer simple journeys, while showroomers tend to enjoy complex journeys, involving various methods of information searching before maximizing purchase benefits. Additionally, many webroomers

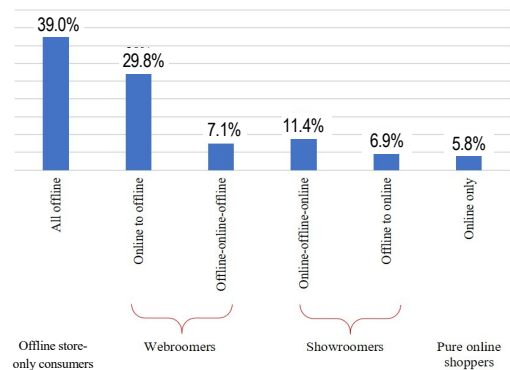


Figure 1. Consumer segments based on channel selection throughout purchase journey ( $N = 185$ )

tend to finalize their choice in-store after researching online. Despite the complexity of the purchase journey, the benefits that can only be obtained from offline channels ensure that offline stores remain an essential part of the process. This indicates that while the purchase journey complexity varies among different consumer types, offline channels play a crucial role, providing unique benefits that complement online research and enhance the overall shopping experience.

## Study 2: Differences in Consumer Mindset According to Purchase Journeys

In Study 2, we investigated the mindset of each purchase journey type (offline store-only, showroomers, webroomers) identified in the previous study.

### Research Method

A new group of participants, different from those in Study 1, was recruited. A total of 77 American college students participated in the study through a Qualtrics survey. Initially, participants were asked which purchase journey they would consider if they were to purchase sunglasses within the next six months. The options, aligned with the three consumer types (offline store-only, showroomers, webroomers), were presented as follows:

1. Browse and try on sunglasses in an offline store, then purchase in the offline store.
2. Browse and try on sunglasses in an offline store, then purchase online.
3. Search for sunglasses online, then try on sunglasses in an offline store and purchase in the offline store.
4. None of the above.

Next, the deliberative-implementation mindset was measured using Büttner et al. (2013)'s mindset scale (7-point Likert scale: 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree). The scale items are provided in Table 1. To control for extraneous variables that might affect the consumer's mindset, we also measured product involvement, task involvement, gender, and the brand of the product the participant wanted to purchase. By collecting and analyzing these data, we aimed to understand how the mindset differed among consumer types based on their anticipated purchase journey. This approach allowed us to explore how the type of purchase journey influences whether consumers adopt a deliberative or implementation mindset.

## Results

**Consumer Types According to Purchase Journeys.** Among the 77 participants, 40.3% were identified as offline store-only consumers, 31.2% as webroomers, and 20.8% as

showroomers, showing a similar trend to the results of Study 1. Six participants (7.8%) chose "None of the above," and were excluded from the analysis; these participants can be presumed to be online-only consumers.

**Implementation-Deliberative Mindset.** To determine the respondents' mindsets, we calculated an implementation-deliberative mindset index by subtracting the average score of the deliberative mindset items from the average score of the implementation mindset items. Higher positive values indicated a stronger implementation mindset. An ANCOVA (Analysis of Covariance) was conducted with the purchase journey type as the independent variable, the implementation-deliberative mindset as the dependent variable, and gender and product involvement as covariates.

The analysis revealed a significant effect of purchase journey type on the predicted direction ( $F=4.23, p<.05$ ). As shown in Table 2, offline store-only consumers exhibited a more implementation mindset compared to webroomers and showroomers, who tended to have a deliberative mindset. Among these, webroomers displayed a less deliberative mindset than showroomers. Among the covariates, only gender showed a significant difference ( $F=4.06, p<.05$ ), with female consumers exhibiting a more deliberative mindset than male consumers.

These findings highlight the differences in mindset based on the purchase journey type, with offline store-only consumers being more action-oriented (implementation), while webroomers and showroomers are more evaluative (deliberative). Additionally, gender differences suggest that female consumers generally approach purchase decisions more cautiously.

## Discussion

The three types of consumers based on their sunglasses purchase journey exhibited distinct mindsets. Webroomers and showroomers demonstrated a more deliberative mindset, while offline store-only consumers had the most implementation mindset. The negative index values for webroomers and showroomers indicate a stronger deliberative mindset among these groups, with webroomers showing a relatively lower deliberative mindset than showroomers. Webroomers' higher implementation mindset compared to showroomers can be attributed to their collection of detailed product and brand

Table 1. Scales of deliberative-implementation mindsets

Items	Cronbach's $\alpha$
<u>Deliberative</u>	
I would visit a number of stores before choosing a pair of sunglasses.	.83
I probably would not decide for a long-time which pair of sunglasses I would choose.	
I would be very unsure about which pair of sunglasses I should buy.	
If I found a nice pair of sunglasses, I would deliberate a long time about whether I should buy them or not.	
<hr/>	
<u>Implementation</u>	
I decide in advance which stores I would like to go to.	.72
I pay attention to how to get to the right stores as quickly as possible.	
Right from the start, I would have a clear idea of what the pair of sunglasses should look like.	

