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*A study of young females' experience of fashion
and its relation to anxiety*

Master Thesis in Marketing

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Preface

This study has been an amazing opportunity which made it possible for me to study some aspects of fashion, clothing choices and its relation to anxiety. I am especially grateful for the help I received from my precious supervisor, Cecilia Solér, who has inspired me a lot by her passion and knowledge about the topic, and kindly provided me her advice.

I am also grateful to my dear friends who supported me in my study and took part in the interviews.

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Abstract

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Key words: Consumption of Fashion & Anxiety/Stress

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to describe young female's experience of fashion consumption and anxiety/ stress.

Method: The study is based on an Abductive and Phenomenographic method. 7 in-depth interviews have been done with young females aged 21 to 31.

Result: This study has shown that the aspect of social interactions and identity formation might create more anxiety among female consumers than the aspect of consumption of fashion forward clothes as a way to cope with their stress and anxiety caused by other factors.

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1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present the study background, problem discussion, objective and the research questions which later will be investigated. In this chapter the definition of the concepts such as fashion, anxiety and stress will be demonstrated.

1.1 Background

This study is going to investigate young women's experience of consumption of fashion forward clothes and its relation to anxiety. The reason behind the consumers' intention of purchasing clothes, except the functional reason, might be seeking for identity, status or belongingness to a specific group. Therefore, it is interesting to study if any of the mentioned reason for buying clothes creates anxiety or stress among young females. This study carries a consumer perspective and might be interesting for those who are interested in the subject of consumer behavior.

1.1.1 Consumption of Fashion / Clothes

Consumption became an important subject right after the Second World War when an explosion of consumption happened in industrialized countries, which led to the expansion of many industries and the creation of consumerism culture (Gabriel & Lang 2006; Baines et al. 2008) with the promise of bringing happiness to human beings life (Bauman 2007). Consumption has been integrated with almost all parts of people's daily life in order to satisfy the existential needs (Bauman 2007). Consumers consume for a purpose (Jackson 2006) and the possession of goods is an indication of a secure, reliable and stable way of living (Bauman 2007). Consumption is an indication of living in a society in which "goods are the words of a social language" (Jackson 2006). In contrast to the previous theories which described consumption as a pattern showing affordability among different social classes, the modern theories see consumption as a social phenomenon, i.e. "an experience of choice" (Gabriel & Lang 2006).

An explosion in consumption of fashion happened at the end of the twentieth century by famous designers running catwalk shows and having celebrities as guests to bring extra glamour to the fashion world (Arnold 2001). Consumption of "cultural goods" such as fashion forward clothes is a very significant form of consumption because clothes are the most visible indicators of social status, gender and occupation (Crane 2000). The importance of consumption of fashion lies in its reflection of the cultural changes in a society such as values, beliefs and moralities, which play an important role in constructing individual's identity (Arnold 2001, Crane 2000). It is argued that women's identity gets affected by the purchasing

process and the consumption of fashion more than men. For that reason, fashion industry's focus has mainly been on women (Dittmar 2008). Fashion is an ambiguous world which is shifting constantly and its display of new trends and styles lets the meaning of "gender, sexuality, ethnicity, status and class" embodying in a culture be expressed. Fashion's mission is to reveal all the latest and new images of designers for the consumers (Arnold 2001).

Consumption is a part of people's daily life (Bauman 2007). The culture individuals live in defines a set of requirements which need to be satisfied (Jackson 2006). Sometimes because of special circumstances people put so much effort in what to consume for example, arranging a party in order to celebrate an important happening requires thoughts for purchasing every commodity. In other cases, individuals consume without thinking about what to buy or even why to buy things. In other words, it is like a routine to consume a certain type of products (Bauman 2007). Consumption of fashion, especially for young women, is one of the consumption's forms which require so much thought. The reason is that it embodies a social uncertainty, which is the result of a temptation of a new identity shifting with new trends in every season. For women, the consumption of fashion implies an improvement of identity by imitating the good taste of the ones perceived to be socially superiors. The reason lies in fashion's power to draw the wearer into a particular social group (Arnold 2001).

It is argued that there are two aspects which might affect the pattern of consumption. One is income, which is a crucial aspect in studying consumption (Solér 'in press', Jackson 2006). The reason is that as people earn more money; they are more interested in spending it on more commodities. It is suggested that the transformation of increase in income into consumption is based on the 'social norms and habits' (Solér 'in press'). Another important aspect is time. Many consumers have no idea what to do in their spare time, therefore shopping, in this case clothes and consumption of fashion, is considered as a way to spend time and money in order to seek the meaning of life (Solér 'in press', Jackson 2006).

1.1.2 Fashion and well-being

According to Gabriel and Lang (2006), both need and pleasure have one thing in common which is driving consumption. Gabriel & Lang (2006) mean that according to consumerism, consuming for survival has no joy while consuming for pleasure is what one should do to enjoy the life, simply because "need is based on absence, lack and necessity" while "pursuit of pleasure is based on a search for a kind of motivation which will lead to pleasurable experience". As Dittmar (2008) notes, there are different types of pleasure which have been identified: a pleasure which comes with satisfying needs, a pleasure which is the result of

emotional experiences and 'Aesthetic' pleasure that is the outcome of consumption of "stylish products" such as fashion forward clothes. People have always desired the 'happiness' to occur and tried to avoid the 'unhappiness' (Bauman 2007). The notion that human's consumption is in search for happiness (Gabriel & Lang 2006) can be related to the point that goods are made to make people's life better, easier and more comfortable (Dittmar 2008). This can be related to consumption of fashion and its promise to bring happiness in life (Arnold 2001). Conversely, Solér (In press) explains that consumption of goods does not necessarily bring happiness to life and consumers' awareness or unawareness of it plays an important role in consumption pattern.

Baudrillard (1998) remarks that products and goods beside their 'use-value', which is the function offered by products, also have 'sign-value', which is the symbolic message of the products. In other words, Baudrillard means that we don't consume products just for their functions; we consume products' signs "as they mean something to us". For instance, fashionable clothes are consumed not only for their function but also for the meaning they manifest (Arnold 2001). It is argued that men are mainly interested in action-oriented material objects such as cars for their practical usage, while women's are mainly interested in "sentimental possessions" like clothes which can reflect their emotions and identity (Dittmar 2008). Similarly is the theory of modern hedonism; it was explained that pleasure-seeking is related to emotions (Gabriel & Lang 2006). In other words, the reason for purchasing and consumption of clothes, rather than their function, is getting emotional benefits (Dittmar 2008).

Schiermer (2010) mentions that people use different objects to present themselves. For instance, through images, which are embodied in fashion forward clothes, young women can present themselves. The problem is that fashion is absolutely associated with objects and goods, which once are trendy, and stylish but after a while become ordinary, uninteresting and unattractive, and thus they will be left behind (Schiermer 2010). This stands in line with Bauman's (2007) argument that the happiness consumers get from consumption is limited. For that reason, individuals are willing to find new things to be able to express their personality, individuality and in search for happiness (Schiermer 2010). Thus, consumption of fashion might get affected by young women's concern about adapting themselves with the changes residing with new trends (Crane 2000).

On the contrary, Clarke and Miller (2002) mean that consumption of fashion has its roots in contradictions and problems surrounded individuals in their daily life that eventually determine the aim of using clothes, rather than just the desire or passion of wearing them. In some studies, it has been argued that individuals' taste of clothes is based on social gaps and distinctions, i.e. social classes. In contrast to that theory, Clarke & Miller (2002) argue that individuals' choice of clothes should be considered as "aesthetic choices" made at the moment. In many cases, shoppers, especially women, need another person's idea such as friends or even external agencies to make sure that they have made the right choice. It is an indication that women simply don't know what type of clothes suits them the best, or they don't have enough confidence to trust their own taste. In some other cases, women with a certain and the same casual style were perceived as independent individuals with an independent taste. In contrary, Clarke and Miller (2002) argue that the reason might lie in these women's perception of themselves as totally unable to compete with others in a style challenge, where they have no chance to win. Therefore, they give up and hide themselves behind a style called "casual" which is shaped by relationships. Clarke and Miller suggest a theory which shows the relationship between women and their choice of clothes is based on social awkwardness and anxiety of what to wear in different occasions. It is suggested that fashion presents the contradictions such as self-expression and identity versus ambiguity and anxiety (Arnold 2001).

