Budapest University of Technology and Economics

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SHOPPING EXPERIENCE
OF SECOND-HAND CLOTHES

Thesis of Ph.D. dissertation

Budapest, 2021

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I. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Since the 1990s, consumer behavior research has been known to consider both the physical and psychological aspects of human. The role of emotions in consumer behavior has been emphasized, consumers are not only thinkers and doers, but also sentient beings. The service economy has been replaced by the experience economy, i.e. supply is based on experiences and specialized in staging experiences (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). The new conceptualization treats consumption as a holistic experience in which a company and/or its offer and a consumer interact (LaSalle and Britton, 2003).

So-called experience research has been carried out since the 2000s. The idea is to study consumption as an experience. They seek to find out what (positive or negative) impressions and experiences consumers have when shopping. Experience research is mainly categorized in the literature according to whose point of view is in focus.

In my doctoral research, I investigate the role, perception, and interpretation of experience in consumer behavior in the case of shopping in a physical shopping environment. The shopping experience is related to shopping as an activity and involves the consumer's responses to the shopping environment and situation. Although the focus is on the physical shopping environment, my research also explores experiences that appear in a different shopping environment, for example, online shopping, etc.

I examine consumer behavior along with the Consciousness-Emotion-Value (C-E-V) model. The focus of my research is the consumer's consciousness, emotions, and values about second-hand clothes. These three factors not only influence the decision but also influence subsequent consumer behavior.

According to Fiore & Ogle (2000), a positive experience / a reward/ a benefit, is consciously or unconsciously realized in the consumer during the purchase process. From the consumer's point of view, it means that positive feelings are associated with the buying, which may reinforce the consumer's behavior; from the point of view of the corporate interest, it means that the purchase is realized. The model collects and organizes the benefits resulting from the shopping experience into a Consciousness-Emotion-Value system. I take Fiore's (2008) model as the basic system and relate it to my research results (see Figure 1).
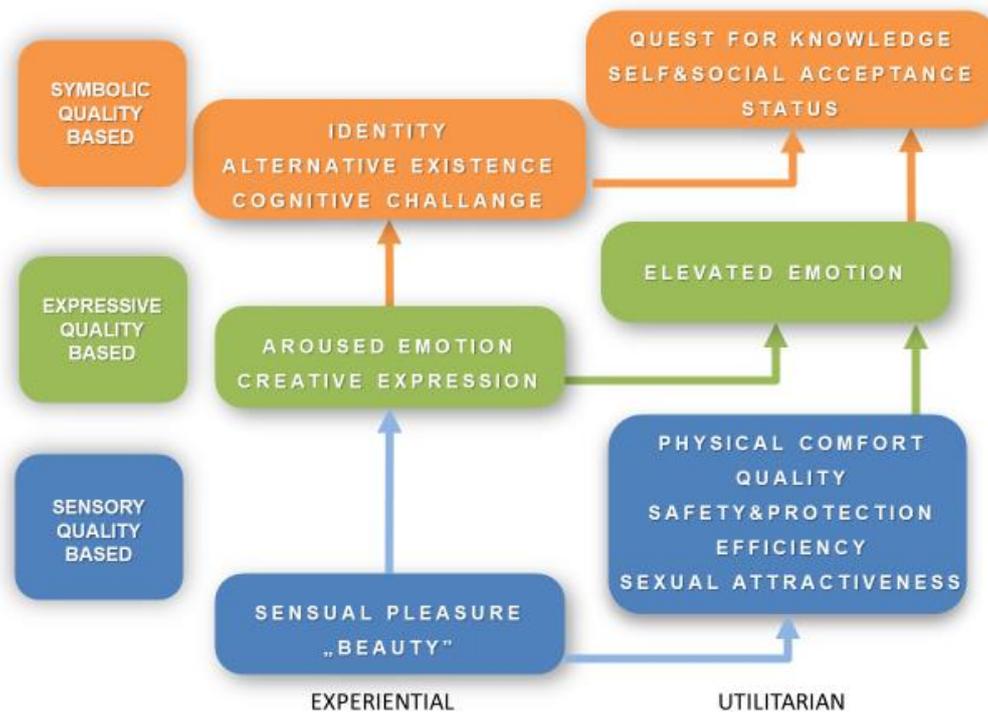
Figure 1.: The reward system of shopping experience,