Table 2. Differences in implemental-deliberative mindsets across purchase journeys

	Offline store-only consumers	Webroomer	Showroomer	F
Implemental-deliberative mindsets	0.29 A <sup>a</sup>	-0.26 B	-0.46 C	4.23*

a: Groups that showed significant differences in the Duncan test are indicated by different letters.

\* $p < .05$

information online, focusing on execution when visiting the store (Fernández et al., 2018).

We can further understand the differences in mindset revealed in Study 2 through the characteristics of the purchase journeys identified in Study 1. Offline store-only consumers, possessing an implemental mindset, likely prefer simple, one-stop shopping to quickly reach their goal, using the store as both an information and purchase channel. In contrast, showroomers' complex and extended journeys reflect a deliberative mindset, as they seek the best choice after considering all alternatives. The finding in Study 1 that most webroomers tend to purchase immediately after trying on products in the store suggests that their deliberative mindset manifests during the online evaluation of all potential choices, which then transitions to an implemental mindset during the store visit.

In summary, offline store-only consumers' implemental mindset leads them to a straightforward purchase journey aimed at quick goal achievement. Showroomers, with their deliberative mindset, engage in a more thorough evaluation process, resulting in a longer, more intricate journey. Webroomers start with a deliberative mindset online and shift to an implemental mindset in-store, highlighting a flexible approach that balances detailed evaluation with goal-oriented execution.

### Study 3: Differences in In-Store Engagement Behaviors According to Purchase Journeys

Study 3 aimed to investigate how consumers with different mindsets, as identified in previous studies, exhibit distinct

in-store engagement behaviors when visiting an offline store.

### Research Method

In Study 3, new participants, not involved in Studies 1 and 2, were recruited to examine their sunglasses purchase journey and in-store behaviors. To enhance realism, participants were presented with a scenario where they received a \$25 discount coupon for Ray-Ban sunglasses. They were asked about their planned purchase journey, and responses were collected from 129 individuals who indicated they would use an offline store at some point. Participants who indicated they would not use an offline store were excluded.

Participants were shown two photographs to gauge their in-store engagement behaviors. The photos, taken in an actual store, depicted two different sections: one with luxury brands (A section) and another with alternative brands and Ray-Ban products (B section). The participants were asked to respond to engagement behaviors such as browsing, trying on sunglasses, checking prices, seeking information on their phones, and requesting assistance from staff, rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Very Unlikely to 5 = Very Likely).

The presentation of survey questions varied according to responses to the purchase journey questions. First, participants identified as webroomers (those who searched for sunglasses online, tried them on in an offline store, and purchased them in an offline store, comprising 37.5% of respondents) were asked to visit the retailer's website, browse for at least two minutes, and describe in an open-ended format what they had explored. Subsequently, participants were presented with a scenario in which they entered a store after seeing a sunglasses shop in a mall and were shown two stimuli pictures of the store. They were then asked to describe their in-store engagement behaviors for each picture.

Participants identified as showroomers (those who browsed and tried on sunglasses in an offline store but purchased them online, comprising 15.8% of respondents) were shown the same stimuli as the webroomers and asked about their in-store engagement intentions without any additional steps. After completing this survey, they were instructed to click a provided link to visit the sunglasses

retailer’s website and describe in an open-ended format what they had explored. Finally, participants identified as Offline store-only consumers (comprising 46.7% of respondents) were shown the stimuli and asked about their in-store engagement behaviors, with no further steps required.

All three groups were asked to complete a final set of tasks, which included evaluating their intention to purchase Ray-Ban products from the store (offline store for Offline store-only and webroomers, online store for showroomers) and their task engagement using a 5-point Likert scale (“I tried hard to answer the questions accurately,” “I put my best effort into the entire task,” “I concentrated throughout the entire task,” Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .80$ ). Finally, participants answered demographic questions (gender and age) before concluding the survey.

## Results

An ANCOVA was performed with the purchase journey type as the independent variable and product engagement, task engagement, and gender as covariates to examine the engagement behaviors in each product section. The results are shown in Table 3. Interestingly, the differences in engagement behaviors based on the purchase journey type varied between Section A, which displayed non-substitute products, and Section B, which displayed substitute and target products.

First, in Section A, the main effect of the purchase journey type was significant ( $F=2.96, p<.05$ ). Showroomers exhibited higher in-store shopping engagement intentions compared to Offline store-only consumers and webroomers, while there was no significant difference between Offline store-only consumers and webroomers. Gender was the only significant covariate ( $F=28.56, p<.001$ ), with female participants showing higher in-store shopping engagement intentions.