1.1.3 Anxiety /Stress

Giddens (1991) defines anxiety as a natural reflection to any kind of dangerous happenings which might result in a feeling of worries and concern. People normally feel stable in experiences they have everyday like routines, but if disturbing circumstances make them feel threatened, uncomfortable or unstable, then they get anxiety. For instance, new trends and fashionable clothes might make young women uncomfortable with the clothes they already have and create anxiety among them. Giddens (1991) argues that crisis situations, which cause anxiety, result in threatening security and the core of self identity. Stress is caused by external conditions and changes that happen in people's everyday life which require an adjustment; the adaption to the new condition causes stress, despite of positivity or negativity of the change (Moschis 2007).

There are two main categories of stress: "Acute stress" and "Chronic stress" which both are caused by an event representing a change and requirement of readjustment. The difference between these two kinds of stress is that 'Chronic stress' has a longer period than 'Acute

stress'. Moschis (2007) remarks that not being aware of the future events and their ambiguity causes stress because people are often not prepared for those changes and simply do not know how to respond to them.

1.1.4 Fashion and anxiety

Fashion is considered both as “anxiety driven and anxiety reducer” (Solér, In press).

According to Moschis (2007), an event which creates anxiety might be affected by four aspects: the importance of the event, its desirability, controllability and if the event is expected or not. Moschis argues that stress and anxiety can be driven from both “consumption and non-consumption activities”. This can be related to the idea that consumption of fashion might create anxiety. In a consumption-related event, according to Moschis (2007), anxiety is expected to be experienced by consumers only in important consumption situations which are crucial and risky. In terms of consumption of fashion, anxiety is expected to be experienced by young women in crucial events, for instance, while having a social interaction with other people. As Moschis(2007) states, obviously, undesirable, uncontrollable and unexpected events cause more anxiety than the opposites. Stress and anxiety can be experienced in different stages of consumption: feeling the need for products, decision on priorities, seeking information, budgeting, evaluation and satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the purchased product. It is remarkable that people usually react differently to the same stressful situations depending on their capacities. Nowlis et al. (2004) explain that stress and anxiety might even be caused as a result of an imposed wait before being able to consume the product. For instance, when consumers order a product on internet, it takes some days until they have access to the product. Nowlis et al. (2004) argue that the imposed wait might decrease the enjoyment of consuming the product.

In opposition to Jackson (2006), who noted income as one of the most important factor in consumption, Clarke and Miller (2002) argue that in many cases the issue for female consumers is not the cost of outfit. The issue is the suitability of the clothes based on who they want to be in relation to others or how they are perceived by others. For most women, the core of their anxiety regarding their outfit choice and consumption is to “fit in”, which obviously changes in different occasions such as at work or different parties. This is in line with Dittmar’s (2008) suggestion that a person’s identity is perceived by what he or she owns, and also individuals use goods, for example clothes, to express who they are or even who they want to be. Similarly, Arnold (2001) mentions fashion as an inseparable part of people’s identity which reveals their desire and anxiety in the sense of acceptability. As Clarke and

Miller (2002) state, some women get the anxiety of finding suitable outfit especially when they get back to workplace after a period of staying at home for instance, a child-care period. In these cases they usually seek others ideas regarding the latest styles. In case that there is no “other” to assure them about their choice of clothes, fashion magazines, clothing catalogs and commercials play eagerly this role and help them in their desperate search for consensus in the process of finding a suitable outfit.

Tumbat & Belk (2011) argue that people are in search for new experiences to escape from the stress caused by different factors in life. This is in line with Solér’s (In press) idea that people are in search for different ways to cope with the anxiety and the pressure of life. Similarly, Moschis (2007) refers to shopping as an activity which might help to reduce anxiety and stress for a short period of time. It is suggested that products are considered as a compensation and solution to anxiety (Solér, In press). This argument can be related to considering fashion forward clothes as a solution to cope with anxiety created by other factors in life among young women.

1.1.5 Young females

Dittmar (2008) proposes that among different shopper categories, young women belong often to the “Leisure shoppers” i.e. “I shop therefore I am”, which means expressing their identity through shopping. Women usually see shopping as an enjoyable activity which gives them emotional benefits. In contrast to women, men often belong to the “Routine shoppers”. They buy according to specific needs rather than desire. Dittmar (2008) suggests that men often see the act of buying as an obligation, i.e. something which has to be done. This leads to the idea that for women, especially for young women, usually the process of buying is considered very important and they would like to enjoy it, while men often focus on the outcome. Therefore, Dittmar (2008) argues that buying goods, for instance fashion forward clothes, affects women’s identity more than men.

1.2 Background to the problem

According to Dittmar (2008), previous studies explained two main dimensions of consumption: ‘Functional’ reason which was based on usefulness of products and value for money and ‘Emotional- Social’ factors like having fun, being sociable and meeting friends during shopping. Later, another dimension was added to the previous dimensions, which was identity related. In other words, expressing identity and how individuals would like to be perceived by others through consumption. Dittmar (2008) also notes that the last dimension,

which is identity-seeking, is related to the concept of social image. In other words, purchasing motives, for many individuals are to upgrade their social image by buying new goods. In terms of consumption of fashion, young women's motivation for purchasing fashion forward clothes, other than the functional reason, might be identity-seeking and social interaction, which might create anxiety.

Moschis (2007) refers to the concept of anxiety and stress as a significant aspect in consumer behavior studies and marketing practices as well as psychological and sociological studies. In spite of the importance of the subject of anxiety and stress, they have never been at the center of attention in marketing researches. According to (Solér, in press), People find consumption as a solution for their anxiety by substituting goods as a compensation for their internal and emotional needs. In other words, they try to satisfy their needs and to "fill an empty self" by consuming goods. In terms of consumption of fashion, young women might find consumption of fashion as a way to cope with their anxiety and also as a way to fill an empty self.

1.3 Problem

Do the social interaction and identity formation which create an anxiety and make female consumers to consume more of fashion, or do the female consumers consume fashion forward clothes as a way to cope with their stress and anxiety caused by other factors.

1.4 Aim of the study

The purpose of this study is to describe young female's experience of fashion consumption and anxiety/ stress.

1.5 Study's main questions

What is the relation between fashion consumption and anxiety/ stress for young females?

- ❖ Are consumers under stress to consume fashion because they are exposed to new trends all the time?
- ❖ Do social interactions and identity formation create anxiety among consumers to be fashion forward?
- ❖ Do consumers consume fashion in order to cope with their anxiety and stress caused by external conditions and changes?

1.6 Limitation

Fashion industry's focus manifests mainly in women's fashion and as Dittmar (2008) mentions purchasing process and consumption affect women's identities more than men, for

that reason this study is restricted to women's fashion and female consumers' experience of fashion. It is noticeable that this study has a consumer perspective.

1.7 Definitions

Fashion: Fashion continuously redefines the social identity of individuals by gradually adding new meanings to products (Crane 2000).

Anxiety: Anxiety is a natural reflection to any kind of dangerous happenings which results in a feeling of worries and concern (Giddens 1991).

1.8 Disposition

Chapter 1: Introduction → the first chapter gives an insight of the study's background, purpose of the study, the research questions and also the theories which the study uses as its ground.

Chapter 2: Methodology → the second chapter presents the qualitative and the phenomenographic methods used to analyze the collected data.

Chapter 3: Result → the third chapter presents a phenomenographic description of the young females' experiences of fashion and anxiety by means of the interviews. In this chapter the collected data has been categorized into three themes in order to make a clear sense of the respondents' experiences.

Chapter 4: Theoretical Discussion → the fourth chapter analyses the collected data in relation to the theories used in the study. In this chapter the research questions have been used as starting points in order to make it easier for the readers to follow the study.

Chapter 5: Conclusion → the last chapter presents the conclusions of the study and also the recommendations.

2. Methodology

The aim of this chapter is to present the qualitative and the phenomenographic methods used to analyze the collected data.

2.1 Research methods

There is no point to do a research unless its result can make a difference by contributing new findings and helping others to have a better understanding of something. In methodology there are two approaches which can be applied in order to carry out a research: Qualitative and Quantitative methods. The difference between quantitative and qualitative approaches is how they analyze a data. In the quantitative approach the analysis will be done through transforming data into numbers in order to get statistical information. Conversely, in a qualitative approach the analysis is carried out by interpreting the collecting data in a written form for instance, interview transcripts. The aim of the qualitative approach is to understand and clarify the situation in which people live every day (Smith 2008). The qualitative method considers how people see one thing from different angles and tries to interpret the individuals' reaction through interviews or observations (Jensen 1995), for that reason the qualitative approach has been applied in this study.