Based on Fiore (2008), own compilation

For the shopping experience research, I chose second-hand clothing, a trend in slow fashion. There is a growing emphasis in the economy on sustainable consumption, which seeks solutions to social and environmental imbalances through more responsible behavior. Sustainable consumption is intrinsically linked to production and distribution, the use and redundancy of products and services. In the clothing industry, there is increasing pressure to develop a circular economy model, which involves the reuse and recycling of textiles and clothing products. One form of recycling clothing that is still of good quality can be to sell it as second-hand clothing.

Another factor in my choice of this product group was that it was available in almost the same shopping environment when I conducted primary research.

To promote second-hand clothes shopping is inevitable to understand why consumers choose to buy it or avoid it. Second-hand clothing, by its very nature, has significant consumer attitudes. Some consumers do not accept the product group itself, so they have neither intrinsic nor extrinsic motivations. In my research, I focus on consumers who do not refuse the product group, who are open to second-hand clothing.

II. OBJECTIVES

This dissertation aims to explore the experiences that play a role in consumers' purchasing decisions in the shopping experience of second-hand clothing.

In Figure 2, I visualize my research concept and its interpretative framework. In my research, I investigate the consumer's consciousness, emotions, and values when shopping in a physical shopping environment, which is influenced by the shopping situation in which this takes place and the product itself (in my case, second-hand clothes). The result of my research is the identification of the elements of the second-hand clothing shopping experience, which include both positive and negative experiences.
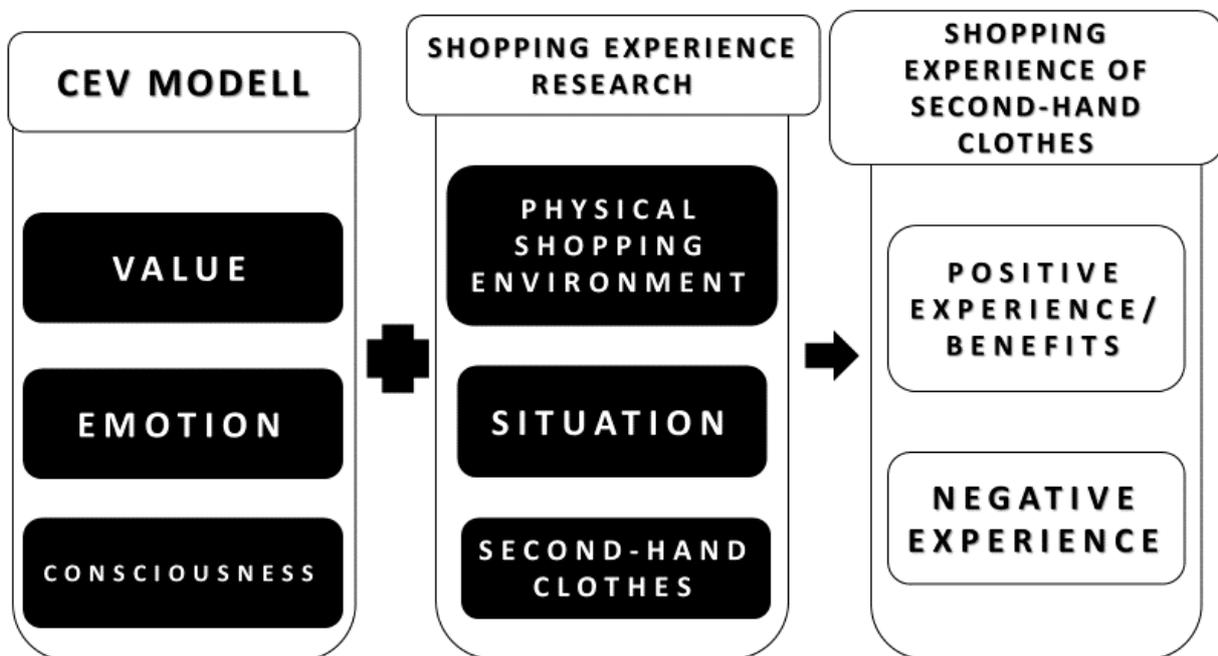

Figure 2: My research concept,

own compilation

In addition to the positive experience, my research also focuses on the negative experience. From the point of view of the company's interest, a negative experience means that the consumer abandons the purchase.