In Section B, which included target products, there were no significant differences in engagement intentions based on the purchase journey type ( $F=0.40, p>.05$ ), as all participants showed relatively high engagement intentions regardless of their purchase journey type. Task engagement was the only significant covariate ( $F=5.74, p<.05$ ). The differences in purchase intentions based on the purchase

Table 3. Differences in in-store engagement behaviors across purchase journeys

	Offline store-only consumers	Webroomer	Showroomer	F
In-store engagement behaviors at Section A	2.54 B <sup>a</sup>	2.53 B	3.16 A	2.96*
In-store engagement behaviors at Section B	3.58	3.69	3.74	0.40
Purchase likelihood	3.64 A	3.14 AB	2.81 B	13.05***

a: Groups that showed significant differences in the Duncan test are indicated by different letters.

\* $p<.05$ , \*\*\* $p<.001$

journey type were significant ( $F=13.05, p<.001$ ). Offline store-only consumers had the highest purchase intentions, while showroomers had the lowest purchase intentions.

## Discussion

The results reveal distinct behavioral patterns across the three types of purchase journeys. Offline store-only consumers, who previous studies have shown to activate an implemental mindset, exhibited lower in-store shopping engagement intentions in Section A, which contained products less relevant to their goals. However, their purchase intentions were the highest. Conversely, showroomers, identified in prior research as having a high deliberative mindset, tend to process all information, including trivial details. This tendency likely explains their higher exploratory behavior in Section A, which displayed non-target products, compared to the other groups. However, their purchase intentions in the online store were the lowest, possibly because the information provided about the offline store was limited to just two display photos, insufficient for transitioning to an implemental mindset in the store.

Interestingly, in-store shopping engagement intentions in the target product section (Section B) were high across all types, regardless of the purchase journey. This suggests that an implemental mindset is activated in sections relevant to the consumers’ goals, regardless of the purchase journey type.



## Conclusion

The three studies presented distinct mindset and behavioral patterns among three types of consumers visiting offline stores (Offline store-only consumers, webroomers, showroomers). We categorized consumer types based on their sunglasses purchase journeys to derive insights into all related activities (Study 1). Study 1 underscored the significant role of offline stores, especially for products requiring physical trial, which remain pivotal in omni-channel environments for purchase decisions. Offline stores served as the primary purchase channel for Offline store-only consumers and webroomers, and also as a critical information channel for exploratory behaviors among Offline store-only consumers and showroomers.

Studies 2 and 3 confirmed correlations between mindset among the three consumer types based on sunglasses purchase journeys and in-store shopping engagement behaviors. Offline store-only consumers, characterized by an implemental mindset, showed higher goal-oriented engagement but lower exploratory engagement in Section A, leading to a higher likelihood of purchase. These patterns align with previous research indicating that individuals with an implemental mindset exhibit greater persistence in goal-directed behaviors (Armor & Taylor, 2003; Büttner et al., 2014). Showroomers, identified with a cautious mindset in previous studies, demonstrated higher exploratory engagement in Section A despite the products' lack of relevance, consistent with prior research indicating their active participation in incidental learning (Fujita et al., 2007), yet their weak persistence in goal-directed behaviors did not translate to purchase (Gollwitzer, 2012).

It was anticipated that webroomers would exhibit higher exploratory in-store engagement behaviors and purchase intentions due to a shift from a deliberative to an implemental mindset upon visiting the store. However, webroomers showed a tendency towards lower exploratory in-store engagement behaviors, likely due to insufficient prior exploration of products simulated in shopping tasks, hindering the transition to goal-oriented in-store engagement behaviors and purchase intentions. The physical interaction with products is crucial for enhancing webroomers' confidence in

their choices and increasing their purchase intentions (Flavián et al., 2016).

This study provided insights into distinct behavioral differences based on purchase journey types, validating these through psychological interpretations of mindset. Consumer mindsets can effectively explain information processing and behavioral patterns in omni-channel environments. While previous research primarily addressed responses to promotions and advertisements (Bell et al., 2011; Wyer, 2018), this study contributed to understanding behaviors related to in-store activities. Furthermore, this study suggests tailored offline store operational strategies based on visitor types. The significant differences in in-store engagement behaviors and varying levels of purchase conversion among different consumer types necessitate retail establishments to customize promotions and in-store strategies accordingly. Promotions may be more effective for showroomers with a cautious mindset, considering their tendency to respond more to limited-time promotional frames (Cheema & Patrick, 2008). Tactics such as promotional coupons available on retail websites may effectively convert showroomers into purchasers.

The observation that webroomers exhibit more goal-oriented behaviors than exploratory behaviors suggests a shift in their mindset from deliberative to implemental upon visiting the store. Considering their pursuit of confident choices during product trials (Flavián et al., 2016), it is essential for offline stores to configure their layouts reflecting styles and brands highly searched online. Reflecting online search behaviors (frequency and dwell time) of products and brands geographically can provide webroomers with the appropriate product assortment.

## Acknowledgment

This work was supported by a 2-Year Research Grant of Pusan National University.

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