2.2 Phenomenography

Phenomenograph was first applied at the beginning of the 1970s with the aim of describing how individuals perceive the world in which they live. Phenomenography is an interpretive method which tries to describe a phenomenon from individuals' different perspectives. This approach suggests that each individual experiences and construes the world in different ways. Thus, Phenomenography provides a guide-line with which people's experiences can be interpreted. The term 'perception' is an important concept in this approach (Solér 1997). The mentioned above is very similar to the qualitative method. Therefore, this study has done some interviews in order to find out the respondents' thoughts and feelings and also adopted phenomenography as its starting point in order to be able to describe the respondents' experiences of consumption of fashion and their perception of its relation to anxiety. In other words, this research has focused on how the participants in the interviews experience the consumption of fashion as a part of their lives which might create anxiety or might get affected by the anxiety caused by other factors. The present investigation has been based on the author's interpretation of the respondents' experiences. During the interviews, the author

was aware of the sensitivity of the subject as it concerns a totally private aspect of respondent's life.

2.3 Positivism & Hermeneutics

The methodological viewpoint includes two process of 'construction' applied by researches in coming up with the results, which they would like to present. These two viewpoints are called positivism and hermeneutics. Positivism, used in quantitative method, believes that individual is a part of the real world which can be perceived with our senses and logic. Memories, feeling and thoughts have 'definite characteristics' which are also a part of this real world. The aim of positivism is to test hypotheses which are based on the known and previous theories. According to positivism measurable variables are able to describe the real world. Conversely, hermeneutics believes that people construct their real world. Hermeneutics, used in qualitative method, is based on interpretation of how people understand others experiences. Thus, the results of hermeneutics have to be considered as interpretations (Smith 2008). Regarding the mentioned description, this study has had a hermeneutics point of view in constructing the study and coming up with the results.

2.4 Induction, Deduction & Abduction

Induction and deduction are two methods used in research in order to come to a conclusion. In an inductive method the researcher has no ground theory as a starting point. The researcher applies experiences as the starting point and arrives to a theory as a conclusion. Conversely, in a deductive method the researcher has a hypothesis which is based on a theory and then tests the hypothesis in order to see if the hypothesis was correct or not (Thurén 2007, Jacobsen 2002). In order to come to a conclusion, this study has adopted an abductive approach, which uses both the theory and the observations as the starting point. In other words, an abductive approach uses the theory as a ground to see a pattern in observations (Alveson & Skölberg, 2008).

2.5 Secondary Data

Secondary data includes literature such as journal articles, books and researches which are collected and studied by a researcher to construct a study (Ejvegård 2009). The relevant literatures especially journal articles related to the three concepts: consumption, fashion and anxiety have been used as the key words in the study by the author.

2.6 Primary Data

Primary data is the empirical data which is collected by the author regarding the problem discussion of the study (Jacobsen 2002). For the present investigation, the primary data i.e. the interpretation has been based on seven in-depth interviews with young females ranged in age from 21 to 31. The participants in the present investigation were all students at an advanced or higher level at university and are from middle or an upper-middle class family. The author has chosen young females because she thinks that women get affected more by the concept of fashion and shopping clothes rather than men.

The interview questions had been formulated before the interviews, but the dialogues between the interviewer and the interviewees were open for further discussions for the purpose of finding out more about the interviewees' experiences. The respondents' experiences have been analyzed based on the author's subjective interpretation, but the author was careful not to have any influence on the participants' responses.

2.6.1 Interviews

The seven young women participated in the study were friends to the author and were interviewed individually in different places such as a coffee shop, restaurant, at school or their homes. The aim was doing the interviews in a place in which the respondents felt comfortable. It is very crucial in an interview that the respondents feel comfortable during the interviews (Trost 1997). The interviews included sixteen questions (See the appendix) starting with the opening question, main questions and the general questions. In some cases the interview questions followed by follow-up questions, in order to have a better understanding of the respondents' answers. The interview questions were asked in English, but the Swedish and the Persian participants answered in their mother tongue and then their responses were translated in to English by the author. The reason was the sensitivity of the subject and thus, giving an opportunity to the respondents to express themselves clearly in their mother tongues. The interviews with the three other respondents from Denmark and Spain were done in English for the reason that it was the only common language between the interviewee and the respondents. The difficulty, which the interviewer faced during the interviews, was the point that the respondents had not thought about the subject before. The reason might lie in the fact that shopping clothes seems to be a usual part of individual's life. For instance, the respondents found it hard to explain what buying new clothes meant to them. All the interviews have been recorded by the interviewee for the purpose of having access to responses later in the study, if necessary.

2.6.2 Respondents

In order to present the respondents participated in the study; the table below illustrates some information about the participants such as their nationality, age and occupation.

Respondent	Nationality	Age	Occupation
A	Swedish	28	Student in advanced level
B	Persian	26	PhD Student
C	Swedish	23	Student in master level
D	Danish	31	Pilot and student at advanced level
E	Swedish/Persian	28	Student in master level
F	Spanish	23	Student in advanced level
G	Spanish	21	Student in advanced level

In some parts of the study the word ‘participants’ has been used which refers to the respondents. As seen in the table above, the respondents have four different nationalities. Hopefully, this gives a clear understanding of young women’s experience of fashion and anxiety regardless of a specific culture.

2.7 The importance of Trustworthiness

The validity of a research determines whether a study can be acceptable as trustworthy and useful by other researches (Smith 2008). In consideration to the point that this study has applied a qualitative method, reliability based on measurements cannot be appropriate to use in this research. In spite of the difficulty, it is very essential for a qualitative researcher to try to develop criteria for the credibility of a qualitative research (Smith 2008). It will be possible if the interviewee shows to the readers that the data collected are relevant to the problem discussion and also uses the same questions and the same situation in order to show that the interviews have been done seriously.

It is also very important for the interviewee to be objective during the interviews even though it is very difficult (Trost 1997). In order to accomplish that, the author has used the relevant literature, tried to formulate the interview questions as relevant as possible to the problem discussion and also to be objective during the interviews. Transparency is very important in a qualitative study (Smith 2008). For that reason the author has provided the transcripts of the

interview questions and answers (See the appendix) for the reader to have access to the data collected. The difficulty which the author faced during the study was the sensitivity of the subject for the respondents as it was about a completely private aspect of their life, which reflected their thoughts and emotions. The subject of the interview was new for most of the respondents; otherwise they could provide the interviewee with more information.

2.8 Criticisms of the Sources

It is very important for a researcher to have a critical point of view while choosing sources as theoretical ground in a study. It is essential that the theoretical basis for a study is objective and trustworthy. Journal articles are considered as trustworthy for the reason that they are expected to be based on valid previous researches which meet high quality of standards Ejvegård (2009). Thus, the author has used the relevant books and journal articles by famous researches which seemed to be trustworthy.

2.9 The Process

To analyze the collected data, which was based on seven interviews, it required a strategy to be as clear as possible. Based on the collected data, the author was looking for a pattern in the responses in order to be able to analyze the data. In a Phenomenographic approach the author is looking for a meaning in the respondents' experiences. Thus, the author has read the responses from the interviews many times to have a clear understanding of the whole collected data and also to be able to see the similarities and the differences of the responses.

In chapter 3, Result, the respondents' experiences and reflections to the interview questions regarding consumption of fashion and anxiety has been divided in to three interpretive themes to make it easy for the readers to follow and understand the data collected. The author has got inspiration from an article by Thompson et al (1990) to come up with the themes. The themes are: theme of being fashionable/ being ensemble-maker, the theme of being sociable/ being efficient and the theme of being anxiety diminisher/ being non-diminisher. The mentioned themes are made by the author based on her subjective understanding of the collected data and the subject. Each theme includes two categories to make it easier to have an understanding of the collected data. The same respondent might have been categorized in different themes. In this chapter the author has used some of the respondents' quotations as the reference. The author has used alphabetic letters to refer to respondents while analyzing their responses not

to let her personal presupposition interfere the analysis, as the respondents were friends with the author.

In chapter 4, theoretical discussion, the author has applied the research questions as starting point and the themes from chapter 3 to make it easy to follow the study. In this chapter, the collected data has been analyzed from a Phenomenographic approach, in relation to the theories discussed in chapter 1. In the analysis, the author has been aware of the similarities and differences between the answers. Chapter 4 will be followed by the final chapter, which is the conclusion. The present study was restricted by the time limitation; otherwise it would be more detailed.

3. Result

The objective of this chapter is to present the phenomenographic description of the young females' experiences of fashion and anxiety through the interviews.