III. METHODOLOGY

Research I. aims to investigate the effectiveness of the Affinity Diagram as a research tool for exploring shopping experience. First, I collected people's experiences through an open-ended questionnaire survey (n=169). Then this was sorted by 12 teams and formed 12 Affinity Diagrams. Finally, it was interpreted and integrated by a professional team. The result is a

system of experience aspects. I then compared this with the experience aspects identified through secondary research (Figure 3).
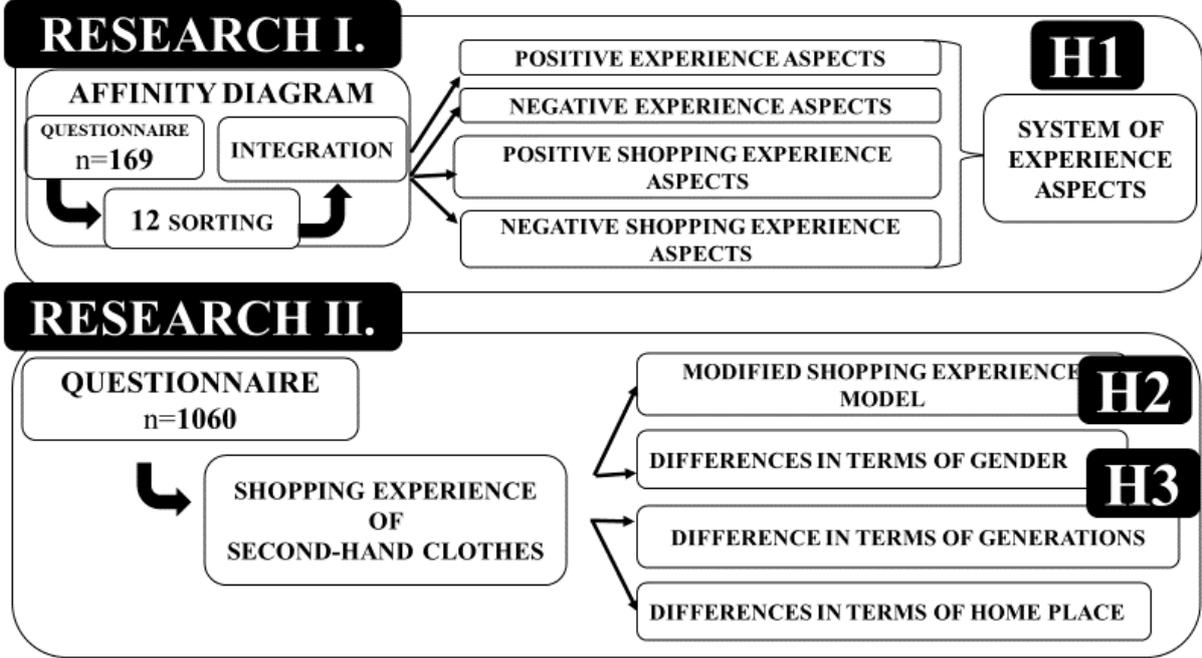

Figure 3: Design and methodology of my research I and II,

own compilation

The aim of my research II was to explore the reward system of the second-hand clothing shopping experience. I collected data using a questionnaire (n=1060) coded by two independent coders. I compared the reward system of Fiore's (2008) shopping experience model described in the literature with the results obtained regarding shopping experience of second-hand clothing. Furthermore, I examined whether there are a significant differences between consumers' second-hand clothing shopping experience along demographic variables.
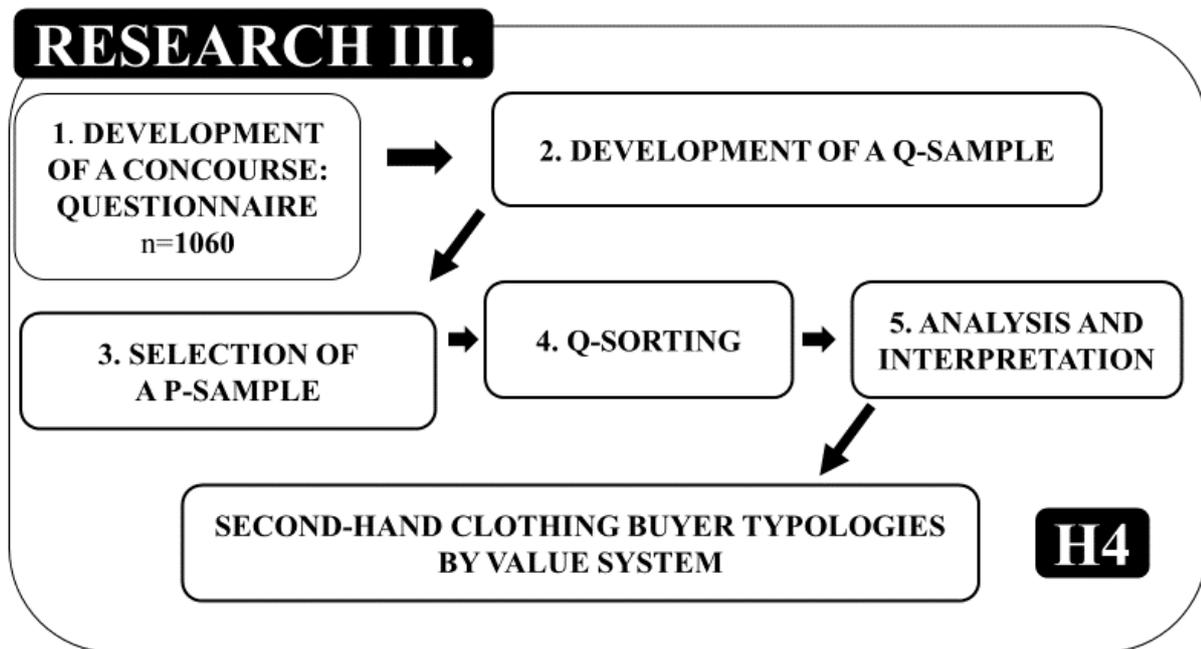
Figure 4: Design and methodology of my research III.,

own compilation

In my research III, I used Q-methodology to identify second-hand clothing shopper types for men and women based on the shopping experience (Figure 3).

IV. NEW ACADEMIC FINDINGS

Hypothesis I. (H1): *To explore the system of the shopping experience, the Affinity Diagram is a valuable research methodology in itself.*

As a result of my research I., I got that experience is created through interaction with myself, others, objects, and the environment. It coincides with my secondary research findings, according to which experience can be defined in terms of the product (object => product experience), the user (self => user experience), and the shopping environment (environment => shopping experience). The experience of interacting with others is included in the shopping experience like communication and behavior with sellers. The aspects are essentially the same as in the experience research presented in the literature. However, the Affinity Diagram technique has provided a novel approach to experiences:

- highlighted the role of interaction,
- defined its direction (acquisition/recognition or loss/damage),
- the factors affecting its dynamics (novelty, change).

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Based on these findings, I accept the applicability of the Affinity Diagram for exploring the system of experience and the shopping experience by comparing the primary and secondary research results. (My publications for the thesis for the Affinity Diagram: E and F)

> **Thesis I.**: To explore the system of the shopping experience, the Affinity Diagram is a valuable research methodology in itself.

Hypothesis I. (H2): *Fiore's (2008) model of shopping experience, originally applied to the physical shopping environment, can also be applied to second-hand clothing as a product group.*

Fiore's (2008) shopping experience model refers to the physical shopping environment and includes all the positive experiences that reinforce consumers' behavior and decisions during the shopping process. My primary research explored consumers' shopping experiences in terms of second-hand clothes. The results show that the experience is not only reinforcing but also discourages consumers from the purchase decision. I compared the obtained experiences with Fiore's (2008) model. In the comparison, I examined which of the 16 experiences in the original model were associated with the obtained shopping experience aspects. Based on these, I conclude the following:

- Negative experiences can also play a role in consumer behavior.
- Fiore (2008) model can be extended to a broader perspective: experiences that avoid/discourage the purchase decision.
- Sensory quality-based benefits should also be put into a broader perspective: perceived-based experiences.
- Based on Fiore's (2008) model, the following positive experiences could be identified in relation of second-hand clothes: efficiency, sexual attractiveness, aroused emotion, creative expression, elevated emotion, identity, alternative existence, cognitive challenge, self-acceptance, and social acceptance.
- The opposite of the positive experiences in Fiore's (2008) model, i.e., their absence, was identified in the following cases:
  - beauty => sight (dirty physical environment)
  - sensual pleasure => sensory effects (unpleasant smell)
  - safety, security => insecurity (the appearance of danger in the crowd)

- o physical comfort => physical sensation (in the crowd, the consumer feels physically uncomfortable)
- o status => status vulnerability appeared (they experience the choice of a product group as a sign of poverty)

- The positive experiences in Fiore's (2008) model did not include, but three new experiences appeared in my primary research:
  - o perceived mental representation, which includes experiences related to the consumer's condition as a result of the perceptual process of the shopping environment,
  - o physiological state change, which involves excitement and arousal due to the perception of used clothing,
  - o and quality time as a value for consumers.

- Positive experiences in Fiore's (2008) reward system included the desire for knowledge, which was not reported in my second-hand clothing research.

  - The obtained positive and negative experiences can be applied to any other clothing product purchase, presumably the results can be generalised. (There is potential for future research.) However, I think the following experiences are product group-specific (and interestingly, the experiences include experiences associated with all three levels):
    - o the visual impact of the colorfulness of the clothes (the benefit of visual pleasure in the model), since the uniqueness of the clothes makes a colorful sight (consciousness);
    - o the unpleasant smell as a negative sensory effect due to the disinfection of the clothes in the physical shopping environment (consciousness);
    - o creative expression, which also results from the diversity and uniqueness of the clothes (emotion);
    - o the benefit of identity in expressing the importance of environmental protection, acting in an environmentally conscious way when buying second-hand clothes (value);
    - o and the experience of quality time, it feels like hunting (value).

Based on the results, I partially accept my second hypothesis. (My publication related to the thesis on the shopping experience model: B, for the research on the second-hand clothes shopping experience: D)

Thesis II.: Based on my research, the shopping experience system of second-hand clothes can be compared to the modified version of Fiore (2008)'s model.

Hypothesis III. (H3): *Significant differences in consumers' rewards for the second-hand clothing shopping experience can be identified along demographic variables.*

Sub-hypothesis III/A:

Significant gender differences in the second-hand clothing shopping experience can be identified.

Sub-hypothesis III/B:

Significant differences in the second-hand clothing shopping experience can be identified across generations.

Sub-hypothesis III/C:

Significant differences in the second-hand clothing shopping experience can be identified along with the residence.

My third hypothesis will also be tested based on the results of my research II. Fiore's (2008) model for shopping experience is a general system that includes all the benefits that consumers acquire during the shopping experience. The model does not, however, address whether there are differences along demographic characteristics and, if so, which experiences differ. In my primary research, I explored whether and how consumers' second-hand clothing shopping experience differ along demographic variables. The first demographic characteristic I examine is gender. I find the following significant differences:

- Men are more likely to store as a negative experience the fact that they were unlucky in their second-hand clothes shopping (U=75794, p=0.005). This result is in line with research by Bakewell & Mitchell (2004), among others, which found that men like to make decisions more quickly when shopping. If they fail to do so - and in the case of second-hand clothes the chances of success are lower, as it takes time to find the right size, color, shape, etc. - they feel disappointed.

- Men are more likely to associate negative emotions with second-hand clothing (U=71654.5, p=0.038) and more likely to feel disgust (U=74046, p<0.001). This is an interesting result that may be related to the social perception of second-hand clothing.

- Women, on the other hand, experience much more passion when shopping for second-hand clothes (U=75234.5, p=0.024) and prefer this form of shopping more than men (U=74959, p=0.022). Raajpoot, Sharma & Chebat (2008) found a similar finding in their research: they found that women perceive their shopping experience to be more exciting when they perceive that they have a wider choice of products to choose from. A wider choice is a given for second-hand clothing, which for women creates passion and excitement.