In order to provide a clear sense of the respondents' experience of consumption of fashion and its relation to anxiety, the author has divided the interview responses into three interpretive themes. These three themes are called: The theme of being fashionable/ being ensemble maker, the theme of being sociable/ being efficient and the theme of being anxiety diminisher/ being non-diminisher. The themes have been chosen to make a clear sense of the shared experiential meanings, and each thematic aspect will be described later in this chapter. It is important to notify that there are several similarities between respondents' experiences in all themes. Dividing the responses into three themes does not necessarily mean that respondent's perspectives as young women and their experiences differ completely from each other. Thus, each respondent might have been categorized in different themes. For the present investigation, interpretation was based on seven phenomenological interviews. Each interview began with the question "How often do you buy new clothes?" The purpose of the opening question was to begin a dialogue with the respondents and to give them a sense of easiness to share their experiences.

3.1 The Theme of Being Fashionable/ Being Ensemble- maker

First theme is being fashionable (following almost all the new trends) and being ensemble-maker (combining new trends with one's own style). This theme stood out when respondents shared their experiences of buying new pieces of clothes, which they had recently bought at the time of the interviews. In this theme, the respondents associate buying new clothes with happiness and positivity especially if the clothes are going to be used in specific events. For instance, if the clothes are bought for special occasions such as a wedding party or Christmas, then the act of shopping generates gladness and joy. The respondents' perception of fashion as something very interesting, which works as a guide while one is looking for new clothes, emerged during the interviews. The fashionable's experience of following new trends shows their high interest of keeping up with what is modern. They also referred to the act of following new trends as a symbol of youth. The next quotations provide evidence to support the description:

“...I needed a nice dress for Christmas so I bought a new one because I want to look beautiful on Christmas Eve. The dress for me symbolizes the Christmas and tradition.”¹

“I like following new trends. Probably it is what you can find at stores. I am young and I can wear those types of clothes which are trendy. You can’t wear any kinds of clothes when you get older.”²

Ambivalence could be seen in respondents’ responses regarding their interest for fashion and their awareness of the fact that the happiness emerging from shopping new clothes is temporary.

“Buying new clothes means a temporary satisfaction to me.... I like a trend which stays for a longer period of time because something which comes over a night disappears also over a night.”³

The following quotation illustrates the importance of following new trends with the focus on its relevance to some of the respondent’s perception of themselves. For them new clothes have a meaning well beyond the function; it is a matter of desired identity. This is not only to suggest how others perceive them, rather who they dream to be as a person.

“...You can show others that you keep on with fashion. It may have something to do with the identity you would like to have. I mean with new clothes I see myself closer to the person I would like to be and it makes me more confident.”⁴

The next passage presents a contrast in respondents’ perception and experience of fashion. Ensemble-makers describe their experiences of fashion by combining new trends with their own styles. Combining fashion forward clothes with their own styles gives the respondents a sense of genuineness otherwise they would feel superficial, as they estate.

“... I think that fashion is very interesting although I don’t follow all new trends. If a new trend suits my style then I will follow it otherwise I won’t. I am not a fashion victim... I prefer to combine.”⁵

¹ Respondent E

² Respondent G

³ Respondent C

⁴ Respondent C

⁵ Respondent A

A similarity between fashionables and ensemble-makers can be seen in terms of not getting an anxiety if they cannot catch up with new trends. In most of the answers the expression “It, doesn’t matter” is quite remarkable. In other words, ensemble-makers don’t consider it very important to follow new trends, except for one respondent who feels the pressure of catching up with the selected new styles:

“I don’t want to follow all new trends. If I like a trend but I can’t catch up with that then I would probably feel less secure or stressed depending on why I can’t buy the new trends, especially if I am supposed to meet new people then I would be worried about their first impression of me. It is also a bit stressful to interpret fashion correctly because everybody interprets fashion very personally. You always ask yourself the difficult questions, such as: who am I? Who I want to be? What is the correct style for me? How do I differentiate myself from others? These questions create stress.”⁶

The above quotation shows directly the importance of consumption of fashion in the respondent’s identity formation regarding the social interactions. Regardless of being fashionable or ensemble-maker the main factors, time and money are the main factors affecting their shopping pattern. Reflecting on their experiences, they pointed out that having a good economy and time are the most important factors which determine how much they buy new clothes. There are also some other factors such as travelling which might lead to purchasing more clothes than the usual, but obviously this factors also depend on time and money. In their description, in terms of money, there is an emphasis on “sale”, which is directly related to money, which has a big impact on their shopping in a way that they buy more clothes in comparison to usual times.

“It depends on my economy and the time. Maybe nothing in a month, but many times during the Christmas sale.”⁷

⁶ Respondent C

⁷ Respondent B

3.2 The Theme of Being Sociable/ Being Efficient

The second theme is of being sociable (seeing shopping as a social activity) and of being efficient (doing shopping alone). One manifestation of being sociable was some of the respondents' reflection on how important it is to enjoy shopping because it is a part of their social life and they spent time and money on it. Thus, they expect to receive a positive energy of it. For most of the respondents shopping is a social activity or a social experience especially when they go shopping with their friends. Buying new clothes gives them a feeling of happiness and freshness while spending some time with their friends creates a social interaction for them. The following quotations provide evidence to support the description:

*"It is very important because I spend time on it so I expect to get a kick of it. It should also be fun especially if I do shopping with my friends then I want to enjoy the social activity than just the shopping."*⁸

*"It is important because it is a part of my social life when I am with my friends so it is important that I enjoy it..."*⁹

Whereas the experience is marked by a sense of anxiety when it results in purchasing more clothes than the respondent had expected. Even a sense of anxiety in terms of regression of spending too much money on the clothes, which were not necessary to buy, was described:

*"...For me it's like getting into different roles. It is maybe a hobby or a social activity if I go shopping with my friends. If I shop a lot then I feel stressed whether I am buying the right clothes or not: I mean the clothes which really show who I am or who I want to be... I feel worried that I have spent my money on something which I am not going to use so often or something which doesn't match my closet."*¹⁰

*"I think sometimes it is a waste of money. It makes me feel guilty of spending money. I think it is important to enjoy it but not a lot because it is expensive."*¹¹

For the respondents, experiences of being efficient were described as a motivation to go shopping alone. Having plans to buy specific piece of clothes for a particular reason leads to some of the respondents' choice of going shopping by their own. In the cases of getting nervous when others push them to decide quickly which garment to buy results in preferring to go shopping alone. The following quotations provide a description of the case:

⁸ Respondent C

⁹ Respondent D

¹⁰ Respondent C

¹¹ Respondent G

“...I don’t do shopping with my friends because it takes a lot of time and I don’t like it when they make me stressed in order to have a coffee break or something like that.”¹²

“Usually alone because I like to focus on what I need. It is a way to be on my own.”¹³

“I prefer alone because I usually spend a lot of time at stores and others make me stressed. For example my boy friend, he never complains but I can see that in his face that he can’t take it any more so I have to make my mind faster.”¹⁴

The theme of being sociable, some of the respondents offered similar descriptions of doing shopping with friends or a family member with whom they can share ideas and have some fun, but also get approval for the clothes they buy. Trusting on a friend or a partner’s idea regarding a trend or a style, which suits best, encourages the respondents to go shopping with a companion in order to get reassurance that they are making the right choice. It is especially important to get a second idea while they cannot choose between two pieces of clothes. Their description indicates that sharing ideas is like a relief from the anxiety of making a decision while choosing clothes:

“I usually do shopping with my husband. It is important for me that he likes the clothes I buy because I like his taste and I like that he is honest when something doesn’t suit me.”¹⁵

“When I can’t choose between two things then I would like to hear what others think but it also depends on whom I am shopping with. It is always good to see that others like your choice of clothes and style... It is very important for me that my mum approves what I buy.”¹⁶

Another dimension of getting approval from others is to fit in the group of people they want to belong to. In this part of the interview one similarity could be seen among all the respondents, which is the frustration of wearing inappropriate clothes for example, at work, school or a party. The feeling of embracement, awkwardness and concern is an indication of experiencing anxiety in such circumstances. Respondents’ description of the situation in the next passage reveals the importance of wearing appropriate clothes:

“I wouldn’t feel good because who wants to dress inappropriately. It would definitely make me feel stressed.”¹⁷