- Men are more likely to perceive it as a programme to participate in with others (U=75518.5, p<0.001), while women also perceive shopping for second-hand clothes as a programme in itself (U=74181.5, p=0.002). This is an interesting data, which may be related to the fact that men spend little time shopping and if they do undertake such a time-consuming purchase, it is mostly for the company.

- Compared to men, women are more likely store as a negative experience that a size was not right (U=75510, p=0.027). This is related to the fact that they experience more emotions: higher intensity of passion and excitement. Consequently this excitement can turn into deep disappointment if the purchase fails (e.g. because of the wrong size).

- There is a strong significant difference in women's positive experience of finding unique (U=57387.5, p<0.001, 35%) and good quality (U=70942.5, p=0.004, 11%) clothes. This result is in line with research by Evans, Christiansen & Gill (1996), who found that women have a greater desire for contemporary fashion and style.

- For men, the ability to find branded items in such places was more often reported as a positive experience with clothes (U=71997, p=0.004). Put another way, this also means that men care about clothing brands. This is somewhat at odds with the research findings of Bakewell & Mitchell (2004), who suggest that men are more likely to make risky purchasing decisions. Knowing a brand reduces the consumer's perceived risk.

- Men are more likely to associate second-hand clothing purchases with poverty (U=72573.5, p<0.001). This information should be taken into account when educating consumers to adopt this product group.

- Men recall more information about the shopping environment than women (U=76420.5, p=0.048). This may also be because while women identify more emotions when buying second-hand clothes, men store experiences based on perceived attributes.

For my second sub-hypothesis, I examined whether experiences are significantly different across generations. I found significant differences in the experience of buying second-hand clothes, but also some contradictory results. Among the results, I highlight those that bring novelty or hold exciting research potential:

- Generation X is more likely than Baby Boomers to think that second-hand clothing is a low-priced product group (p=0.012) and that browsing through clothes is an important part of shopping (p=0.014). Moreover, they also perceive it as a significantly more positive experience to shop for unique clothes (p=0.020). These results suggest that Generation X prefers shopping for second-hand clothes compared to Baby Boomers (hereafter BB), as they find it cheap, unique and accept that browsing is part of the activity.

- A similar result emerged in the relationship between liking and poverty in a pairwise comparison with Generation BB X and Y. Baby Boomers are more likely to associate second-hand clothing and its purchase with poverty than Generation X (p=0.004) and Generation Y (p<0.001). In contrast, BB respondents were significantly more likely to express a preference for second-hand clothing than Generation X (p=0.006) and Generation Y (p=0.008). It is an interesting contradiction that appeared across two generations. Further research is suggested based on the data.

- Compared to BB, Generation Y members are more likely to think that buying second-hand clothes is a way to help the environment (p=0.005). According to Dudás (2011), the growing role of environmental awareness is a process that affects the whole society. However, the results suggest that today's middle-aged people are more environmentally conscious than their elders.

- There is a strong significant difference between Generation BB and Y and Generation BB and Z. Members of the BB generation are more likely to believe that wide range of clothes from brands can be found than members of the Y generation (p<0.001) and the Z generation (p<0.001). These results suggest that today's young and middle-aged people do not consider second-hand clothing stores as branded clothing outlets compared to their elders, which is unfavorable for the second-hand clothing market given their high purchasing power.

- A significant difference emerged for Generation Z is more likely to consider wearing second-hand clothes as fashionable than members of BB (p=0.007) or than Generation

Y (p<0.001), and even compared to Generation X (p<0.001). It means that today's young people see it as a trendy habit.

- Generation Z respondents are more likely to consider the found clothes as a treasure (p=0.012) than Generation X respondents. However, Generation Z respondents are more likely to associate it with poverty than Generation Y respondents (p=0.002). The results may suggest that young consumers do not yet have a congruent view of second-hand clothing compared to middle-aged consumers.

- Generation X respondents consider this type of shopping as a hunting than Generation Z respondents (p=0.018), and presumably, this may be related to the fact that they associate it with more passions (p=0.033).