¹² Respondent A

¹³ Respondent E

¹⁴ Respondent F

¹⁵ Respondent B

¹⁶ Respondent C

¹⁷ Respondent E

“I would feel sad and nervous and I can’t wait until I leave that place.”¹⁸

3.3 The Theme of Being Anxiety Diminisher / Being Non-Diminisher

The third theme is of being diminisher (going shopping in order to reduce anxiety caused by other factors) and of being non-diminisher (not going shopping to reduce anxiety). For the anxiety diminishers experiencing shopping as something, which generates a happy feeling and gives the respondents a sense of freshness, helps also to cheer them up when they feel a bit sad. Experientially, shopping subconsciously makes the respondents to forget about their problems at least for a while. Even though, it is not a permanent solution; it gives them an opportunity to stay away from the problem to clear their minds and reduce the worries and later go back to the reality. The following quotations demonstrate the description:

“... You don’t think about the problem for a while. It keeps you away from the problems so you can clear your mind.”¹⁹

“... if it is a bad day then it helps you to fly from the real world to the dream world where you can associate the clothes with yourself in your dreams.”²⁰

The contrast between diminishers and non-diminishers reveals clearly that non-diminishers describe other activities as an anxiety reducer for instance, doing sports. The next sentences will illustrate respondents’ responses:

“No, it doesn’t work that way. When I am down I go out and run then I feel better.”²¹

“No, it doesn’t work for me. If I am sad then I prefer to watch TV or get some sleep.”²²

A reflection which was similar in almost all the responses was refusing to go shopping when the respondents were experiencing an upsetting period. Although shopping helps the anxiety diminishers to stay away from their problems for a while when they feel a bit down, it actually does not comfort them when they are quite upset. As mentioned before, it is important for them to enjoy shopping, while being upset doesn’t provide them the opportunity to enjoy the shopping. Thus, they prefer to avoid the experience while they are completely

¹⁸ Respondent F

¹⁹ Respondent G

²⁰ Respondent C

²¹ Respondent A

²² Respondent D

obsessed with their problems. The reason mentioned was that they might regret their shopping later. The following descriptions will demonstrate their responses:

*“No, Not at all.”*²³

*“No, I don’t think so! I prefer to go out but not for a shopping because I can’t focus on it and I will regret it later.”*²⁴

*“It makes me happy to find nice things but it is temporary then sometimes I regret what I have bought.”*²⁵

In terms of anxiety, it has been mentioned during the interviews that the music in the stores can also create anxiety. As light music makes the shoppers feel relax to take their time while choosing clothes conversely, music with a high tempo makes them nervous. Consequently, it leads to the shopping which might be regretted later.

*“In Spain the music in the stores makes you feel stressed and nervous. It is more like a disco. It makes you so stressed that when you need something you buy the first thing you find even if you don’t like it just because you want to leave the store as soon as possible. In Sweden everything is quiet. In stores you hear a light music and it makes you stay longer and you can take your time.”*²⁶

To sum up, the present chapter has focused on a description of young women’s experience of fashion. Three themes have been presented in order to make a clear sense of the shared experiential meanings. As manifested in the mentioned examples, the theme of being fashionable/ being ensemble-maker represented the respondents’ experience of following new trends and getting a feeling of happiness of shopping new clothes. Fashionables had a high interest of following almost all new trends. In contrast to that was the ensemble-makers who were also interested in fashion, but in a way to combine some of the new trends with their own styles. In except one case, the respondents did not have an experience of getting anxiety regarding the pressure of following new trends. The most similar point among the respondents was mentioning money and time as the main factors which affected their shopping patterns. The second theme was of being sociable / being efficient. The sociables’ description of their

²³ Respondent B

²⁴ Respondent G

²⁵ Respondent C

²⁶ Respondent F

experiences indicated their perception of fashion as a social activity which could create anxiety when respondents bought more clothes than they needed. Whereas, the efficient preferred to go shopping alone because having a companion made them stressed to make a faster choice. Regardless of being sociable or efficient, almost all the respondents' experiences showed a form of anxiety in case of wearing inappropriate clothes. The third theme was of being anxiety diminisher/ non-diminisher. Being anxiety diminishers' experience pointed out a reduction of anxiety and sadness by staying away from their problems through shopping, while the non-diminishers' experience showed the contrast. Finally, none of them referred to shopping as a good solution to stay away from a problem while they were experiencing an upsetting period.

4 Theoretical Discussion

The aim of this chapter is to present the Phenomenographic analysis based on the theoretical discussions. In this chapter the research questions are used as starting points.

4.1 Are consumers under stress to consume fashion because they are exposed new trends all the time?

Consumers getting anxiety, regarding their exposure to new trends, depends on two factors time and money. This stands in line with the theory of Jackson (2006), and Solér (In press), who remark time and money as the main factors, which affect the pattern of consumption. Jackson (2006) and Solér (In Press) suggest that as consumers earn more money and have extra time, they have are interested in buying new products. In other words, if young women, from both categories of the theme of being fashionable/ensemble-maker, have enough time and money, they are interested in purchasing more of fashion forward clothes. If time and money are not considered as the obstacles, they might feel the pressure of adapting themselves with new trends, regardless of their interest of following almost all new trends or combing them with their own styles. The reason might lie in the notion that new trends make them uncomfortable with the clothes they already have. As Giddens (1991) states, situations which make people uncomfortable with themselves and require an adaption create anxiety. The importance of adaption to new trends, referring to the theme of being sociable/ efficient, might be based on the importance of how people's identity is perceived by each other through their clothes. As Clarke and Miller (2002) argue, suitability of clothes and to 'fit in' is the issue for females regarding their consumption of fashion.

In case of considering time and money as obstacles, young women from the theme of being fashionable/ensemble-maker claim that not being able to follow new trends does not necessarily create anxiety among them. According to their statement, if they do not have enough time or money to follow new trends, then it does not matter how many new trends come with every season. While it is expected that the same reason mentioned above, which is not being able to adapt themselves with the changes coming with new trends, create anxiety. They do not consider following the new trends and wearing fashion forward clothes as an important issue, if they do not have time or money. They claim that it is not important to wear fashionable clothes. It is important to wear appropriate clothes, but they might not be aware of the point that appropriateness of the clothes actually changes with fashion. As Schiermer (2010) states, fashion is associated with objects, which once are trendy, but after a while

become unattractive and will be left behind. This is also in line with Arnold's (2001) theory considering fashion as the reflection of the cultural norms and values, which is constantly changing. Thus, appropriateness of clothes changes with fashion.

Regardless of time and money, young women experience a feeling of happiness and pleasure when they consume fashion forward clothes. As Gabriel and Lang (2006) state, consumption of stylish products such as fashionable clothes creates pleasure, and both need and pleasure drive consumption. As young women from the theme of being fashionable/ensemble-maker mention, consumption of fashion forward clothes gives them a sense of freshness and happiness. This is in line with Arnold (2001) who claims that fashion's promise is to bring happiness. Similarly, it is Dittmar's (2008) theory which notes one form of pleasure and happiness emerges as the result of consuming "stylish products" such as clothes. Referring to the theme of being fashionable/ensemble-maker, clothes have a significant meaning for young women, which is well beyond their functions. For instance, clothes can symbolize special events. Relating clothes with happiness makes consumers be interested in the new trends in order to create new opportunities for being happy. Young women's reflection on shopping clothes as an act creating happiness stands in line with Bauman's (2007) statement that consumers' aim of consumption is searching for happiness. Similarly, it is the Schiermer's (2010) theory which remarks that individuals' motivation for buying new products is to find a way to express their personality and also searching for happiness.

4.2 Do social interactions and identity formation create anxiety among consumers to be fashion forward?

Social interactions and identity formation might create anxiety among young women to be fashion forward. Referring to the theme of being sociable/ efficient, social interactions might create anxiety among young women as they get affected by others' attitude during the purchasing process. Some of the young women consider the process of shopping clothes as a social activity or a social interaction with friends, which is expected to create an enjoyable time. As Dittmar (2008) states, 'emotional-social' factors such as meeting friends and having fun during shopping is one of the consumption's dimension. In other words, young women usually see shopping as an enjoyable activity, which gives them emotional benefits. The problem is that the emotional benefits are not the only outcome of social interactions. The

other outcome might be creating anxiety. As the consequence of having a companion during the process of purchasing clothes, young women might get anxiety. The reason is that the companions put pressure on them to make their minds as quick as possible. In other words, the companions push the process of shopping clothes. Thus, this might create anxiety among young women. The theoretical sources applied in the study do not mention that anxiety might be created based on the pressure caused by companions. There is another aspect which might also create anxiety among young women, while having friends as companion. The other aspect is the regression of too much shopping. As young women mention, having friends as companion might lead to impulse shop of too many clothes beyond their expectation. To spend a lot of money on the clothes which might not be used later creates anxiety. As Moschis (2007) states, anxiety can be caused because of the dissatisfaction of the purchased products. As the result, in order to avoid getting anxiety caused by social interactions, some of the young women prefer to go shopping alone.