- There is also a significant difference between Generation X and Z that older generation members are more likely to consider second-hand clothing unique (p<0.001). Generation Z thinks that wearing second-hand clothes is fashionable and what is fashionable is not unique.

- The most significant differences are between Baby Boomers and other generations, which partly confirms the research by Trend Inspiration (2019) that generational boundaries are eroding and generational values are starting to blur.

Finally, and related to my third sub-hypothesis, I looked at consumers in terms of their place of residence. I obtained the following results:

- The results show that rural residents are more likely to perceive second-hand clothes as a low-priced product group than those in Budapest (U=111642, p=0.036), and more rural people think they are of good quality (U=109713, p=0.005). It may suggest that in rural areas second-hand clothes are perceived as cheap and of good quality.

- People living in the capital are more likely to associate a negative experience based on a perceived characteristic (e.g., unpleasant smell) with the shopping environment (U=111926, p=0.008) than people living in rural areas, and they also associate more negative feelings with it (U=104866.5, p=0.001). It confirms the previous result that the perception of the product group seems to be more acceptable among rural residents.

- People in Budapest more often feel that buying second-hand clothes is like a hunting (U=115062.5, p=0.020), which requires too much time from the consumer (U=113671, p=0.034). Residents in Budapest have more shops to choose from, and time factors such as going to the shop can add to the shopping time.

> **Thesis III.**: There are significant differences in consumer benefits for the second-hand clothes shopping experience along with certain demographic variables.

Sub thesis III/A.:

Significant gender differences can be identified between the second-hand clothing shopping experience.

Sub thesis III/B:

Significant differences can be identified in the second-hand clothing shopping experience across generations.

Sub thesis III/C:

Significant differences can be identified in the second-hand clothing shopping experience across the residence.

Hypothesis IV (H4): *Within consumers with presumably significantly different consumer behavior in terms of clothing purchase, different types of consumers can be distinguished in terms of their second-hand clothing shopping experience.*

In my research III, I identified shopping types within women and men based on the experience of the second-hand clothing shopping experience using the Q-methodology.

Based on my research, I concluded the following:

- Based on the shopping experience system, shopping types can be distinguished between women and men.

- Based on female sorting, six factors or opinion groups were created, which are: adoring, hunting, avoiding, entering for rational reasons, self-rewarding, and entering for emotional reasons.

- For men, six factors or opinion groups also emerged: avoidant, price avoider, self-rewarding, physical avoider, self-, and social acceptance avoider and environment-friendly hunter.

Based on these, I accept the hypothesis with clarification. (My publication for the thesis: D)

> **Thesis IV.**: Six to six consumer types can be distinguished in terms of the shopping experience of second-hand clothing for women and men.

IV/2. OTHER SCIEFINTIC RESULTS

The dissertation also includes other novel scientific findings. The interdisciplinary approach to experience in literature research is a novel achievement. Based on the role of experience in psychology, sociology, and economics, the following can be formulated:

- Experience is closely related to perception and is created through the processing of impressions by a learning process, which also implies that it can be changed. Since experience is processed individually by each person, each person has subjective experiences. (Based on Locke, 1968; Pléh, 2010; Bartha, 2011)

- Experience is reflexive and involuntary. (Based on Schulze and Mezei, 2000)

- Individuals do not want to experience situations, but to live them, which implies an inward-looking approach to life, i.e. people are more concerned with themselves and want to be active doers of situations and experiences rather than sufferers. (Based on Schulze and Mezei, 2000)

- Consumers have an emerging need to be changed and influenced by the experiences they buy from businesses. (Based on Pine and Gilmore, 1999)

- Experience is a memorable mental, physical and emotional connection with consumers that is personal and subjective. (Based on Mossberg, 2007)

- The experiences offered by a company can be interpreted along the lines of the strength of active-passive participation and involvement. These can be distinguished as entertaining, educational, aesthetic, and esoteric experiences. (Based on Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982; Pine and Gilmore, 1998)

- The experience can be related to all elements of the C-E-V model and can act as a motivating factor in the consumer's purchase decision. (Based on Fiore, 2008)

This dissertation provides a valuable, novel scientific approach to shopping experience research:

- Consumers' shopping experiences can be described not only along with positive, reinforcing rewards (Fiore and Ogle, 2000) but also along with negative experiences.