Referring to the theme of being sociable/ efficient, having social interactions during the shopping is not the only reason to go shopping with a companion. As young women mention, in the process of purchasing new clothes having a second opinion is very important. The reason, as they claim, is getting approval for the clothes they buy. This shows that young women get anxiety when they cannot choose the right clothes, which suit them best. The responsibility of making a choice might create anxiety among young women. Thus, having someone to share the anxiety with is very crucial for some of the young women. This stands in line with Clarke and Miller (2002) claiming that in many cases shoppers need another person's idea to make sure that they have made the right choice. The reason might be they either don't know what they want, or they do not trust their own tastes. Depending on others' idea regarding the proper clothes illustrates the importance of the role of fashion forward clothes. Wearing proper clothes especially in important events is very crucial for young women. Accordingly, wearing inappropriate clothes leads to the creation of anxiety. This stands in line with Arnold (2001) saying that clothes reveal people's anxiety in the sense of acceptability. The importance of clothes is based on its role in individuals' identity. Similarly, Dittmar (2008) mentions that individuals are perceived by what they own and what they consume. In other words, their consumption of clothes expresses their identity.

Identity formation, referring to the theme of being sociable/ efficient, might also create anxiety among young women. The reason might be based on the fact that clothes, because of their visibility to others, are an indicator of people's identity. As Baudrillard (1998) claims,

products, except having a use-value, have a sign-value. Sign-value is the symbolic message of the clothes as they make a statement about the wearer. Thus, except for the functional reason, young women's aim of consumption of fashion is to express their desired identity. Otherwise, they would get anxiety about expressing an undesired identity. As Arnold (2001) states, consumption of fashion for young women is an indication of their temptation of a new identity, which shifts with new trends. Arnold (2001) refers to fashion as an ambiguous world shifting constantly displaying the meaning of "ethnicity, status, class" etc. In terms of expressing the desired identity, not being able to adapt with new trends, young women might get anxiety. As Giddens (1991) and Moschis (2007) define anxiety as a natural reflection to any kind of disturbing situations, despite of the positivity or negativity of the required adaption to the change.

4.3 Do consumers consume fashion in order to cope with anxiety and stress caused by external conditions and changes?

Anxiety generated by different factors in the daily life is inevitable. Crisis situations result in a feeling of worries and anxiety (Giddens 1991), and also the adjustment to the new conditions cause anxiety (Moschis 2007). People have different ways to cope with the anxiety caused by external factors. Referring to the theme of being anxiety diminisher/ non-diminisher, one way to cope with anxiety is following new trends and purchasing fashion forward clothes. As young women claim, spending some time on shopping new clothes gives them an opportunity to stay away from their problems, i.e. the crisis situation. In spite of going shopping alone or with a companion, checking new trends prepares an opportunity for young women to reduce the anxiety caused by other factors in life. Similarly, Tumbat and Belk (2011) suggest that people are in search for new experiences to escape from the anxiety caused by different factors in life. Although, as mentioned in previous parts, purchasing fashion forward clothes might create anxiety, but it might diminish anxiety as well. This stands in line with Solér's (In press) theory, which considers fashion both as "anxiety driven and anxiety reducer".

Referring to the theme of being anxiety diminisher/ non-diminisher, following new trends might be considered as a way to diminish anxiety and pressure caused by other factors in life, but it is a temporary solution. Moschis (2007) refers to shopping clothes as an activity which might help to reduce anxiety for a short period of time. Accordingly, some of young women prefer to do other activities rather than shopping clothes in order to reduce their anxiety.

These young women claim that following new trend cannot help them to diminish anxiety caused by other factors. Having anxiety does not let them to enjoy the time they spend on shopping clothes. Therefore, they do not consider purchasing fashion forward clothes as a way to reduce anxiety.

5. Conclusion

In this chapter the conclusion of the study and the recommendations will be presented.

The purpose of this investigation was to describe young female's experience of fashion consumption and anxiety, in order to see whether the social interactions and identity formation create anxiety and make female consumers to consume more of fashion; or do the female consumers consume fashion forward clothes as a way to cope with their stress and anxiety caused by other factors. The study has been carried out by means of seven in-depth interviews with young females based on the perception that fashion industry focuses mainly on women rather than men; for the reason that women's identity gets affected more by fashion and purchasing process. The present investigation has adopted Abductive and Phenomenographic methods to analyze the collected data, which resulted in both expected and unexpected results that were in line with most of the theoretical discussions.

Referring to the three themes explained and research questions discussed, the conclusion is as following:

Consumers getting anxiety, regarding their exposure to new trends, depends on two factors time and money. If time and money are not considered as obstacles, young women might get anxiety and feel the pressure of adapting themselves with new trends. The reason might lie in the notion that new trends make them uncomfortable with the clothes they already have. The importance of adaption to new trends is based on the idea that individuals' identity is perceived by other people through clothes, which are the most visible part of people's identity. In case of considering time and money as obstacles, not following new trends does not create anxiety among young women. They claim that if they do not have enough time and money, it does not matter how many new trends come with every season. They refer to appropriateness of clothes as the most important point. While, it is expected that the same reason i.e. not being able to adapt with new changes create anxiety. The reason is that appropriateness of clothes changes with fashion and new trends.

Regardless of time and money, clothes make the respondents happy through their association with special events and occasions. Relating clothes with happiness makes consumers be interested in the new trends in order to create new opportunities for being happy. Social interactions seemed to have a big impact in creating anxiety in form of buying too many clothes, and companions pushing young women to make their mind as quick as possible. In

terms of social interactions, some of the young women need a companion with whom, they can share the anxiety created by the responsibility of choosing the right clothes. The importance of clothes lies in the idea that clothes are indicators of people's identity, and individuals are willing to express the desired identity.

In terms of reducing anxiety, shopping clothes might be a way to cope with their anxiety as it provides an opportunity for them to stay away from their problems. The point is that diminishing anxiety through shopping clothes is a temporary solution. Thus, some of young women might prefer other activities to reduce the anxiety caused by other factors.

Finally, this study concludes that the aspect of social interactions and identity formation might create more anxiety among female consumers and lead to increase in consumption of fashion, than the aspect of consumption of fashion forward clothes as a way to cope with the anxiety caused by other factors.

Based on the result of this study, further researches are recommended regarding the relation between anxiety and the consumption of other visible material objects such as cell phones or accessories. It would be also interesting to study the relation between males' consumption of fashion and anxiety instead of females.

Source

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Appendix

Interview Questions:

1. How often do you buy new clothes?
2. What does it mean for you to buy new clothes? Please give me 3-5 examples of what you have bought recently! What do they mean for you? Did you buy them because you needed them or because you liked them?
3. How do you feel when you buy new clothes?
4. What does fashion mean to you?
5. How important is it for you to follow new trends?
6. Are you interested in stylish clothes or casual clothes?
7. Do you enjoy shopping new clothes?
8. How important is it for you to enjoy shopping?
9. Do you do shopping clothes alone or with a family member or a friend?
10. Do you care about what others think about the clothes you buy? Why?
11. Are you interested in going shopping when you are a bit sad in order to feel better? If yes, how can it help you feel better?
12. Are you interested in going shopping when you are very upset in order to feel better?
13. Do you feel more confident in new clothes?
14. How would you feel if you can't catch up with new styles?
15. How would you feel if you realize that you are dressed inappropriately at work? At school? In a party?
16. Which one is more important for you? Quality of clothes? Price? Style?
17. How old are you?
18. What is your occupation?

Repondents:

- A. Maria, 28 years old, 2011-11-29
- B. Golnar, 26 years old, 2011-12-02
- C. Sofia, 23 years old, 2011-12-05
- D. Sanne, 31years old, 2011-12-06
- E. Nadja, 28 years old, 2011-12-06
- F. Andrea, 23 years old, 2011-12-07
- G. Anna, 21 years old, 2011-12-07

The answer of the interviews:

1. How often do you buy new clothes?

- A. It depends on my economy. Maybe 2 or 3 times in a month.
- B. It depends on my economy and the time. Maybe nothing in a month, but many times during the Christmas sale.
- C. Maybe every other week. It's almost regular, of course it is not a whole closet which I buy but something little. Most of the time it depends on the time and money for example now I have to save my money to be able to buy Christmas gifts.
- D. It depends on if I travel or not. In my hometown, Copenhagen, I buy new clothes two or three times a month, but I buy more clothes when I am travelling. During summer time I find more clothes than winter, maybe because the clothes are boring in winter.
- E. Maybe once in a month. It depends on my economy.
- F. Every season, sometimes more than once in a season, if like something and of course if I have money especially when a new trend comes.
- G. I have bought two pieces of clothes since I came to Sweden. In Spain I usually go shopping every weekend. I may do just window shopping but if I like something then I buy it.

2. What does it mean for you to buy new clothes? Please give me 3-5 examples of what you have bought recently! What do they mean for you? Did you buy them because you needed them or because you liked them?

- A. I have recently bought a dress of which I got a happy feeling because soon it is the New Year and I felt very pretty in my new dress. New Year reminds me of love because I met my partner at a New Year party some years ago. Then I bought a pair of tights which I needed, but I bought the dress because I liked it. I have also bought a pair of gloves from Belgium in order to keep the memory from there. My gloves are modern and different and I don't think that anyone else here in Sweden has them. I like things which are a bit different from others because I don't want to look like others; I like designs and products which convey the passion of the designer.
- B. It depends on the clothes. For example, I bought my wedding dress some month ago and it meant a lot to me because wedding is a special occasion, but when I bought base clothes they did not mean anything special and I bought them because I needed them. I also bought a white suit. I don't associate it with anything special. I bought it because I thought it was pretty and of course because I needed a suit.
- C. Buying new clothes means a temporary satisfaction to me. Impulse shopping makes me feel happy but if I buy something because I need it then it is more like a relief. I have recently bought a red blouse; it made me very happy because of its color and it also could complete my closet because most of my clothes are black. I have bought underwear, they are also red, I bought them because I liked them. It was not out of need because I actually have many but I didn't have a red one.

- D.** It is a mixture of functional issue and emotional issue to add something new to my wardrobe. I bought a dress in Las Vegas from an outlet; to me the dress means holiday. If buy clothes while I am travelling with my friends then it is a positive association. I have bought a bikini which also means holiday to me. I have also bought a skirt from US which was very cheaper than in Denmark. I have bought sport clothes which I needed.
- E.** It means to rearrange my closet. I bought a pair of socks; I always lose my socks so I always need new ones. I needed a nice dress for Christmas so I bought a new one because I want to look beautiful on Christmas Eve. The dress for me symbolizes the Christmas and tradition.
- F.** Sometimes I feel better when I buy new clothes because I can change my appearance. If what I buy is expensive then it means that I am going to reward myself. I bought pygmies which I needed. It makes me feel happy because it is colorful. I have bought black trousers in order to not to wear jeans all the time. I have bought gloves and hat which I really need for winter. I have also bought a jacket for the winter which means a lot to me because my parents have paid for it and it makes me feel protected.
- G.** I think it doesn't have an important meaning. It means that I get something new. I have bought a jumper; I wanted something which keeps me warm in the winter. I have bought a scarf; I wanted something which keeps me warm as well. I actually had another scarf but I bought this one because I liked it more than the other one.

3. How do you feel when you buy new clothes?

- A.** Not very happy because I have spent my money on things which are boring even though I am not that kind of person who spends a lot of money on cloths which I will never use like some of my friends do.
- B.** I feel happy. I would like to wear them as soon as possible.
- C.** I feel happy. It also depends on the clothes, if it is base clothes and I know that I am going to use it then it feels good otherwise, I feel worried that I have spent my money on something which I am not going to use so often or something which doesn't match my closet.
- D.** I feel happy not like those who are shopaholic but I feel happy because I own something new. It gives me a sense of satisfaction.
- E.** I feel good. It gives me energy. I feel new as a person. New clothes associate with an event.
- F.** I feel better, especially if it is expensive. I don't work now and I don't have so much money but if I do then it is ok to spend money on me. I mean it's like a present for me myself. I prefer to spend money on clothes than a Saturday night.
- G.** Sometimes I am not sure, then I regret it especially if I feel that I didn't need it. If I like it then it makes me feel happy and satisfied.

4. What does fashion mean to you?

- A.** Fashion is something which differs from country to country or even from group to group. I think that fashion is very interesting although I don't follow all new

trends. If a new trend suits my style then I will follow it otherwise I won't. I am not a fashion victim.

- B.** Fashion is interesting, but it depends a lot on what the new trend is and who wears it.
- C.** Fashion is like a guide to me when I want to buy new clothes. I don't want to go out wearing something which is not modern. It can also be a motivation for buying new clothes, but for me it is not so important to have the latest trends.
- D.** Fashion was more important for me when I was younger. Now it is like a personal adaptation but I don't buy fashion magazines.
- E.** I am not so much into fashion. I don't see myself as a fashionable person. Following fashion is something you do by purpose.
- F.** I like to look beautiful in new clothes. Therefore, fashion is very important because it makes me like myself and be comfortable with myself.
- G.** Fashion is not something that I am interested in. I don't like clothes that celebrities wear because they are usually extreme fashion. In stores you usually find modern clothes not extreme fashion.

5. How important is it for you to follow new trends?

- A.** It is interesting to follow new trends which are nice, but I don't follow all new trends. I prefer to combine.
- B.** Not very important, it depends if it suits me or not. I may wear clothes which are not fashion forward but they suit me.
- C.** I would say almost important. It shows others that you keep up with what is modern. I like a trend which stays for a longer period of time because something which comes over a night disappears also over a night.
- D.** I would say not very important but I still follow it. I get inspired by what others wear.
- E.** Not important at all! I want to feel comfortable. It makes me feel superficial because I have to buy things that others have.
- F.** It is not so important. It depends if I like it or not. I may buy clothes which are not very new. Sometimes new trends look ugly at first, but when you see other people wear it then you get encouraged and think maybe it is not that ugly. So you imagine yourself in it and get encouraged to buy it.
- G.** I like following new trends. Probably it is what you can find at stores. I am young and I can wear those types of clothes which are trendy. You can't wear any kinds of clothes when you get older.

6. Are you interested in stylish clothes or casual clothes?

- A.** Both, most stylish than casual. At work I have a business style and in my leisure time more casual style.
- B.** Stylish, it makes me feel chic and it affects my attitude toward things; by this I mean that when I feel chic then I want everything around me to be organized. Unfortunately at my work people usually wear casual clothes, so if you are dressed very stylish you will stick out.

- C. Both, it depends on where I am going for example at school it is not very casual. I try to adapt myself to the place I am going to. It also depends on my mood whether I want to spend time on my appearance or not.
- D. At home casual but outside more stylish. I am a pilot so at work I wear a uniform which makes me feel masculine.
- E. I think casual because of my personality. I don't see the fuss of wearing clothes which makes me uncomfortable just in order to look nice.
- F. It depends, at work or school more casual but in a formal meeting then I would be more confident in stylish clothes.
- G. It depends on the occasion but usually casual clothes, simply because I am still as student and I don't need to wear stylish and formal clothes but I like stylish clothes.

7. Do you enjoy of shopping new clothes?

- A. Some years ago I thought that shopping was very interesting, but not any more maybe that's because I have some other priorities in my life like travelling and spending money on myself not my appearance. I have a different perspective.
- B. It depends on my figure. If I feel pretty then I enjoy of doing some shopping and trying on new clothes. If I feel that I have gained weight then I don't enjoy shopping.
- C. Yes, I do. For me it's like getting into different roles. It is maybe a hobby or a social activity if I go shopping with my friends. If I shop a lot then I feel stressed whether I am buying the right clothes or not: I mean the clothes which really show who I am or who I want to be.
- D. Yes, definitely because it a social experience when I am with my friends. When I was younger shopping was like a hobby but not anymore.
- E. Yes, I do because I am buying something which I like. It makes me feel new.
- F. Yes, of course! Sometimes I don't find what I am looking for then I don't feel happy, but if I find what I want then I would enjoy my shopping.
- G. Yes, I enjoy shopping because I like to walk in the street and do window shopping as well as shopping. Sometime it is like my hobby.

8. How important is it for you to enjoy shopping?

- A. It is not very important. I have other enjoyable things in my life than shopping.
- B. It is very important. I see shopping as a hobby when I have a good economy and I want to enjoy that; sometimes I am very fussy while choosing clothes.
- C. It is very important because I spend time on it so I expect to get a kick of it. It should also be fun especially if I do shopping with my friends then I want to enjoy the social activity than just the shopping.
- D. It is important because it is a part of my social life when I am with my friends so it is important that I enjoy it. There are other social activities which I enjoy as well like dinning with my friends.
- E. If I have money then it is important because then I would be focused on my shopping rather than other things of the day like a difficult exam.