Finally, Fiore's (2008) shopping experience model has not been researched before in relation to second-hand clothing as a product group.

V. UTILIZATION OF THE FINDINGS

The result of the research is a classification of consumers' perceptions, feelings, and values related to second-hand clothing.

Possible uses of the results:

- at company level: in the development of corporate marketing activities, commercial strategy (customer segmentation, user-friendly shopping environment - business atmosphere, commercial innovations, etc.);

- at government/decision-maker level: in the production of educational materials to promote slow fashion.

Based on the research findings, I will first present the aspects to be taken into account when designing the ahopping environment and then those to be used in marketing.

In the shopping environment, efforts should be made to create experiences based on perceived qualities such as clean instore space and clothes that smell clean and well-ordered. Willander & Larsson (2006) found that smell evokes memories over time, creating a stronger sensation than visual ones. So, smell has a very important power and the research suggests that unpleasant odors are realized in the consumer as an avoidance experience. Also, according to Evans, Christiansen & Gill's (1996) research, women desire informative shop windows, convenient locations close to the workplace, and a clean shopping environment.

When designing the shopping space, it is also important to provide convenient access to browse and try on clothes, helping the consumer to find him/her way around. Given the current trend towards time-wasting, efforts should also be made to reduce the consumer's subjective perception of time in the design of the shopping environment (e.g. signage to help orientation). Primary and secondary research shows that one of the most serious barriers to the acceptance and choice of second-hand clothing is the time-consuming nature of the purchase. In addition to consciously designing the shopping environment, it would be important to educate consumers about what style, style, fabric suits them so that they can make a more targeted search in the store (these are important considerations not only for second-hand clothing but for all clothing stores).

According to research by Young, Hwang, McDonald, & Oates (2010), 30% of consumers claim to be very concerned about the environmental situation. Yet, according to research by

Carrington, Neville, & Whitwell (2010), in the trade-off between individual and collective utility in ethical purchasing decisions, the individual side prevails.

This is reinforced by the "don't want to know" trend and Joergens' (2006) research, which found that consumers are interested in eco-fashion but dislike the inconvenience (e.g. higher price) that ethical shopping causes them. It is therefore particularly important to keep the price of second-hand clothes low. It would of course help if the marketing of fast fashion products were tightened up at the decision-making level, and if the recycling and reuse of clothing were supported both financially and in terms of expertise.

To use Kotler & Levy's (1971) concept of demarketing, if second-hand clothing could offer a real response to demand, then it would be possible to campaign against fast fashion. This would require consumer education and a change in social values. (This is beyond the scope of this thesis.)

According to Pine & Gilmore (1998), involvement is also an important aspect of the experience. O'Cass's (2004) results show that the more a consumer learns about the product and its use, the stronger his or her subjective perception of involvement and knowledge of the product. In other words, the more information the consumer acquires about second-hand clothing, the more likely he is to try it out and become a consumer. Here again, consumer education is reinforced. Based on research results, it is worth emphasizing in communication with young people that second-hand clothes are not only fashionable but also unique. Furthermore, it is worth emphasizing that branded and good quality goods can be found, which makes it possible to implement slow fashion in a wider social stratum. The idea is raised that the term second-hand, rather than used clothing should be used, but more importantly, the term previously loved clothing should be spread.

Marketing messages often seek to appeal to values, in the case of second-hand clothing: environmental awareness, hunting, sustainability. In addition, it is worth highlighting the higher emotions that can be experienced, such as passion, excitement. It is possible to create own unique style in an environmentally conscious way.

Marketing communication is most effective when the specific target group is known. My research results can help to personalize the types of men and women who buy second-hand clothes or to target marketing messages by age, gender, or place of residence.

VI. LITERATURE

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VII. ACADEMIC PUBLICATIONS RELATED TO THE THESIS POINTS

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B: Kapusy, K. & Lógó, E. (2017): Values Derived from Virtual Reality Shopping Experience among Generation Z. In:CogInfoCom Conference

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