- F. If I don't enjoy it then I feel exhausted and tired. If I enjoy it then I feel better and it gives me energy.
- G. I think sometimes it is a waste of money. It makes me feel guilty of spending money. I think it is important to enjoy it but not a lot because it is expensive.

9. Do you do shopping clothes alone or with a family member or a friend?

- A. I do shopping alone or with my partner because he has a good taste and he is honest. I sometimes do shopping with my mum when she wants to buy things. I don't do shopping with my friends because it takes a lot of time and I don't like it when they make me stressed in order to have a coffee break or something like that.
- B. I usually do shopping with my husband. It is important for me that he likes the clothes I buy because I like his taste and I like that he is honest when something doesn't suit me.
- C. Often with my friends which leads to impulse shopping. If I really need something and I am looking for it then I would go shopping alone because it is more effective. I used to go shopping with my mum, but not anymore maybe because she is very critical and makes the shopping difficult. Now I think that I have her perspective in my mind therefore I go shopping alone and then I show her what I have bought. It is very important for me that my mum approves what I buy.
- D. With my friends because as I mentioned before it is a social activity.
- E. Usually alone because I like to focus on what I need. It is a way to be on my own.
- F. I prefer alone because I usually spend a lot of time at stores and others make me stressed. For example my boy friend, he never complains but I can see that in his face that he can't take it any more so I have to make my mind faster. In Spain the music in the stores makes you feel stressed and nervous. It is more like a disco. It makes you so stressed that when you need something you buy the first thing you find even if you don't like it just because you want to leave the store as soon as possible. In Sweden everything is quiet. In stores you hear a light music and it makes you stay longer and you can take your time.
- G. With my mum or alone. I go shopping with my mum because she pays and at the same time I can ask for her opinion. I care a lot about my mum's opinion because I rely on her.

10. Do you care about what others think about the clothes you buy? Why?

- A. Unfortunately I do. That is because people get judged by their appearance in the first sight. The first sight is important especially at work where there is a norm and a dress code. I do care a lot about what my partner thinks about my cloths in case if the clothes don't fit me well; I trust him.
- B. Yes, I do. I want to look pretty. I don't change my style based on others ideas but I like to get approval from others for the choice of my clothes. It is nice to be the centre of attention.
- C. When I can't choose between two things then I would like to hear what others think but it also depends on whom I am shopping with. It is always good to see

that others like your choice of clothes and style. If I really like something and I buy it then it is not so important what others think.

- D. Yes, in some way. My friends and I ask each others' opinion. I usually ask for my friends' approval or opinion especially if I am in doubt and can't make my mind. If like something very much then I don't care what others think. For example I like pink but my friends don't but I buy things in pink anyway.
- E. No, not really as far as I like them. I cared about it when I was younger. When you get older, you make progress with your own personality to be on your own.
- F. Not actually, a few years ago when I was younger and I was living in a small town I cared a lot what other thought about my clothes, but now I don't care what others think. Of course I want to look beautiful but if others don't like my style, I don't care.
- G. I care while I am buying clothes, but after I have bought I don't care what others think. As far as me and my mum like it, others' ideas are not important.

11. Are you interested in going shopping when you are a bit sad in order to feel better? If yes, how can it help you feel better?

- A. No, it doesn't work that way. When I am down I go out and run then I feel better.
- B. No, shopping can't keep me away from my problems.
- C. Yes, it makes me happy to find nice things but it is temporary then sometimes I regret what I have bought.
- D. No, it doesn't work for me. If I am sad then I prefer to watch TV or get some sleep.
- E. Sometimes, maybe subconsciously when I had to do things which I didn't then it makes me forget about it at least for a while.
- F. Yes, of course! When I am sad I buy two things to cheer me up: sweets and clothes. They make me feel better.
- G. Yes, because you don't think about the problem for a while. It keeps you away from the problems so you can clear your mind.

12. Are you interested in going shopping when you are very upset in order to feel better?

- A. No, not at all!
- B. No, not at all!
- C. If I am really depressed then I don't go shopping, but if it is a bad day then it helps you to fly from the real world to the dream world where you can associate the clothes with yourself in your dreams.
- D. No, I prefer to stay at home.
- E. Yes, definitely! It makes me forget about the problem.
- F. No, because I won't enjoy it. Probably thinking about other things won't let me enjoy it.
- G. No, I don't think so! I prefer to go out but not for a shopping because I can't focus on it and I will regret it later.

13. Do you feel more confident in new clothes?

- A. Not always, it depends on the clothes. I may feel totally confident in my clothes which are not new but they are my favorites.
- B. No, I don't think it's relevant at all. I may feel confident in my old clothes which I like a lot.
- C. Yes, because you can show others that you keep on with fashion. It may have something to do with the identity you would like to have. I mean with new clothes I see myself closer to the person I would like to be and it makes me more confident.
- D. No, not in new clothes but I feel confident in clothes that I like. It's a short cut if I am wearing something fashionable which like then I would feel very confident especially if it is about the first impression.
- E. I wouldn't say confident, I would say new and fresh. As long as I like my clothes I feel confident in them no matter if my clothes are new or not.
- F. Yes, I actually don't know why. It's a strange feeling but it is so.
- G. I like to wear new clothes all the time but it is not possible, so when you wear something new it makes you feel more confident.

14. How would you feel if you can't catch up with new styles?

- A. It doesn't matter because I have other priorities in my life and fashion is not something which changes over a night. It takes a while.
- B. If I like it, I get encouraged to buy it. If I see that I can't buy it then I forget it.
- C. I don't want to follow all new trends. If I like a trend but I can't catch up with that then I would probably feel less secure or stressed depending on why I can't buy the new trends, especially if I am supposed to meet new people then I would be worried about their first impression of me. It is also a bit stressful to interpret fashion correctly because everybody interprets fashion very personally. You always ask yourself the difficult questions, such as: who am I? Who I want to be? What is the correct style for me? How do I differentiate myself from others? These questions create stress.
- D. It doesn't matter that much. I am comfortable in what I already have and that's what is important.
- E. It doesn't matter! I actually don't catch up with new styles. I just buy the clothes which I like.
- F. It doesn't matter! I probably will buy it next time.
- G. The problem would be time and money, but it doesn't matter!

**15. How would you feel if you realize that you are dressed inappropriately at work?
At school? In a party?**

- A. I would feel embarrassed. I don't like to stick out with an extreme style therefore; I usually have a classical style, which makes me overdressed than underdressed. It is all about standing for the clothes you are wearing.
- B. It's a bad feeling. I prefer to leave the place as soon as possible even if I am overdressed.

- C. Very nervous, it would be a very difficult situation. I would feel stressed if others get me wrong. I mean if I give a wrong impression. Dressing appropriately is more important than being fashionable.
- D. I would feel terrible, nervous and awkward. It is important to fit into the group you are with. It is ok if I am overdressed which I usually am, but underdressed is not ok at all.
- E. I wouldn't feel good because who wants to dress inappropriately. It would definitely make me feel stressed.
- F. I would feel sad and nervous and I can't wait until I leave that place.
- G. Really worried, then I would like just to go home and finish the day. I don't want to feel different from others, even if I am overdressed. I don't want to be the one everybody looks at. It makes me feel small even if it's for a good thing. I don't like that sort of attention.

16. Which one is more important for you? Quality of clothes? Price? Style?

- A. I would say quality and price which are hand-in-hand. When it comes to basic clothes then the quality is more important than the price.
- B. I think style because it makes me feel pretty then price and quality.
- C. It depends! If it is a high price then it is very important that the quality is high. There is a relation between the high quality and the price. It also depends on the clothes, if it is something which I really need and buy seldom then I am ready to pay a high price for that because I know that I am going to use it. If I find clothes on sale, then it is the price which is very important not the style because you can't find new styles on sale.
- D. For a nice material I could easily pay a high price as well. I think for me is quality, design and then price.
- E. Quality, no matter what the price is. I don't buy any sort of clothes just because they are cheap. If I can't afford what I like then I don't buy. I don't want a cheap quality.
- F. Price because I don't work right now but if I have money then that is the style which is important. I want it to look beautiful.
- G. I like the relation between the quality and price. I want a quality be worth the price I am paying for it.

17. How old are you?

- A. 28 years old.
- B. 26 years old.
- C. 23 years old.
- D. 31 years old.
- E. 28 years old.
- F. 23 years old.
- G. 21 years old.

18. What is your occupation?

- A.** Student in advanced level.
- B.** Doctoral student.
- C.** Student in master level.
- D.** Pilot and student at the same time.
- E.** Student.
- F.** Student.
- G.** Student.